

Combating Global Terrorism

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The views expressed in this paper do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.

Since September 11th, 2001, the world has been at war with global terrorism: a new manifestation of terrorism demonstrating, for the first time, global aims and reach. In response to the unprecedented terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, the entire international community agreed to condemn terrorism and to cooperate in action to stamp it out while the US led an international military campaign to eliminate al Qaeda's base in Afghanistan. Terrorism is high on the agenda of every international organization, UN, G8, APEC, NATO, etc. It is a truly global challenge and only consistent and comprehensive global action will defeat it.

Terrorism is not new. In its modern form, it has been around for more than 200 years. Terrorism is the illegal use of violence by private individuals or groups intended to kill or injure human beings and to destroy or damage property in order to advance the objectives of that individual or group. Terrorism is a criminal activity. It involves recruiting, organization and training, planning, preparation and reconnaissance, logistics, administration and fundraising. Like other criminal activities, most of these are conducted clandestinely. These covert activities support the conduct of terrorist attacks; public acts targeted for both their physical and psychological impact. The destruction of the twin towers of the World Trade Center, for example, profoundly affected the psychology of the American people and had immediate and lasting negative effects for the airline and aviation industry and for the international economy as a whole.

Historically, two broad terrorist strains can be distinguished. One is local terrorism directed either within a state against its government or against foreign domination or occupation. This is the dominant model for Irish or Palestinian terrorism (as well as for Jewish terrorism in Mandate Palestine before the establishment of the State of Israel). Local terrorists usually have limited and concrete objectives and draw legitimacy from the support of their ethnic, religious, or other group within the population. They also frequently seek international recognition and legitimation. They are less likely to conduct indiscriminate mass casualty attacks which can cost them popular or overseas support. They may negotiate with their opponents and successful resolution of the underlying conflict may convince these terrorists to lay down their arms and end their armed campaigns. Of course, die-hard extremist militants within such groups may refuse to accept a settlement and continue the armed struggle themselves. The history of the

Official IRA, the Provisional IRA, the Real IRA and the Continuity IRA is one example of this devolutionary process.

The other terrorist strain is global terrorism based in extremist ideology and intended to produce revolutionary or transformational change. In the latter half of the 20th century, this was, to a degree, the model for such groups as the Red Army Faction and Red Brigades in Europe and the Weather Underground in the United States. In the 21st century, this is the model demonstrated by Usama bin Laden, al Qaeda and associated groups. This is also the model for many North American neo-Nazi and white supremacist militia groups. These groups do not pursue limited or concrete objectives and draw their inspiration and legitimacy from their own extremist ideology. They regard themselves as the armed vanguard of profound revolutionary change and favour mass casualty or other spectacular attacks. They will not negotiate with their opponents and there are few limits on the means that they will use: toxic chemicals, nuclear and radiological materials or toxins and disease-causing organisms, if they can obtain them.

Al Qaeda is the first successful example of a genuinely global terrorist group, both in terms of its ideological foundation and its global reach and ambitions. Indeed, before the end of the Cold War and the collapse of Soviet communism the East-West division of the globe into two opposed camps (with the developing world exploited by both sides) prevented the emergence of a genuinely global society or of truly global terrorism. Al Qaeda is also the first successful proponent of what can be termed franchise terrorism. It has forged links among islamist extremist groups around the world, providing training, support and assistance for them to each pursue their individual agendas. Cooperation among terrorist groups is not new and can be traced back to the 1960s. What is new is that these individual extremist groups assist al Qaeda to conduct its own operations and cooperate with it in a global islamist jihad. This loosely-organized global terrorist network of networks led, but not directed, by al Qaeda and dedicated to overthrowing the existing international political, economic and social order is innovative, adaptive and opportunistic. It is capable of spending years patiently organizing a spectacular attack like September 11th and contemplates future such attacks. It is equally able to mount driveby shootings and bombings where conditions permit. Al Qaeda has a pool of islamist militants around the world to recruit from and can call on local assistance and local expertise from associated islamist groups when needed.

The global terrorism carried out by al Qaeda and associated groups is both the product of and a violent reaction to globalization and the growing integration of global society and the international economy. In essence, al Qaeda is at war with the modern world and with the integrative forces at work in the world today. Usama bin Laden and other islamist extremist leaders are directing an atavistic assault on modernity itself. At the same time, these terrorist leaders and their networks could not function without the tools of the information age, cable television, satellite cellphones and the internet, for example. They are the armed, intolerant and extremist opposition to globalization and to the development of global society and global community. While it

may appear that their war is against the United States - the Kenyan and Tanzanian Embassy bombings and September 11th, 2001, would appear to demonstrate that - al Qaeda and associated groups are, in fact, waging war on all of us. This is made explicit in the latest bin Laden communique, at least for Canada, Australia and the other European coalition partners, but it has been implicit in the concept of Islamist jihad from the outset.

This fact has two important ramifications: one, we are all at risk (Indeed, before September 11th, 2001, the majority of victims in terrorist attacks directed against the United States were non-American.); two, the US does not have a right to do whatever it thinks is necessary to protect itself (In fact, as US domestic security improves al Qaeda will increasingly attack non-Americans in vulnerable third countries, exactly what happened with the Bali bombing.).

In order to successfully combat global terrorism governments must: protect their people, their societies, and their economies; prevent terrorist attacks; and, pursue and eliminate terrorists and terrorist groups. Government actions must be based in law and protect individual privacy, liberty and human rights and not unduly or unnecessarily impact the legitimate movement of people and goods. They must be proportionate to the real threat and balanced between the demand for security and the needs of normal everyday life. Most importantly, they must be consistent and comprehensive around the globe.

UNSCR 1373 is an important milestone in that it established, for the first time, a common international anti-terrorism standard. UNSCR 1373 required all UN member states to criminalize, prevent and suppress terrorist activities, including terrorist financing, to establish terrorist acts as serious criminal offences in domestic law and regulations, and to ensure that terrorists are apprehended and prosecuted. This established a common standard and the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC), also created by UNSCR 1373, has been following up with governments to verify that effective national measures are being taken to comply with it.

The G8 has built upon this work over the past year in developing additional anti-terrorism standards and best practices. The next step is to disseminate these best practices internationally with the assistance of the UN CTC. Work is also ongoing in other international fora, like the International Maritime Organization (IMO), to establish additional common practices and standards. To be effective, of course, these common practices and standards must be effectively and universally applied by national governments around the globe. It is interesting to note that in responding to terrorism, the international community has chosen to rely upon and reinforce the responsibility of individual governments to apprehend and prosecute terrorist offenders. There has, so far, been no attempt to create a supranational organ or to use the International Criminal Court to prosecute terrorist offences.

Where individual governments are unwilling to meet their anti-terrorist

obligations, strong sanctions can and should be applied. In the aftermath of September 11th, strong US pressure was applied to the Government of Pakistan to end its relationship with the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Where countries are unable to meet the agreed standard, better advantaged countries should provide capacity-building assistance to enable them to meet the international norm. Provision of such assistance benefits the international community as a whole since al Qaeda and associated groups can be expected to take advantage of any vulnerability to strike at the international community and at the global economy. The recent Bali bombing targeted Australian and other foreign tourists, the Hindu inhabitants of Bali, the Indonesian government, and international travel and tourism. Capacity-building assistance is one area where greater efforts and improved cooperation and coordination are required.

The global islamist jihad movement led by al Qaeda is fueled by rage and envy: rage at the present state of the world and envy of the security and prosperity enjoyed by North Americans, Europeans, Japanese and others. Having defeated the Soviet Union in Afghanistan and convinced that this led directly to the collapse of the Soviet Union, these islamist jihadists are equally convinced that they can also ultimately destroy the United States and the rest of the developed world. Disaffected with and alienated from the global community being created through globalization, Usama bin Laden and other global terrorists seek to exploit and increase ethnic, religious and other differences among people, primarily between the haves and have-nots of the present world. Surprised at their success in collapsing the World Trade Center, we should expect that they were also surprised by the massive economic impact of that attack. Buoyed by their success, they will seek additional opportunities to harm the international economy.

Governments must be careful not to assist these terrorists in their efforts by unnecessarily harming international trade or global society through the ill-considered application of additional security measures. Governments must also ensure that their actions do not further inflame prejudices among people or unreasonably target particular ethnic or religious groups. We cannot identify terrorists or their supporters by race, colour, ethnicity or religion and it is contrary to the very values that we are fighting for to try and do so. Palestinian suicide bombers have successfully disguised themselves as religious Jews or members of the Israeli security forces, and al Qaeda has already recruited Europeans and North Americans. The colour of one's skin or hair or the nation of one's birth are not reliable indicators of an individual's reliability or allegiance.

The longterm strategy that will succeed against global terrorism is to further develop the common values, standards, and institutions required for a genuinely global community. The essence of terrorist violence is that it is an attack on others: its solution is to effectively expand the definition of who we are, to create a common sense of community with shared values, opportunities and commitment. Human communities have traditionally used external enemies to galvanize group identification and cohesion. Global terrorists may yet prove to be just the enemy that the global community required.

Defeating global terrorism will demand patience, persistence and perspective. The psychological impact of terrorist violence often far outways its physical results. During the recent sniper rampage around Washington, D.C., more people died as victims of ordinary murders than were killed by the snipers. Nevertheless, people throughout the metropolitan D.C. area began to take extraordinary, even irrational, measures to protect themselves and their families from the sniper threat. There is no such thing as absolute security, for individuals or for nations, but in order to defeat terrorism society must continue to function and normal life must go on. Terrorists will continue to succeed from time to time in their attacks but they cannot succeed in their campaign unless we let them.