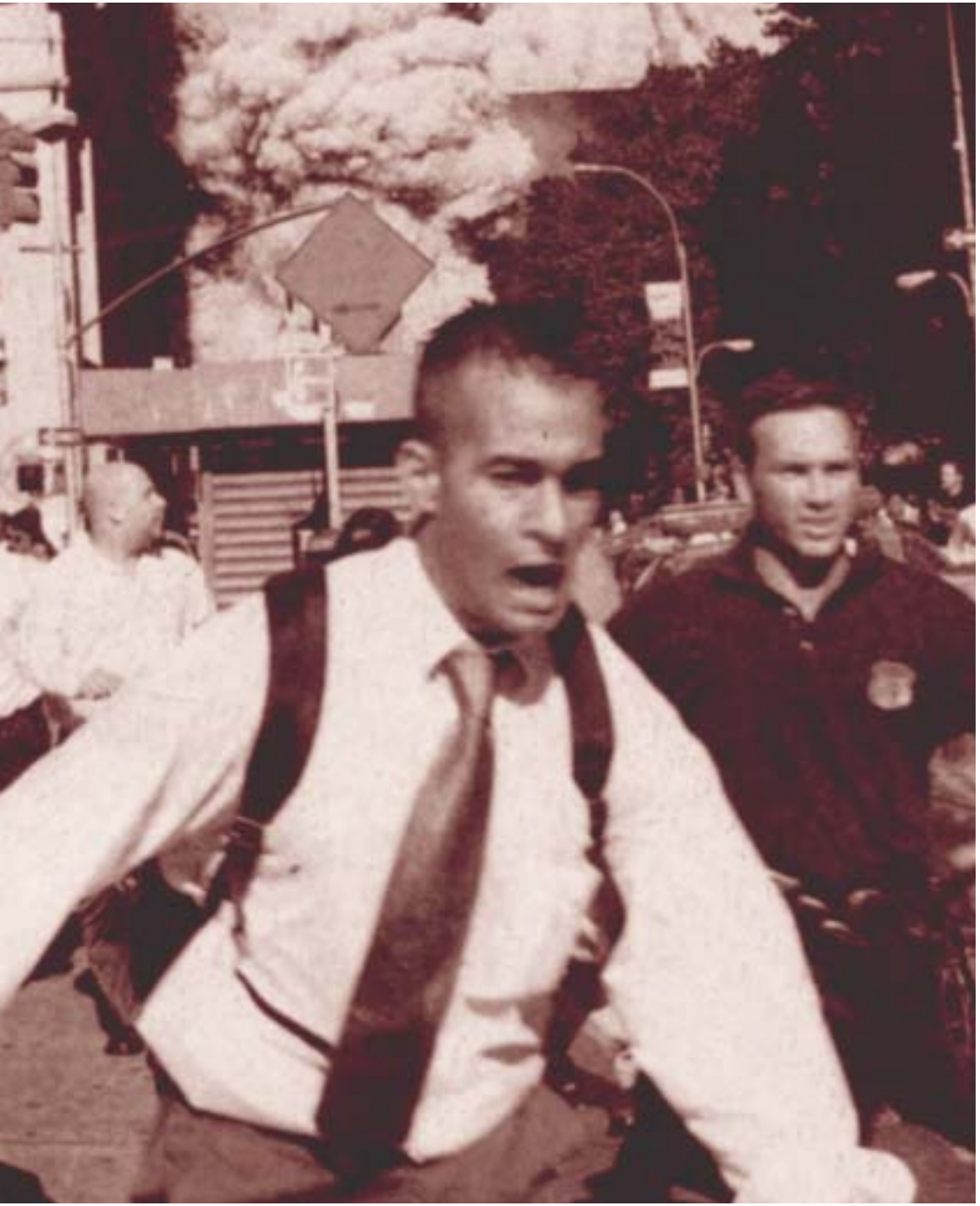

AIR POWER and the Changing Nature of Terrorism

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The horrific events of 11 September 2001 brought international terrorism back in to the spotlight and reinvigorated the debate about how terrorism can be combated. Since the attack on the United States (US), governments in many parts of the world have utilised a broad range of instruments in the fight against terrorism. This paper will concentrate upon evaluating the utility of one such instrument – air power – when employed for this purpose.

To begin with, it is necessary to define the terminology of modern international terrorism, and to appraise the changing nature of this phenomenon since the late 1960s. This approach highlights the emergence of a 'new wave' of terrorist groups that have become more prominent during the last 20 years. The subsequent analysis attempts to set out the major differences between more 'traditional' terrorist groups and their 'new wave' counterparts, concentrating on five main areas: motivation, organisational structure, state support, targeting policy and lethality.

Thereafter, in assessing the ability of air power to combat these 'new wave' organisations and their state sponsors, it will be suggested that there are four potential areas in which air power may be able to contribute to the fight against international terrorism: highlighting to public/media that action is being taken, inflicting costs, providing key Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance (C4ISTAR) assets and assisting in the prevention of terrorism. The intention is to focus on the precise attributes of air power that lend themselves to counter-terrorist action, on recent experience, and on the difficulties posed by the defining characteristics of 'new wave' terrorist groups. The conclusion considers how these factors may influence the role of air power in the fight against international terrorism.

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DEFINITIONS

The concept of terrorism has historically proven difficult to define. There is no single accepted definition of terrorism: different governments, and indeed departments within a single administration, have their own distinct definition that reflects their own priorities. In the US, for example, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and Department of Defense (DOD) all have their own separate definitions.

This difficulty has been partly caused by an expansion of the type of groups that have been considered as terrorists, especially since the end of the Cold War. The concept covers a broad range of organisations that have a variety of political, religious and social motivations, from single-issue groups [for example anti-abortionists] to terrorist entities that have a wide range of political and religious objectives, such as Al – Qaeda. Additionally, terrorism is a 'value-laden' term that has negative connotations for those groups labelled as such. Being labelled as a terrorist can lead to governments evoking specialist anti-terrorist legislation that grants more wide-ranging powers to the civil authorities than when confronting 'ordinary criminals'. Moreover, the use of the term, especially within the political arena, can be subjective: it is an old maxim that one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter

Nevertheless, there are a number of essential elements that are common to most of the definitions, such

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as the use of violence, psychological effect, and the attempt to gain leverage in order to achieve the group's stipulated aims. The use of violence, integral to terrorists, also encompasses the threat of violence, which is an important tool that has not been incorporated in many definitions of terrorism. The aforementioned violence has to be both deliberate and organised. Alongside the immediate physical and political effect of the use of violence, the psychological effect upon a wider audience, and the resultant

manipulation of fear, constitutes a crucial feature of the concept. Terrorists utilise violence and its effects in order to gain leverage, influence and power in the pursuit of change, generally within the political arena. Although the terrorists' goals may be political, religious or social, it is mainly political change that they seek. Thus for the purposes of this paper, terrorism is defined as the deliberate and organised use of violence, or the threat of violence, in order to attain leverage, influence, and power to effect political change through the exploitation of fear.[1] International terrorism can be considered to be terrorism that transcends national boundaries: for example in the planning or execution of an attack or the make-up of a group.

The changing nature of terrorism: 'traditional' and 'new wave' groups

BACKGROUND

One of the first manifestations of modern international terrorism was the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine's (PFLP) hijacking of an Israeli commercial flight from Rome to Tel Aviv in 1968.[2] Since then, international terrorism has been fluid, with terrorist groups continuously evolving. Since the 1980s, and especially after the end of the Cold War, international terrorism has been transformed by the emergence of a 'new wave' of terrorist organisations.[3] Terrorist groups with a more religious motivation and orientation, such as Al – Qaeda, Hamas and the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), have become more prominent, increasing steadily in number and accounting for a higher proportion of acts of international terrorism. In 1980, only 3% of international terrorist organisations were classified as primarily religious.[4] By 1995, however, this figure had risen to 46%.[5] In addition, these 'new wave' groups have accounted for a disproportionate number of casualties. Furthermore, while there has been a decline in the number of international terrorist incidents since the end of the Cold War, the attacks have become more lethal: during the 1970s one or more people were killed in 17% of these acts; during the 1980s this figure rose slightly to 19%; in 1995 it had risen markedly to 29%.[6]

Although Islamic terrorists have received the most publicity and notoriety, the increase in 'religious terrorism' has by no means been restricted to the Muslim faith. There has also been a resurgence of terrorism within other established religions, for example Judaism, Christianity and Hinduism.[7] Religious cults espousing millenarian aims, believing that the beginning of the new millennium would bring the end of the world, have also come to the fore, but their activities have mostly been restricted to the domestic arena.[8] In addition, the post-Cold War era has witnessed the emergence of new categories of terrorism, such as eco-terrorism and narco-terrorism.[9] Columbian drug cartels, for example, have attacked numerous American owned oil pipelines in Columbia.[10] Nevertheless, as Islamic terrorist groups arguably pose one of the largest risks to the security of the UK and her allies in view of the events of 11 September 2001, they represent the primary focus of the following discussion.[11]

THE FIVE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF TERRORIST GROUPS

The main attributes of international terrorism from the late 1960s up until the present day may be examined under five major headings, which are applicable both to the more 'traditional' terrorist groups that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s and the 'new wave' of organisations that were set up in the 1980s and 1990s. These are: motivation, organisational structure, state support, targeting policy and lethality.

MOTIVATION

Firstly, in terms of motivation, the 'traditional' international terrorist groups, such as the Palestine Liberation Organisation, PFLP, Red Army Faction and Provisional Irish Republican Army, were usually secular in their orientation. This is not to say that religion did not play a role, especially in determining the membership of some of these organisations. Nevertheless, it can be argued their over-riding objectives – for example independence or unification – were political and social rather than religious in character. These 'traditional' terrorist organisations mainly espoused nationalist, separatist or extreme left-wing views that were commensurate with their own distinctive ideological beliefs.

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Aftermath of an IRA bomb

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In contrast, the 'new wave' groups, for example Al – Qaeda and Hamas, primarily claim to be motivated by long-term religious goals, although they also espouse some short-term political ambitions. Hamas have attempted to achieve short-term objectives, such as the release of members held in Israeli prisons, and long-term goals, such as the destruction of their principal enemy, Israel, simultaneously.[12] Bruce Hoffman, an expert on terrorism, has stated that for these types of group, 'the religious motive is overriding; and indeed, the religious imperative for terrorism is the most important defining characteristic of terrorist activity today.' [13]

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Turning now to the organisational structure of international terrorist groups, 'traditional' groups on the whole are formally organised with a hierarchical structure and a well-defined command and control (C2) apparatus. They tend to be very bureaucratic organisations with the leaders exercising tight control over those who commit the acts of terrorism. Additionally, in the aftermath of an attack, 'traditional' terrorist groups usually issue communiqués explaining their actions and taking credit for them, wanting the world to know who perpetrated an attack.

The 'new wave' of 'religious' groups, however, usually constitute loosely tied networks made up of small, dispersed units, which have a high degree of operational autonomy. These groups utilise both horizontal and vertical channels of communication within a relatively flat organisational structure. These small units tend to be inspired and encouraged by a spiritual mentor or terrorist leader rather than being directly controlled like 'traditional' groups. Simon Reeve, a leading writer on terrorism, has concluded that:

> 'Osama bin Laden is now more of a cult leader,
> inspiring terrorists to commit acts rather than actually
> controlling them.' [14]

Bin Laden and the other leading commanders can be perceived as being at the hub of the operations of these small, dispersed units, with the hub providing training, general guidelines concerning rules of engagement, technical assistance, such as skilled bomb makers, and possibly finance to these units. The hub of the network, however, exerts little direct control over the operations conducted by their members.

The 'new wave' groups have taken advantage of the information age and the availability of new technology, such as the Internet, which has facilitated the construction of this novel organisational structure.[15] These 'new wave' entities are generally less bureaucratic than 'traditional' organisations, relying more on a shared identity and values and horizontal co-ordination than on a defined hierarchy and direct C2 in order to promote internal cohesion. Additionally, unlike 'traditional' terrorist organisations, 'new wave' entities do not tend to claim responsibility for every act of terrorism they carry out.

State sponsors have in the past tended to take an active role in the groups that they supported, asserting a higher degree of direct control than is apparent today

STATE SUPPORT

'Traditional' terrorist groups, especially within the Middle East, have often enjoyed state support in the form of material and financial resources, operating bases and training facilities.[16] State sponsors have in the past tended to take an active role in the groups that they supported, asserting a higher degree of direct control than is apparent today. A prime example of state sponsorship was Iran's support for Hizbollah's activities against Israel.[17]

'New wave' international terrorist groups utilise alternative means of finance, including private funding based on a network of investments and companies wholly or partly owned by these organisations.[18] In addition, a network of wealthy benefactors and charities also provides financial aid.[19] Although state

sponsorship remains, its importance has been reduced in terms of finance. Moreover, state sponsors tend not to exert as much direct control over the activities of this 'new wave' of terrorist groups as they have done in the past with 'traditional' groups. But states continue to provide vital assistance by allowing terrorist organisations to run training camps and base their operations within their borders. Terrorist groups such as Al–Qaeda rely heavily on this support, which has provided them not only with the ability to train large numbers of people in the art of terrorism, but also with a safe haven where they were protected from their perceived enemies.[20]

TARGETING AND LETHALITY

Targeting and 'lethality' represent the fourth and fifth major headings under which international terrorist groups may be considered. 'Traditional' organisations tend to execute highly selective and discriminate acts of violence against symbolic targets.[21] As well as targeting their declared enemies, these terrorists also commit violent acts against civilians from third countries in order to maximise the attention and publicity they receive. Terrorist groups, such as the PFLP, targeted not only Israelis, their declared enemy, but also western nationals, thus increasing the attention they received via the western media. Media coverage of these events is essential to these groups in order to attract attention to their cause and themselves, while also spreading fear and alarm, the psychological element of terrorism. Further, these terrorist acts are intended to influence an audience far wider than their immediate geographical locale, thereby mobilising sympathy and support outside their own theatre of operations. Violence is generally perceived by 'traditional' international terrorist organisations as a means to an end, as they see themselves as reluctant warriors who are forced to take up arms [as a last resort] in order to achieve their aims.

Israeli people celebrate after the successful rescue of passengers from an Airbus A300, which had been hijacked and diverted to Entebbe in Uganda by Palestinian and West German terrorists in 1976

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The collapse of the World Trade Centre buildings, after being rammed by hijacked airliners.

...'new wave' terrorist groups have ventured towards more indiscriminate violence and greater lethality than more 'traditional' groups...

In contrast, 'new wave' terrorist groups have ventured towards more indiscriminate violence and greater lethality than more 'traditional' groups. This trend has been highlighted by the fact that the most destructive and headline-grabbing international terrorist acts since the end of the Cold War have been carried out by this 'new wave' of terrorist groups:

- 1992: The bombing of the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires by Palestinian terrorists that killed 29 people.[22]
- 1993: The attack against the World Trade Centre that was intended to collapse one of the twin towers onto the other.[23]
- 1994: The bombing of the Argentine and Israeli Mutual Association in Buenos Aires which left 86 people dead and hundreds of others wounded.[24]
- 1995: The car bomb that exploded in the car park of the Office of the Program Manager/ Saudi Arabian National Guard in Riyadh, that killed 7 people and wounded 42.[25]
- 1996: The truck bomb that detonated outside the US military's Khobar Towers housing facility in Dhahran, killing 19 people and wounding 515 others.[26]
- 1998: The bombing of the US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania that left a total of 301 people dead and over 5,000 wounded.[27]

- 2000: The attack against the USS Cole in which 17 were killed and 39 wounded.[28]
- 2001: The 11 September attacks in the US that resulted in the death of around 3,000 people. [29]

This increase in the lethality of international terrorism may be traced to several possible causes. It has been suggested that the attention given by the public and media to these types of incidents has decreased as the public have become desensitised to acts of terrorism and that conversely, survival rates have increased.[30] Thus modern terrorist organisations need to perpetrate ever more destructive acts in order to command the same amount of media coverage as international terrorism has received in the past. Additionally, it can be suggested that international terrorist groups have learnt from not only their own past experiences, but also from the experiences of other groups thus increasing their operational capabilities. Furthermore, new technology has also increased the capabilities of terrorists with the availability of more sophisticated weaponry and explosives etc.

...Religious terrorists' seem to operate with vastly different value systems and mechanisms of justification and legitimation than their secular counterparts

Finally, it can be argued that the most important influence on this area has been the rise of 'religious terrorism' perpetrated by fundamentalists. 'Religious terrorists' seem to operate with vastly different value systems and mechanisms of justification and legitimation than their secular counterparts. Violence is often viewed as a sacramental or a divine duty, carried out in response to a theological demand or imperative giving it a transcendental quality. By evoking the totality of the struggle, Fatwas and statements issued by prominent Muslim clerics and terrorist leaders justify the destruction of whole societies and large sections of populations.[31] The defence of the Muslim faith appears to be perceived as a contest of good versus evil, with the Islamisists attempting to repel the modern day 'Crusaders'.[32] 'New wave' religious terrorists, therefore, are less discriminate in their choice of targets: for example, any American may be viewed as a legitimate target.[33] Critically, one of the key characteristics of fundamentalism, in general, is its unwillingness to compromise, and to view total destruction rather than defeat as a primary aim. Thus violence is no longer a means to end, but an end in itself.

The use of air power against 'new wave' terrorism

The next section of this paper analyses the utility of military force in general, and air power in particular, in combating 'new wave' terrorism. In the light of recent experience and the characteristics of the 'new wave' of terrorist groups highlighted above, both the contributions and the limitations of utilising air power will be examined.

AIR POWER'S CONTRIBUTION

Military force has a role to play within the panoply of instruments available to combat terrorism. Within military force, air power has the potential to make an important contribution to this effort in the following areas:

- Providing key C4ISTAR assets to the fight against terrorism.
- Inflicting costs upon terrorist organisations and their state sponsors through the disruption and destruction of operations and resources.
- Assisting in the prevention of terrorism.
- Communicating to the public/media that action is being taken in the wake of a terrorist attack, and possibly deterring further attacks by highlighting that those who commit and actively support terrorism will be punished.

C4ISTAR

Intelligence is the lifeblood of counter-terrorist actions, providing knowledge of key areas, such as capabilities, command structures and intentions. The organisational structure, motives and modus operandi of most of the 'new wave' terrorist groups, however, pose a particularly challenging problem to the intelligence services of those states to which they pose a threat. The fact that they do not always claim responsibility for their attacks makes it more difficult to discover who perpetrated them. Moreover, many of the perpetrators of these acts have little or no contact with either their co-conspirators or the organisation's leadership, further hindering attempts to collect information.[34] The adoption of a networked organisational structure, with 'new wave' groups utilising small, dispersed, cells with a relatively high-degree of autonomy, reduces the chances of reliable intelligence being obtained. The tangled web of contact and assistance within such groups also makes proving a direct link between the perpetrators of a particular act of terrorism and the groups' leadership very challenging. Direct linkages are required, especially when acting within a coalition, in order to persuade political leaders that action needs to be taken. Taken together these attributes make an attempt to build up a clear intelligence picture of the activities and contacts of such groups relatively difficult when compared to a state or more 'traditional' terrorist groups.

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Air power through the utilisation of ISTAR assets, such as satellites, manned aerial vehicles and UAVs, has a potentially significant role to play in increasing the transparency of the 'new wave' terrorist groups and ameliorating this difficulty. These assets are capable of providing a wide range of intelligence, including COMINT, ELINT, MASINT and SIGINT. The utilisation of imaging equipment, for example, can provide valuable information pertaining to a group's capabilities regarding the location and the level of

activity within and around training camps. Further, space and aircraft-based sensors possess the ability to intercept SIGINT/COMINT, which is important to networked organisations that are generally reliant upon communication for their operational effectiveness, thereby providing an important source of information, which may help uncover a terrorist's intentions. Within military operations conducted against 'new wave' terrorists, the linking together of C4ISTAR capabilities with strike assets in a 'network - centric capability' can produce a synergistic effect, enhancing situational awareness and increasing the level of co-ordination and reducing the 'sensor-to-shooter' time that can be important when combating a disparate organisation, whose constituent parts are difficult to locate and track and are relatively mobile.

Ultimately, however, the analysis of the intelligence provided by these capabilities is fundamental to its eventual use, as has been highlighted by the debate in the US over why the FBI and CIA failed to predict and prevent the events of 11th September.[35] Notwithstanding this limitation, air power, in concert with other agencies, retains the ability to utilise its strengths in order to help to increase knowledge and therefore enhance the government's ability to tackle international terrorism.

INFLICTING COSTS ON TERRORIST GROUPS AND STATE SPONSORS

After the perpetrator of a terrorist attack has been identified and their centre of gravity has been determined, air power is able to provide highly capable strike assets to be utilised as part of a 'network-centric capability', in order to inflict costs upon terrorist groups and their state sponsors. Through the striking of a 'new wave' organisation's centre of gravity it is hoped to undermine the opponent's ability, will and means to continue their terrorist activities. This desired effect might be achieved, for example, through the disruption and destruction of key facilities, such as headquarters and training camps, which can be considered as viable targets for air power.

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US forces bomb terrorist hideouts in the hills of Afghanistan

Donald Rumsfeld, the US Secretary of State for Defense, emphasised the utility of this approach when he stated that, 'the only way to defend against terrorist acts is to take the battle to the terrorists'. [36] Air power's penetration, flexibility and versatility, and use of precision engagement enable it to take the fight to the adversary and make a positive contribution in this area. Penetration allows air power to strike terrorist targets even if they are contained deep within a hostile state. Air power's inherent flexibility and versatility means that air vehicles can strike various specialist target sets during a single mission. Thus it is possible for aircraft to be stationed on a CAP awaiting instructions from ground forces that are attempting to locate mobile targets. The increased accuracy offered by precision guided munitions can help to reduce the amount of collateral damage incurred within an operation, an important consideration given the need for governments to retain the 'moral high ground' when dealing with terrorists.

Air power can also be integral to the success of ground operations designed to disrupt and destroy terrorist operations and resources. Air vehicles facilitate the rapid insertion and extraction of land forces into and out of locations that might otherwise be more difficult to reach. In addition, air power is able to provide valuable indirect and direct fire support to such operations. Through the utilisation of the above attributes air power is able to play a major role in fulfilling Rumsfeld's desire to seize the initiative.

Nonetheless, air power can also make a contribution through Peace Support Operations in places such as Afghanistan or other regions where extremism may emerge

AMELIORATING THE UNDERLYING CAUSES OF TERRORISM

Thirdly, air power is able to play a supporting role in preventing the emergence or return of social conditions that allow terrorism to flourish. It has been argued that there is a direct link between extremist ideas, such as those that are prevalent within 'new wave' terrorist groups, terrorism, and social deprivation. The aftermath of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM in Afghanistan will be important in the prevention of instability and promote better social conditions for the Afghan population, which will hopefully mean that Afghanistan will no longer be a seedbed for fundamentalists and terrorists. By dealing with the underlying causes of terrorism rather than the symptoms, it may be possible to cut off support for terrorists and reduce the number of people who feel the need to turn to extremism.[37] The economic and political instruments of power will probably constitute

the main elements of government policy and action in this area, as they have during Tunisia's successful struggle against religious extremism during the 1980s and 90s.[38] Nonetheless, air power can also make a contribution through Peace Support Operations in places such as Afghanistan or other regions where extremism may emerge. The utility of air power in this respect has been emphasised since the end of the Cold War during operations in the Balkans, Somalia and Sierra Leone. Utilising its strengths air power has demonstrated an ability to fulfil certain tasks more effectively than land and naval power within PSOs, such as ISR, the rapid transportation of men and supplies, and the enforcement of no fly zones.[39]

COMMUNICATION: PLACATING PUBLIC OUTCRY AND DETERRING FURTHER ATTACKS

Lastly, and probably most importantly, air power can provide a visible and timely response to an act of terrorism that can help to placate a public outcry for some form of action to be taken. Air power's global reach enables it to strike far-flung places inaccessible to other forms of military power. Its responsiveness allows it to respond in a timely fashion to terrorist attacks and above all, air power is a highly visible capability that can convey the message that something is being done. Operations INFINITE REACH[40] and ENDURING FREEDOM[41] were both examples of air power being utilised to counter acts of international terrorism. Both operations provided a clear signal to the public/media, meeting their expectations for some sort of direct action to be undertaken.

In contrast to air power, other instruments of power are not as visible and are thus unable to convey such a powerful message to the public/media back home. Much of the work of intelligence agencies, for instance, is undertaken covertly, and therefore lacks the transparency of air power. Further, the pursuit of suspected terrorists by law enforcement agencies can take a relatively long time to produce visible results. The FBI, for example, took over 2 years to capture Ramzi Yousef, the main perpetrator of the 1993 attack on the World Trade Centre.[42] Although the apprehension and subsequent imprisonment of Yousef can be viewed as an important step in America's fight against international terrorism, it did not produce the immediate response that air power is capable of providing.

The use of air power in Afghanistan helped to facilitate the Taliban's removal from power, the ultimate price for a regime that supports terrorism

In addition, air power can assist in attempting to deter the state sponsors of terrorist groups by forming an integral part of an overall military capability and by carrying out operations such as those mentioned above,[43] which can convey a message to potential attackers and those who support them. The use of air power in Afghanistan helped to facilitate the Taliban's removal from power, the ultimate price for a regime that supports terrorism. This success was due to a number of factors including the Northern Alliance's ground offensive, the betrayal and defection of members of the Taliban and tribal leaders, who had previously supported them, and the hatred felt by many members of the Afghan public towards the regime.[44] Nevertheless, air power acted as a force multiplier for the Northern Alliance's ground forces, rapidly destroying much of what little C2 and military infrastructure Afghanistan possessed, and thereby making an important contribution the Taliban's fall from power.[45] The enforced regime change that occurred in Afghanistan may serve as a warning to other states that may consider harbouring the leaders of these 'new wave' groups, given that this action may lead to a similar response.

An essential element of successful deterrence is credibility, as an adversary has to believe that a state is willing to carry out its deterrent threats irrespective of how large a capability it possesses. Without the requisite amount of political will and the clear communication of resolve, threats and indeed actions may lack credibility and therefore fail to produce the desired effect in terms of deterrence. The efficacy of air power in this sector is therefore dependent to a certain extent upon the clear communication of political will and resolve. It can be argued, for example, that Operation INFINITE REACH lacked credibility as a deterrent threat owing to the ambiguous motives behind the attack. Despite President Clinton claiming that, our target was terror. Our mission was clear',[46] between 30% and 40% of the American public believed that the air strikes were an attempt by the US administration to divert public attention away from the Zippergate scandal.[47] Further, in many parts of the Muslim world, the military strikes became known as Operation MONICA.[48] Thus it is possible to suggest that the strikes did not convey the forceful message that Clinton's rhetoric suggests. In contrast, Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, backed by clearer political motives has probably had a more positive deterrent effect on terrorists and their supporting states.

AIR POWER'S LIMITATIONS

Despite air power's evident counter-terrorist applications and advantages, there are a number of limitations that can hinder its overall effectiveness in this area. These limitations are generally a consequence of the characteristics of 'new wave' terrorist groups that have been highlighted above, concerning, for example, their organisational structure and motives. Although most of these limitations also apply to other forms of military power, the fact that air power has been at the forefront of most of the military interventions made by western governments since the end of the Cold War make them important to consider at this point.

STATES ARE EASIER TO COERCE/DETER THAN 'NEW WAVE' TERRORIST GROUPS

In view of the major characteristics of the 'new wave' of terrorist groups emphasised above, it would seem that it is easier for a state to coerce/deter the state sponsor of a 'new wave' organisation rather than the group itself. The evidence would appear to suggest that this difference between state sponsors and 'new wave' terrorists may be the result of three main factors: terrorist groups are more resilient to attack, less willing to compromise and more fanatical in their beliefs.

Firstly, 'new wave' terrorist entities can be perceived as being relatively resilient to the disruption and destruction of their key nodes when compared to states, as they offer fewer targets; those they do offer are generally to be found in urban areas and are situated in both friendly and hostile states, their cells are spread out around the world, and they tend to operate more autonomously.

In comparison to most states – even impoverished states like Afghanistan – 'new wave' terrorists generally do not present a wide range of targets that air power can strike. In particular, they tend to lack the vast array of infrastructure that is usually associated with a state, which generally provides a lucrative target set for air power. Instead, they tend to utilise the infrastructure of a host state, either overtly or covertly. Thus, attempts to deny the terrorists access to their communications network, a vital asset of a networked organisation, that utilises mobile phones and the Internet, may prove difficult, if for example a mobile phone mast is contained within a friendly state. In addition, many of the operational cells of these groups operate in urban areas, which pose particular problems. Within these areas small groups are difficult to locate, track and target and there is an increased chance of collateral damage. Despite the better accuracy of PGMs, the use of Special Forces supported by air power may offer a greater chance of success.

Despite some of these problems, American and British air power has targeted Al–Qaeda's leadership, infrastructure and fielded forces during the campaign in Afghanistan. US air strikes successfully destroyed C2 facilities and training camps,[49] which were integral to the operational efficiency of bin Laden's organisation. Al–Qaeda, however, is unique among the 'new wave' groups in that it had fielded forces fighting a conventional war alongside the Taliban's troops. Also, many of these targets were situated in sparsely populated areas. Thus it can be argued that Al–Qaeda presented a far more prominent and easier target to strike than either their operational cells or other 'new wave' terrorist organisations.

'Our war on terror begins with Al–Qaeda, but it doesn't end there.
It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found,
stopped or defeated'. [50]

As President Bush suggests, some of the 'new wave' terrorist groups possess the ability to perpetrate acts of terrorism on a worldwide scale. Al–Qaeda, for example, has a presence in about 60 countries and has carried out attacks in the Middle East, Africa and America.[51] Unlike states, 'new wave' groups tend to be very disparate entities encompassing cells that are spread throughout the world. Thus any simultaneous operation directed against a number of these cells would require a geat amount of co-operation, co-ordination and resolve in order to achieve a high degree of success.

While bin Laden may represent 'public enemy number one' in many western states, it is Al–Qaeda's operational cells that will perpetrate any future attacks

Notwithstanding the success of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM emphasised above, there remains a large force of Al–Qaeda operatives spread throughout the world. Colin Powell, US Secretary of State, has estimated that between 10,000 and 30,000 Al–Qaeda operatives were still at large.[52] Thus it is not unreasonable to suggest that Al–Qaeda's remaining active operatives and 'sleeper agents' continue to pose a potent threat despite America's' actions in Afghanistan. It is possible that Al–Qaeda will be able to survive the current campaign and the possible capture or death of bin Laden, albeit with a reduced operational capability, and that they will retain the ability to perpetrate acts of international terrorism.

Paul Wolfowitz, US Deputy Defense Secretary, has highlighted the danger of the international community becoming focused solely on bin Laden to the detriment of other aspects of the 'war against terrorism'.

It's also important to emphasise I think [that] there's a danger in the fascination with Bin Laden … [and] that we might forget that there is a whole network outside Afghanistan – there's a whole network that we have to get rid of, its more than just Bin Laden'. [53]

While bin Laden may represent 'public enemy number one' in many western states, it is Al–Qaeda's operational cells that will perpetrate any future attacks. In addition, it has still to be established whether the finances of these groups are dispersed or centrally controlled. If it is proven that they are centrally controlled, it will be much more difficult for Al–Qaeda to mount operations on anything like the scale of September 11. Nevertheless, it is possible to suggest that the destruction of Al–Qaeda's operations in Afghanistan may only disrupt, and not destroy, the capability of its other nodes to perpetrate acts of terrorism.

Secondly, the unwillingness of many of these groups to compromise, and of their preference for total destruction rather than defeat, as a primary aim, may also have important ramifications for efforts in this area. Hence, as highlighted above, one of Hamas' main objectives is the total destruction of Israel, and there seems little prospect of compromise on this issue. But it is possible that through policy initiatives or PSOs, governments may reduce the support offered to these groups and thus their legitimacy within their own and wider-world communities, which would constitute an first important step towards limiting their effectiveness.

It would seem very difficult to deter fanatics who believe that they will enjoy the riches of 'paradise' if they carry out the action that their adversaries are seeking to deter

Thirdly, the difficulty in coercing/deterring these groups is also a reflection of the fanatical nature of their members and the different value systems that they possess. The fact that many of these 'new wave' groups view violence as a divine duty and believe that they will enter 'paradise' if they die in defence of their faith, threatens to shatter the rational actor model and cost-benefit analysis upon which much of deterrence is based. It would seem very difficult to deter fanatics who believe that they will enjoy the riches of 'paradise' if they carry out the action that their adversaries are seeking to deter. Thus, in this respect, they can be more difficult to deter than states that are generally perceived as being more rational and pragmatic. On 11 September 2001 Al–Qaeda attacked the homeland of the world's pre-eminent military power, an act that would be unthinkable for most states given the fatal consequences of their action.

While the evidence seems to suggest that air power is of more utility against state sponsors than against 'new wave' terrorist groups, it is likely that by attacking their state sponsors, air power can indirectly affect the operational capability of the terrorists they support. The removal of the Taliban has serious implications for the operational capability of Al–Qaeda: bin Laden's organisation's operational effectiveness as a terrorist group has been reduced, while the hub is pre-occupied with its own survival. Al-Qaeda also lacks the protection that the Taliban had previously afforded. Although states that sponsor terrorism generally offer a wider range of targets that air power is able successfully to locate and strike than 'new wave' terrorist groups, these 'new wave' organisations remain reliant upon the support that they receive from states, without which their operations would be far more difficult.

THE USE OF AIR POWER CAN, IN SOME INSTANCES, PROVE COUNTER PRODUCTIVE

It has been remarked that the use of military force, including air power, has in some ways proved counter-productive in the fight against terrorism in this area by increasing popular support for terrorists and increasing the standing of men like bin Laden. Operation INFINITE REACH, for instance, helped to increase bin Laden's standing within the wider Muslim community and attracted more volunteers to his cause by radicalising sectors of the Muslim population.[54] Peter Bergen, a writer on terrorism, has remarked that Operation INFINITE REACH, 'turned bin Laden from a marginal figure in the Muslim world into a global celebrity'.[55] The US air strikes were very unpopular in many parts of the Muslim world and while this, on balance, may not over-ride the value of air strikes, it remains an important consideration when deciding whether to respond to international terrorism with military force.

Since the 1980s, 'new wave' terrorist groups have become more prominent both numerically and in terms of the proportion of attacks that they carry out and the number of casualties that they cause. This change in the nature of international terrorist organisations has presented opportunities and difficulties with regard to the employment of air power in an effective counter-terrorist role. Air power's visibility and responsiveness allow it to help ameliorate demands from the public and media that action should be taken in the wake of an incident of international terrorism. But the organisational structure of these groups complicates the task of ascertaining responsibility for acts of terrorism.

Air power, by utilising its inherent strengths of penetration, flexibility and versatility, and its ability to carry out precision engagement, is well placed to take offensive action against terrorist organisations and their state sponsors. While 'new wave' groups may be less dependent than their more 'traditional' counterparts upon state support in terms of finance they remain reliant on states for the provision of training facilities and safe havens. Thus there seems to be an opportunity for air power indirectly to affect terrorist groups by inflicting costs upon the states that provide these resources, an opportunity magnified by the fact that states usually offer a wider range of targets that air power is able to strike. By contrast, 'new wave' organisations are generally structured into loosely tied networks that are often relatively resilient to attack. Similarly, air power can contribute to the potential deterrence of terrorism by demonstrating its offensive capability. But the 'new wave' terrorists' religious fanaticism and their perception of violence as an end in itself means that their state sponsors may prove easier to deter. Even then, the strategic effect of such deterrence will be difficult to predict, for states tend to exert little direct control over these 'new wave' terrorist groups. Although air power possesses the potential to be utilised as an instrument of counter-terrorism, even against 'new wave' groups, it seems to be more effective when confronting the state sponsors of terrorism.

Notes

1 See Bruce Hoffman, Inside Terrorism, Gollancz, 1998, and Walter Laqueur, The New Terrorism, Phoenix Press, 2001.
2 See Hoffman, Inside Terrorism, pp. 67-9.
3 The use the term 'new wave' reflects the fact that religious terrorism, at the forefront of this trend, is not new, but has experienced a marked revival. Religion has always been a feature of terrorism, for example the Order of the Assassins were committing acts of terrorism in the 11th Century, but it's relative importance in modern international terrorism was limited until the 1980s.
4 Hoffman, Inside Terrorism, p.90.
5 Hoffman, Inside Terrorism, p.91.
6 Ian Lesser, et al, Countering the New Terrorism, RAND Report, 1998, pp. 12-3.
7 See Walter Laqueur, 'Post-modern Terrorism', Foreign Affairs, September/October 1996.
8 The Aum Shinrikyo Sect in Japan, who successfully perpetrated a terrorist act using Sarin, a chemical agent, in an attempt to precipitate the end of the world, offers a prime example of this trend.
9 See Terry Terriff, et al, Security Studies Today, Polity Press, 1999.
10 See CIA, Patterns of Global Terrorism 1998, US Department of State, 1999.
11 See The Strategic Defence Review: A New Chapter, HMSO, 2002.
12 See Ranstorp, 'Terrorism in the Name of Religion', and Walter Laqueur, The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction, Phoenix Press, 2001.
13 Hoffman, Inside Terrorism, p.87.
14 Simon Reeve, 'A new breed of terror', The Guardian, 12 September 2001, pp. G2/4-5.
15 See Michele Zanini, and Sean Edwards, 'The Networking Of Terror In The Information Age', in John Arquilla, and David Ronfeldt, ed., RAND Report, 2000.
16 See Magnus Ranstorp, 'Hizbollah's Command Leadership: Its Structure, Decision-Making and Relationships with Iranian Clergy and Institutions', St Andrews University, Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence, at http://www.st-and.ac.uk/academic/intrel/research/csttpv/publications2c.htm, and Laqueur, The New Terrorism, pp. 156-83.
17 See Laqueur, The New Terrorism, pp. 172-8.
18 See Trifin Roule, et al, 'Investigators seek to break to break up Al – Qaeda's financial sructure', Jane's Intelligence Review, November, 2001, pp. 8-11, also Peter Bergen, Holy War Inc: Inside the Secret World of Osama bin Laden, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2001, and Yossef Bodansky, Bin Laden: The Man Who Declared War On America, Forum, 2001.
19 Bodansky, Bin Laden, p. 315.
20 Osama bin Laden left Afghanistan and moved to Sudan in 1991. His operations were based there until international pressure on the Sudanese government forced him to move back to Afghanistan in 1996 under the protection of the Taliban regime.
21 Hoffman, Inside Terrorism, p. 67.
22 See Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Patterns of Global Terrorism 1997, US Department of State, 1998.
23 See Reeve, The New Jackals.
24 See CIA, Patterns of Global Terrorism, 1997.
25 CIA, Patterns of Global Terrorism 1995, US Department of State, 1996.
26 CIA, Patterns of Global Terrorism 1996, US Department of State, 1997.
27 CIA, Patterns of Global Terrorism 1998.
28 CIA, Patterns of Global Terrorism 2000, US Department of State, 2001.
29 CIA, Patterns of Global Terrorism 2001, US Department of State, 2002
30 Hoffman, Inside Terrorism, p. 201.
31 See Salah Najm, 'Transcript of Interview with Usama Bin-Laden', The Terrorism Research Centre, 10 June 1999, at http://www.terrorism.com/terrorism/BinLadinTranscript.shtml.
32 See Simon Reeve, The New Jackals: Ramzi Yousef, Osama bin Laden and the future of terrorism, Andre Deutsch, 1999.
33 See CIA, Patterns of Global Terrorism 1997.
34 See Bodansky, Bin Laden.
35 Economist, 'A Systematic Failure', The Economist, 23 May, 2002, at http://www.economist.com/printedition/PrinterFriendly.cfmStory_ID=1143638.
36 Rumsfeld, US Department of Defense News Briefing, 29 October, 2001.
37 Geoff Hoon, '11 September – A New Chapter For The Strategic Defence Review', Ministry of Defence, at http://www.mod.uk/index.php3?page=43&nid=2466&view=1054&cat=33.
38 Anver Versi, 'How Tunisia won the war against terrorism', Middle East, November 2001, pp. 1-4.
39 See Craig White, 'Is There A Role For Air Power In The Post-Cold War World?', Air Power Review, Vol. 4, no 3 (Autumn 2001), pp. 29-43.
40 Operation INFINITE REACH was the US designate for the cruise missile attacks it carried out against terrorist related facilities in Afghanistan and Sudan in August 1998.
41 Operation ENDURING FREEDOM is the US designate for its military operations in Afghanistan that commenced 7 October, 2001.
42 See Reeve, The New Jackals.
43 The use of air power in order to inflict costs upon terrorists and their state sponsors will be analysed in more detail below.
44 See Paul Wolfowitz, US Department of Defense News Briefing, 21 November, 2001, at htt://www.defenselink.mil/news/Nov2001/t11212001_t1121dsd.html, and John Keegan, 'Success for the alliance, but it's not over yet', The Daily Telegraph, 14 November, 2001, at http://www.dailytelegraph.co.uk/dt?ac=006542137455052&rtmo=qKRdxpL9…/do01.htm.
45 Rear Admiral John Stufflebeem, US Department of Defense News Briefing, 23 October, 2001, at http://www.defnselink.mil/news/Oct2001/10232001/t1023.asd.html.
46 President William Clinton, 'Text of President Clinton's statement at the White House on military strikes to terrorist related facilities in Afghanistan and Sudan', TIME Daily, 8 August, 1998, at http://www.time.com/time/daily/special/asbombing/clintonspeech2.html.
47 Michael James Heron, 'Operation Infinite Reach', at http://www.drakkos.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/politics/reach.html, and Arianna, 'The Cruise Missile Follies', 24 August, 1998, at http://www.ariannaonline.com/columns/files/082498.html.
48 Sardar Lodi, 'US air strikes against Afghanistan and Sudan', September, 1998, at http://www.defencejournal.com/sept98/usairstrikes.htm.
49 Geoff Hoon, Transcript of Ministry of Defence Press Conference, 23 October, 2001.
50 President George W. Bush, Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People, 20 September, 2001, in Lawrence Freedman, 'The Third World War?', Survival, Vol. 43, no. 3 (Winter 2001/02) p. 62.
51 See Giles Whittell, 'Al – Qaeda's agents still a threat in 60 nations', The Times, 22 May, 2002, at http://www.timesonline.co.uk/newspa per/0,,172-303701,00.html and Donald Rumsfeld, US Department of Defense News Briefing, 29 October, 2001, at http://www.defnselink.mil/news/Oct2001/t10292001_t1029sd.html.
52 Whittel, 'Al - Qaeda's agents still a threat in 60 nations'.
53 Paul Wolfowitz, Department of Defense News Briefing, 21 November, 2001.
54 See Tim Weiner, 'In Islamic World, Bin Laden's Esteem Rises', The New York Times, 8 February, 1998, and Bergen, Holy War Inc, Bodansky, Bin Laden, and Reeve, The New Jackals.
55 Bergen, Holy War Inc, p. 137.