The Justification of the New Terrorism Label:

Al-Qaeda's Application of New Media as Defining Factor of New Terrorism

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Introduction

Terrorism of the twenty-first century is often referred to as 'new terrorism.' Scholars who apply this label argue that recent terrorism displays several novel features that separate it from its earlier manifestations. It has for instance been claimed that today's terrorists are characterised by religious motivation (e.g. Hoffman 2006, Nacos 2007), the resort to increasingly violent acts (e.g. Devetak 2004, Mockaitis 2007), and their ability to strike in any part of the world (e.g. Gray 2003, Hurrell 2007). However, this view is not shared by everyone. It is maintained by critics that the so-called new terrorism is not so new, as it actually shows several important continuities with traditional forms of terrorism (e.g. Duyvesteyn 2004, Field 2009, Spencer 2011). The use of the label 'new terrorism' can in their opinion not be justified. Even though this counterclaim enjoys considerable support, the argument in this thesis is in line with the first viewpoint. Indeed, the aim of the discussion below is to illustrate that terrorism has undergone significant change in the past few decades and become a different and more dangerous phenomenon.

Besides the characteristics mentioned by the supporters of the new terrorism label, it will be suggested that especially the use of new media separates today's terrorists from their predecessors. Although the relationship between terrorists and the media has been studied extensively, the link between new terrorism and the application of new media has received far less attention. As a result, this thesis will investigate the following question: Why is the application of the new terrorism label justified and can the use of new media by terrorists be regarded as the label's defining characteristic? Al-Qaeda will be used as the main case study since this organisation has in many ways been at the forefront of modern terrorism of the 1990s and 2000s.[1] In order to reach a thorough conclusion the discussion is divided in three chapters.

The first chapter will introduce the keywords used in the text including terrorism, radical Islamic terrorism, al-Qaeda, and new media. This will be followed by a justification of the use of al-Qaeda as main case study and a justification of the thesis question.

The second chapter will examine the new terrorism debate and discuss the viewpoint of those who are in favour of applying the label and those who are against it. After analysing and comparing a number of secondary sources in each subsection, a quantitative approach

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[1] This thesis will focus on the 1990s and 2000s (i.e. 1991 until 2010) since these two decades are most commonly regarded as the period when new terrorism dominated by al-Qaeda came into existence and started to rise in significance (see also chapter 2, paragraph 2).

involving the Global Terrorism Database will be used to strengthen and confirm the arguments of the supporters.[2] The aim of this chapter is to highlight the new elements in recent terrorism and make the first step in justifying the use of the new terrorism label.

The third chapter will elaborate on the justification of the new terrorism label and strengthen this viewpoint by including the concept of new media. The aim of this part is to establish that current terrorism really is new by revealing that the application of new media by al-Qaeda decidedly changed its character.

Finally, a conclusion will be given based on the findings of these three chapters. It is hoped that the answer provided to the thesis question will add to the ongoing debate and confirm the usefulness of the new terrorism label.

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[2] At least 25 secondary sources related to new terrorism – published between 2000 and 2012 – have been consulted and none of the experts have conducted and presented a thorough quantitative analysis. It is therefore believed that the quantitative examination in this thesis will shed a new light on the new terrorism debate and possibly strengthen the case of the supporters.

I. An Examination of Terrorism and Related Concepts

Before delving into the new terrorism debate it is important to first come to grips with the key terms used in this thesis. A clarification of concepts like terrorism and radical Islam will not only enable the discussion in the second and third chapter, but it will also establish how this particular work understands and defines these often contested terms. Besides a careful examination of the definition of terrorism and related concepts, the paragraphs below will also reveal why al-Qaeda is chosen as the main case study and why it is important to investigate the thesis question.

The Definition of Terrorism

If there is one thing experts in the field of terrorism agree upon, it is the difficulty to create a definition of their own subject. This task has mostly proven to be elusive as there is "[a] disagreement about almost all elements which may or may not constitute terrorism" (Spencer 2010: 3). The result of the definitional debate is the creation and application of inadequate versions of the term by numerous parties. It has been observed that there are as many as "212 different definitions of terrorism in use throughout the world" of which at least "90 [are] used by governments and other institutions" (Spencer 2010: 3). The existence of these variants further complicates the quest for a common definition.

This becomes especially clear when it is noted that even within the same government various agencies and departments have different interpretations of the concept (Pearlstein 2004: 1, Seib and Janbek 2011: 1). A good example is the government of the United States. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for instance defines terrorism on its website in the following way:

> Terrorism is the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof in furtherance of political or social objectives.[3]

The Department of Defense (DOD) does not apply the description presented by the FBI but instead uses its own definition:

> Terrorism is the unlawful use of violence or threat of violence to instil fear and coerce governments or societies. Terrorism is often motivated by religious,

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[3] Retrieved from the FBI website <http://www.fbi.gov/albuquerque/about-us/what-we-investigate> on 24 June 2014.

> political, or other ideological beliefs and committed in the pursuit of goals that
> are usually political.[4]

The Department of State (DOS) does not adopt either of the previous descriptions but rather follows the definition of terrorism that is contained in Title 22 of the United States Code, Section 2656f(d):

> The term 'terrorism' means premeditated, politically motivated violence
> perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or
> clandestine agents.[5]

A brief comparison of these official definitions currently in use by the US government will highlight their differences and individual shortcomings.

It appears that even though all definitions include the element of violence, the one proposed by the DOS fails to describe it as unlawful. The DOS, however, uniquely recognises the element of premeditation. Each definition also indicates that the actions of terrorists are politically motivated. Curious to observe is that only the DOD stresses the probable influence of religious and ideological beliefs. Both the DOS and the FBI furthermore identify the civilian population as the main target of terrorist attacks. The DOD does not include this element in its definition. Finally, the DOS makes clear that the actions are conducted by subnational or clandestine groups. The FBI and DOD fail to mention this characteristic. It becomes apparent that none of the definitions presented above are perfect as each variant misses several elements that could be considered important to the concept of terrorism.

A similar development can be observed when examining the definitions proposed by academics. Hoffman argues that, like US officials, "[e]xperts and other long-established scholars in the field [are equally] incapable of reaching a consensus" (2006: 33). One way or another, all attempts reveal shortcomings and are subsequently dismissed. The impossibility of creating a commonly acknowledged definition can be underscored by assessing the work of Alex Schmid, the leading scholar in the definitional debate. After four years of research, Schmid gathered 109 different descriptions of terrorism and combined their unique elements into one comprehensive definition.[6] Although his term is likely the best attempt at defining terrorism, it cannot escape criticism.

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[4] Retrieved from the DOD website <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod_dictionary/data/t/ 7591.html> on 24 June 2014.

[5] Retrieved from the Legal Information Institute website <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/22/2656f> on 24 June 2014.

[6] See Schmid (2004: 378) for his detailed attempt at defining terrorism.

First of all, Schmid admits that despite praising his attempt, not all scholars agree on each of the 16 elements included in his description (2004: 377). Secondly, because of its great length, the definition is unpractical and not taken into common use (Kveberg 2012: 13). Thirdly, a comparison with the definitions applied by the US government reveals that several prominent elements are omitted. There is for instance no mention of the unlawful nature of terrorist violence or its possible ideological or religious aspects. Finally, it has been rightly observed that the definition is a product of the western view on terrorism and thereby probably "not shared by the majority of people on earth" (Merari 2007: 14). Because of these weaknesses, Schmid's version can never be taken as the standard definition of terrorism.

What academics and government officials have repeatedly failed to present as a clear and universal concept cannot be resolved within the bounds of this thesis. For this reason, the discussion below is forced to rely on the aforementioned definitions. Even though it has been pointed out that these definitions are flawed, they are still among the best and drawing on their most common elements will suffice for the examination in this thesis. However, the discussion is not just concerned with terrorism in general. A closer look at a specific form of terrorism called radical Islamic terrorism is also necessary.

The Threat of Radical Islamic Terrorism and Al-Qaeda

Despite the fact that many different terrorist organisations exist, ranging from secular to Christian to Jewish groups, Islamic terrorists have by far the largest presence. Seib and Janbek confirm that when analysing the material compiled by scholars, think tank experts, and other specialists in terrorism, it becomes clear that it is "a largely Muslim-centric discipline" (2011: xi). Even within the Muslim world the dominance of radical Islamic terrorism is noted. Abdul Rahman al-Rashed, a well-known Arab journalist, for instance lamented: "It is a certain fact that not all Muslims are terrorists, but it is equally certain, and exceptionally painful, that almost all terrorists are Muslims" (Kifner 2004). It appears that an examination of radical Islamic terrorism is both the most obvious and the most interesting choice for this thesis.

Pearlstein observes that Muslims who belong to Islamic terrorist groups "have come to embrace what has been termed radical Islamic fundamentalism, or radical Islam" (2004: 42). This means that their violence is not motivated by Islamic faith in general, but by the selective reading of certain 'fundamental' themes and issues taken from the Quran. As a result, Islamic fundamentalists believe that Allah instructs them through his teachings to eliminate or convert

all unbelievers by means of religious warfare, or jihad. The spiritual and non-violent meanings of jihad are simply ignored. The purpose of jihad, according to these radicals, is the establishment of a new world in which "all nonfundamentalist regimes are overthrown and replaced by a pure, revitalized Islam where religion and government become one" (Pearlstein 2004: 47). Given this fact, it can be concluded that radical Islamic terrorists are at war with virtually every nation on earth. The global scale of the holy struggle, the unlikely realisation of its end goal, and the religious fervour of its supporters make radical Islam the foremost threat to the international society of the twenty-first century. Of all radical Islamic terrorist groups, al-Qaeda is generally regarded as most destructive.

The majority of attacks made in the name of Islam during the 1990s and 2000s can be traced back to al-Qaeda and its leader Osama bin Laden. The superiority of al-Qaeda over other terrorist organisations becomes apparent when observing its past actions. It is the first terrorist group to successfully conduct attacks on land, sea, and in the air. Most infamous are the bombing of the USS *Cole* in 2000 and the attacks on the World Trade Center in 1993 and 2001. The happenings on 9/11 are the most deadly terrorist actions in history and they underscored al-Qaeda's ability to launch major strikes at high profile targets on US soil. These events, in combination with the destructive attacks in Europe (e.g. the 2004 Madrid bombings and the 2005 London bombings), Africa (e.g. the 1998 US embassy bombings), Asia (e.g. the 2002 Bali Bombings), and the Middle East (e.g. the 2007 Baghdad bombings), make al-Qaeda the first transnational terrorist group with a truly global reach. Because of their unparalleled success, the organisation is for instance described by scholars as the "model" (Pearlstein 2004: 55, Seib and Janbek 2011: xi), the "pioneering vanguard" (Gunaratna 2002: 4), and the "standard bearer" (Kiras 2011: 369) for militant Islam.

It has been remarked that al-Qaeda's accomplishments and global reach are the result of its successful adaptation to the changing international community and its application of new media.[7] Devetak explains that al-Qaeda is "deeply implicated in modern processes of globalization" and takes "full advantage of the technologies afforded by modern industrialized societies including travel, communications, computers, information, and global finance" (2004: 241). Seib and Janbek, in a similar vein, argue that no terrorist group relies as much on the latest technology as al-Qaeda and that its rise in prominence has been "aided immeasurably by new media" (2011: xi, 42). The observations in the present and previous

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[7] New media is predominantly internet-based media. It is accessible through modern communication devices such as smart phones, laptops, and computers. Al-Qaeda is known to make use of the following new media services: websites, e-mail messaging, social media sites, chat rooms, discussion boards, and video sharing sites (see also chapter 3).

paragraph make clear that the organisation is in every way at the forefront of modern, globalised terrorism. As a result, al-Qaeda is the most suitable subject for investigating the thesis question and revealing the possible usefulness of the new terrorism label.

This section established that al-Qaeda is the foremost terrorist organisation of the 1990s and 2000s and therefore best suited as case study. The thesis question can also be justified at this point. As earlier mentioned, there are at least two reasons why an answer to the thesis question could be useful. First, not much research has been done on the application of new media by al-Qaeda. Investigating this aspect might reveal its impact on the evolution of terrorism. Second, this work aims to participate in the new terrorism debate. The answer to the thesis question could help to confirm the usefulness of the new terrorism label. However, most importantly, by investigating these aspects this thesis will add to the literature on al-Qaeda and thereby – however slightly – help to improve common understanding of the most unique and most dangerous terrorist organisation to date.

II. The New Terrorism Debate

Apart from the definitional debate on terrorism, the adjective 'new' in 'new terrorism' is the cause of another central disagreement among scholars. This chapter will examine four characteristics that the supporters of the label most often associate with new terrorism. Those same features are also the main target of criticism of the opponents. The first characteristic of new terrorism that will be discussed is religious motivation, followed by the closely related second characteristic of indiscriminate targeting. The third characteristic that will be examined is the greater lethality of recent terrorist attacks. Particular attention will be given to the application of suicide attacks and the potential use of weapons of mass destruction. The fourth characteristic is new terrorism's global reach, which is often linked to the networked structure of current terrorism. When these features are compared with the main traits of al-Qaeda, it becomes clear that the organisation fits the profile of new terrorism perfectly. The purpose of this chapter is to make the first step in justifying the use of the new terrorism label. Before discussing new terrorism, a brief examination of the concept and the origin of the debate will be helpful.

Even though there is no general agreement on the advent of new terrorism, various proponents point to the period of the 1990s and 2000s (e.g. Simon and Benjamin 2000: 66-67, Wilkinson 2003: 33). Especially the events on 9/11 and the rise of al-Qaeda in the preceding decade are cited as the beginning of new terrorism (e.g. Hoffman 2006: 295, Nia 2010: 9). The labels 'old' or 'traditional' terrorism, in contrast, are used to describe all terrorist violence before the 1990s and typically terrorism of the 1960s until the 1980s. Indeed, it is often associated with the heydays of the IRA, the ETA, and the Red Army Faction (RAF). The main argument made by the critics is that this distinction between the so-called 'old' and 'new' terrorism is artificial and cannot be maintained when comparing their characteristics (e.g. Duyvesteyn 2004: 449, Field 2009: 195). Spencer consequently calls for the abandonment of the new terrorism label (2006: 25). Each of the sections below will begin by discussing the view of these critics after which the viewpoint of the supporters is examined. The records in the Global Terrorism Database on al-Qaeda and several traditional terrorist groups – primarily the IRA, ETA, and RAF – will be analysed and compared in order to strengthen the viewpoint of the supporters.

The Religious Nature and Indiscriminate Targeting of New Terrorism

The critics dismiss the argument that new terrorism is characterised by religious motivation while traditional terrorism was predominantly secular. Rapoport believes that religious motivation cannot be seen as a new characteristic since it has been a feature of terrorism throughout the centuries. He cites religiously motivated terrorist movements such as the first century Zealots, the eleventh century Assassins, and the fourteenth century Thugs in order to point out that "religion provided the only acceptable justification for terror" in the past (1984: 659). Duyvesteyn discusses more recent examples to underline the religious aspect of old terrorism. He for instance argues that the IRA had an almost exclusive Catholic membership while the FLN fighters in Algeria were all Muslim (2004: 445). The critics maintain that a distinction between old and new terrorism based on religion is impossible to uphold.

The supporters of the new terrorism label are not convinced by the examples presented by the critics. For instance, Kurtulus rightly questions the representativeness of those examples as the Zealots, Assassins, and Thugs operated in a period in which the vast majority of terrorist groups were actually non-religious (2011: 483). These three organisations should rather be treated as "statistical outliers" (Kurtulus 2011: 493). Kveberg supports Kurtulus' view and he persuasively details why only new terrorism can be considered religious terrorism. He explains:

> Even though traditional terrorist groups also had religious members, they differ from new terrorists because their goals were often secular, such as the creation of a secular state. [...]. The new terrorists are engaging in terrorist activities because it is according to their beliefs. They are not terrorists who happen to be religious as well – they are terrorists because they are religious. For new terrorists, religion defines the goals. (2012: 15)

Kveberg makes the important point that a terrorist group such as the IRA cannot be seen as religious solely based on the fact that some or all of its members have a spiritual life. What matters is whether or not religion plays a dominant and *active* role in the group's motivation and activities. Al-Qaeda is the prime example of such a terrorist group.

Religion can mostly be considered a characteristic of new terrorism as recent decades have seen a sharp increase in religiously motivated terrorism. Between 1968 and 1990 not more than two active terrorist groups could be classified as religious (Hoffman 2006: 63, Gurr and Cole 2000: 28-29). However, during the 1990s and 2000s a radical change had taken

place. In 1994 as many as 16 terrorist groups were religiously motivated while in 2004 at least 52 of all active groups could be classified as religious (Hoffman 2006: 86).

An increase of religious terrorism in the 1990s and 2000s is also reflected in the Global Terrorism Database,[8] which holds information on virtually all known terrorist attacks conducted between 1970 and 2013. When the records on al-Qaeda[9] are examined for the period from 1991 until 2010[10] a significant rise in terrorist attacks can be observed over the years. Between 1991 and 2000 only two attacks had been carried out by al-Qaeda. In 2001 al-Qaeda conducted five attacks. This number increased sharply to 28 in 2003, 68 in 2005, 100 in 2007, and decreasing slightly to 93 in 2010. Although these results exclude other religious terrorist organisations operating between 1991 and 2010, the numbers on al-Qaeda alone indicate a significant rise in religious terrorist activity. Moreover, Kveberg discovered that non-religious terrorism does not show a similar trend in the same period and he notes that from 2002 onwards "religious incidents make up the largest [...] percentage of yearly incidents" (2012: 66). Given the arguments and numbers presented above, it seems that religious terrorism is a feature of the 1990s and becomes even more present in the following decade.

Related to the religious nature of new terrorism is the selection of targets. As observed in the previous chapter, the religious view of al-Qaeda resulted in its declaration of war on the entire international community. This means that, different than traditional terrorism, every individual can be targeted by new terrorism.

The critics of the new terrorism label do not support this view. According to Spencer and Duyvesteyn, al-Qaeda still carefully selects its targets in order to gain as much attention on the global stage as possible. Both critics argue that the attacks on the World Trade Center were highly selective and directed at the symbol of Western capitalism rather than innocent civilians (Spencer 2011: 461-462, Duyvesteyn 2004: 448). Field furthermore notes that, like new terrorists, "the supposedly rational 'traditional' terrorists frequently attacked innocent civilians" and thus also exhibited indiscriminate violence (2009: 203).

The claims of the critics are not entirely convincing. First of all, the attacks on 9/11 cannot be considered discriminate as the terrorists did not make any distinction between

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[8] The Global Terrorism Database is accessible on the START website <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/>.
[9] As the discussion so far has illustrated, al-Qaeda is the most prominent and most influential religious terrorist group in the 1990s and 2000s. Al-Qaeda will therefore serve as a reliable indicator for a possible rise in religiously motivated terrorism within this time period.
[10] The timeframe 1991 until 2010 is chosen as this thesis focuses on this specific period and because these two decades are widely regarded as the advent and rise of new terrorism (see the argument in the second paragraph of this chapter).

innocent civilians in the World Trade Center and military personnel at the Pentagon. Nevertheless, the targeted buildings themselves – the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and the White House – hold a high symbolic value for the Americans and the West. It can thus be argued that al-Qaeda's aim was twofold: to kill as many people as possible and destroy the symbols of Western power. Secondly, traditional terrorism is only rarely indiscriminate. The critics tend to focus on several high casualty attacks carried out by terrorist groups such as the IRA, the ETA, the RAF, and the Japanese Red Army (JRA) in order to prove that traditional terrorism was also indiscriminate in its targeting. What they ignore is that those few examples are practically all instances of indiscriminate, mass casualty attacks prior to the emergence of new terrorism. This can be illustrated with the data from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD).

It appears from the records of the GTD that between 1970 and 2010[11] four major traditional terrorist organisations – the IRA, ETA, RAF, and JRA – had conducted 22 attacks in total that caused between 11 and 50 innocent victims. When the attacks with a casualty rate of 51 to 100 are examined only two cases can be discerned. There are an additional two instances where attacks claimed the lives of more than a hundred civilians. When al-Qaeda is investigated for the same time period it can be observed that this single organisation conducted 31 attacks that caused between 11 and 50 civilian casualties. The attacks with a casualty rate of 51 to 100 and more than a hundred appear to be 15 and 16 cases respectively. These numbers from the GTD confirm that new terrorism embodied by al-Qaeda is more concerned with the killing of non-combatants than traditional terrorist groups.

This section revealed that religious motivation and a high casualty rate among civilians are characteristic features of new terrorism. However, the indiscriminate nature of new terrorism's violence can be questioned as the targets are not merely chosen at random. It can be concluded that the arguments of the supporters and the results of the GTD for the most part help to justify the application of the new terrorism label.

The Greater Lethality of New Terrorism

Since al-Qaeda targets entire societies and one of its aims is to kill all enemies of Islam, new terrorism can also be considered deadlier than traditional terrorism. This becomes

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[11] This timeframe is chosen in order to include the vast majority of attacks conducted by the four major traditional terrorist organisations discussed in this chapter. Even though the ETA was already active in the 1960s, the database unfortunately does not cover these years.

apparent when it is observed that terrorist organisations like al-Qaeda are willing to use weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and commit suicide attacks in order to achieve their goal. Where traditional terrorists wanted "a lot of people watching, but a few people dead" the new terrorists seemingly want "a lot of people watching *and* a lot of people dead" (Kurtulus 2011: 478).

Various critics are sceptical about the supposed greater lethality of new terrorism since terrorist attacks in the past also resulted in high casualties. In addition, the relation between new terrorism and the willingness to use WMD and suicide tactics is questioned. The critics argue that the Aum Shinrikyo attack in 1995 is the only well-known incident of the use of a chemical weapon. And, so far, no nuclear attack has been conducted. The resort to WMD has been very limited and it is therefore "not an inherent feature of the new terrorism and [neither can it be said to] constitute a trend" (Duyvesteyn 2004: 449). The link between WMD and new terrorism's greater lethality seems debateable. Robert Pape also refutes the claim that suicide tactics are a characteristic feature of new terrorism. After conducting one of the most detailed investigations on suicide terrorism to date, he found that of the 315 suicide bombings examined for the period 1980 to 2003, 301 were linked to secular terrorism (2005: 4). Pape therefore maintains that there is "little connection between suicide terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism, or any of the world's religions" (2005: 3).

Despite strong arguments to discredit the greater lethality of new terrorism, other findings seem to point to a different conclusion. It can for instance be noted that traditional terrorist organisations largely tried to avoid mass casualty attacks since they could turn public opinion against them and harm their cause. Al-Qaeda, however, is not in the least concerned with its reputation and does not have to abide by this rule. For new terrorist organisations, terrorist violence is no longer "a means to an end" but rather "the end in itself" (Nia 2010: 10). This is supported by the data of the GTD.

When only focussing on major terrorist attacks that claimed more than a hundred lives, a significant rise of such incidents can be seen in each passing decade. In the 1970s only 11 terrorist attacks caused more than a hundred victims. In the 1980s this number climbed to 79. It further increased to 115 in the 1990s and more than doubled to 269 in the 2000s. When only al-Qaeda's attacks with more than a hundred victims are reviewed the results also show an increase. There are no records for the 1970s and 1980s, since al-Qaeda came into existence between 1988 and 1989. Its first and only mass casualty attack in the 1990s was the 1998 bombing of the US embassy in Nairobi. In the 2000s the number vastly increased to 31 mass casualty attacks. Where al-Qaeda's actions accounted for less than 1% of mass casualty

attacks in the 1990s, the number increased to 12% in the 2000s. The data from the GTD confirms that both terrorism in general and al-Qaeda have become deadlier throughout the years and especially in the 2000s.

Even though the numbers from the GTD help to strengthen the view of the supporters, the argument that WMD are an indicator of the greater lethality of new terrorism is less convincing. It has been maintained by many experts that new terrorists are more willing to use weapons of mass destruction in order to completely annihilate their religious opponents (e.g. Laqueur 1996: 36, Jenkins 2001: 324, Kurtulus 2011: 478). It is furthermore believed that "many of the constraints [...] which previously inhibited terrorist use of WMD are eroding" (Hoffman 2006: 197). The proponents portray the use of WMD as the next inevitable step for new terrorist organisations like al-Qaeda. Apart from the above mentioned chemical attack by Aum Shinrikyo and various minor incidents with biological agents, no serious attempt at using other WMD such as nuclear devices has occurred. Hard numbers are lacking and the possible use of WMD can therefore not be listed as a credible indicator of a more lethal new terrorism.

The resort to suicide tactics is a more reliable indicator of a deadlier new terrorism. Even though Pape's findings cannot be ignored, his investigation excludes the crucial years of new terrorism after 2003. The data in the GTD on suicide terrorism can illustrate this. First of all, a vast increase in suicide attacks throughout the decades can be observed. For the 1970s no records on suicide terrorism exist. In the 1980s, 16 cases are recorded with no more than 7 attacks a year. In the 1990s, 106 cases are recorded with no more than 25 attacks a year. In the 2000s, 1451 suicide attacks occurred and this number never falls below 50 instances a year. Suicide tactics are without doubt a characteristic of the 1990s and 2000s; the decades dominated by religiously motivated new terrorism. Moreover, when the 2000s are examined in detail, it appears that from 2004 onwards the number of suicide attacks starts to rise significantly and for the first time the yearly incidents do not fall below the 100 mark. Suicide terrorism takes truly epic proportions in the year 2007 when as many as 336 cases are recorded. It becomes obvious that Pape's investigation up to the year 2003 paints an outdated picture.

The statistics in the GTD also indicate that al-Qaeda conducted at least 131 suicide attacks in the 2000s. If other prominent radical Islamic terrorist groups and movements are included, such as Hamas, Hezbollah, the Taliban, and various Islamic Jihad groups, this number rises to almost 500 cases. This shows that radical Islamic terrorism alone accounts for at least a third of all suicide attacks in the 2000s. The data for other religious terrorists groups

will also add to this number. Pape's claim that suicide bombings are almost exclusively linked to secular terrorism can be questioned with the records of recent years.

Despite Pape's counterclaim and the finding that the resort to WMD are an unreliable indicator of a more lethal new terrorism, the majority of the arguments and results above support the idea that terrorism of the 1990s and 2000s is more deadly. It can therefore be concluded that this part mostly helps to strengthen the case of the proponents of the new terrorism label.

<div align="center">The Global Reach of New Terrorism</div>

The global reach of recent terrorist organisations is also among the top characteristics attributed to new terrorism. It is believed that groups like al-Qaeda have a different structure than traditional terrorist organisations which allows them to operate on a global scale. Again, the critics are not convinced of this viewpoint.

Duyvesteyn observes that the newness of the global reach of recent terrorism is debatable as "the traditional terrorists also operated transnationally to a significant extent" (2004: 443-444). Field, in a similar vein, argues that many traditional terrorists "expressed similar lofty global aims" as al-Qaeda and that their statements "frequently alluded to an ideological aspiration to overturn the wider international system" (2009: 202). In addition, it is believed that the global nature of al-Qaeda's struggle should not be seen as such; the organisation is rather a "collection of separate but interrelated Islamic insurgencies against secular and apostate governments" (Guelke 2006: 267-268). The picture painted by the West of a single, unified al-Qaeda is misleading according to the critics.

The proponents maintain that al-Qaeda was the first and only terrorist organisation in the 1990s and early 2000s that could truly be considered global. Though the critics argue that traditional terrorism was transnational in its aspirations, it should not be regarded as international. Leman-Langlois and Brodeur support this view and they explain:

> A transnational terrorist organization is based in one country but operates at times outside its territory. An international terrorist organization not only operates outside a particular territory but is also based in several countries and is comprised of members of different nationalities [hence] al-Qaeda is truly international. (2005: 131)

Moreover, since al-Qaeda's aim is to replace all existing nations with a global, pan-Islamist Caliphate, international terrorist attacks are a necessity and a long-term goal for this

organisation. This is not true for traditional terrorists who only operated outside their borders to a limited extend. Pillar agrees that the area of operations of new terrorism has increased significantly and he argues that "terrorists have extended their reach by building globe-circling infrastructures" (2001: 34-35). New terrorism's networked structure is often cited as the main cause of its globalisation. Before looking into the networked structure, the next paragraph will first test the reliability of new terrorism's expanded reach by examining the data from the GTD.

Unfortunately, it is not possible with the parameters of the GTD to separate domestic from international incidents. A solution to this limitation is to examine all data on attacks that occurred outside the perpetrator's region of origin. An added advantage of this method is that only incidents with a truly global reach are included. It appears from the records of the database that between 1970 and 2010 the IRA, ETA, and RAF had conducted only six attacks outside Europe: four in the 1970s, one in the 1980s, one in the 1990s, and none in the 2000s. This is in stark contrast with al-Qaeda, who conducted 170 attacks outside the Middle East and Afghanistan when reviewing the same time period: none in the 1970s and 1980s, two in the 1990s, and 168 in the 2000s. These attacks took place in Europe, North America, Africa, East Asia, and Southeast Asia. Despite excluding the many international incidents that occurred throughout the Middle East, the results nonetheless illustrate that al-Qaeda's reach is significantly larger than three of the major traditional terrorist organisations combined. The results also show that al-Qaeda began expanding its reach in the 1990s and became a true global phenomenon in the 2000s. The records from the GTD of al-Qaeda thus help to confirm that new terrorism's reach has significantly increased in the recent past.

The arguments and findings in this section are mostly supportive for the application of the new terrorism label. At this point it can be said that new terrorism of the 1990s and 2000s, embodied by al-Qaeda, is markedly different than traditional terrorism. It has been revealed that new terrorism is unique because of its religious character, its deadlier attacks, its reliance on suicide tactics, and its global reach. However, there are also more questionable characteristics attributed to new terrorism such as its random targeting and its possible resort to WMD. In addition, it cannot be ignored that the critics presented various strong arguments against the use of the new terrorism label that could not readily be refuted. The claim that al-Qaeda is not a single networked organisation is a case in point. The next chapter will focus on the organisation's networked structure together with its use of new media in order to try to confirm the usefulness of the new terrorism label.

III. New Media and New Terrorism

The picture painted so far is mostly supportive for the application of the new terrorism label. However, it is curious to observe that the use of new media by recent terrorist organisations is hardly included in the debate.[12] It will be proposed in this chapter that new media could in fact be considered the defining element of the new terrorism label. First, the relationship between new media and al-Qaeda's new structure will be discussed. This will be followed by a close examination of al-Qaeda's new media reliance and online presence. Even though it appeared in chapter 2 that the distinction between traditional and new terrorism is not always clear-cut, the aim of this chapter is to confirm that terrorism of the 1990s and 2000s is different and deserves to be labelled as new terrorism.

The Application of New Media and the Changed Structure of Al-Qaeda

The literature on new terrorism often describes the structure of old terrorist organisations as hierarchical while new terrorist organisations are said to be horizontal. The critics do not agree with this distinction and they argue that the proponents of the new terrorism label have "exaggerated [the] organisational differences between 'new' and 'traditional' terrorist groups" (Field 2009: 202). They maintain that characteristics of hierarchies and networks are present in both types of terrorism (Crenshaw 2003: 52, Duyvesteyn 2004: 404, Field 2009: 202). Spencer underlines that "even in the apparently most network-like organisation such as Al-Qaeda [a hierarchical structure] is visible" (2011: 463).

Various scholars outside the new terrorism debate argue that the structure of new terrorism has evidently changed. Cooper explains that "the information revolution has privileged and strengthened the network as a form of organization over other forms, especially over hierarchies" (2004: 158). Terrorist organisations are no longer dependent on the hierarchical structure characteristic of the 1970s and 1980s where orders were given from top to bottom. Instead, the application of new media allows terrorists to "flatten out their pyramid [structure]" and adopt a horizontal network in which numerous individuals and groups are "linked [together] by advanced communications" (Tucker 2010: 1-2). In this

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[12] After examining at least 25 secondary sources regarding the new terrorism debate, published between 2000 and 2012, only Spencer (2006, 2011) and Kurtulus (2011) discuss the influence of new media on terrorist organisations to a certain extent. However, they do not present the application of new media by terrorists as a characteristic that can either confirm or dismiss the usefulness of the new terrorism label.

network each cell has fairly equal levels of authority and can carry out attacks autonomously or in loose coordination with other cells. It can furthermore be noted that power and influence in these networked structures are multi-directional instead of unidirectional (Jackson 2006: 247). Al-Qaeda is a key example of such an organisation as its members make intensive use of new media to communicate with the leadership or to communicate with other cells across the globe without leadership involvement. Even though al-Qaeda has a leadership and thus betrays signs of a hierarchical structure, the organisation mainly displays the characteristics of two common variations of the networked structure: the "hub and spoke structure" where nodes communicate with the centre and the "wheel structure" where nodes communicate only with each other (Simon and Benjamin 2000: 70).

However, several experts take it one step further and argue that new media and modern communication tools have allowed new terrorist organisations like al-Qaeda to expand beyond the networked structure. Mockaitis observes that because of its loose interconnected structure of cells and groups, al-Qaeda can best be described as "a network of networks, linking numerous organizations hidden within sympathetic populations around the world" (2007: 55). It can now be noted that the critics were in fact right in the previous chapter to describe al-Qaeda as a collection of interrelated Islamic insurgencies rather than a single, cohesive organisation. Though the critics portrayed this as a negative aspect, it is merely a characteristic element of al-Qaeda and new terrorism. It is consequently believed that today there are many al-Qaedas instead of one and that the organisation also exists as an ideology for its millions of followers (Mockaitis 2007: 56, Hoffman 2006: 282). Indeed, it will become clear that with the help of new media tools and especially the internet, al-Qaeda has "transformed itself from an organization to an ideology" or what some call "the idea of Osama" (Schuster 2005: 117).

This section revealed that because of the use of new media, al-Qaeda was able to change its structure and even adopt characteristics of an ideology. The next part will show that besides changing al-Qaeda in the real or 'physical' world, new media also allowed the movement to flourish in the virtual world of the internet.

The Online Presence of Al-Qaeda

Both the present and previous chapter have illustrated that the discussion on new terrorism is primarily concerned with the possible changes of terrorist organisations in the physical world. One important point that has been neglected so far is that al-Qaeda was the

first terrorist organisation to firmly establish itself in the digital realm of the internet because of its appreciation of new media. The online presence of al-Qaeda can be considered a critical step in the evolution of terrorism as it gave rise to many advantages unknown to traditional terrorist organisations. Eedle shares this view and he stresses that if we want to understand how al-Qaeda "has survived and adapted since the war in Afghanistan [and] how it has transformed itself [into] the dispersed social movement" it is today, then "the most important single factor to look at is its use of the Internet" (2005: 124). The discussion below will reveal that the use of the internet clearly separates new from old terrorism.

Al-Qaeda's transformation from a physical organisation that could be defeated on the battlefield into a highly resilient virtual entity has arisen from a combination of factors. It is mostly argued that the "revolution in information and communication technologies [...] during the early 1990s" as well as the "loss of [the] physical sanctuary in Afghanistan [...] in 2001" have triggered al-Qaeda's evolution (Awan 2011: 49). Seib and Janbek add that al-Qaeda's online presence began with the creation of azzam.com in 1996 and that shortly afterwards many additional websites appeared (2011: 26). It can be observed that the period in which al-Qaeda adopted new media coincides with the decades of the advent of new terrorism. This furthermore strengthens the idea that the use of new media can be considered a characteristic element of new terrorism. Besides being the first terrorist organisation to apply new media and the internet, al-Qaeda is also regarded as the most active and most skilful user (Seib and Janbek 2011: xi, Ciovacco 2009: 853). As a result, many terrorist groups in the past decades have copied al-Qaeda's media strategy. The number of terrorist websites was estimated at only "a dozen in 1997" which expanded to "4,350 by early 2005, 4,800 by 2006, and over 6,000 by 2008" (Seib and Janbek 2011: 44). Today, it can be assumed that virtually every terrorist group owns a website. There are a number of good reasons for terrorist organisations to follow al-Qaeda's media strategy and become a part of the online community.

First of all, new media enables a degree of connectedness between terrorist cells and groups that was unknown to traditional terrorist organisations (Morgan 2009: 67). Indeed, new media is predominantly internet-based media and it imposes almost no restrictions on its users. An unlimited amount of data can be shared cheaply and rapidly with a large audience across the globe. Most importantly, the internet is interactive and can be used as a relatively secure, two-way communication tool through online services such as e-mail, message boards, and social media sites. Individuals can anonymously make contact with other individuals, groups, or even entire online communities. These aspects of the internet both enable and sustain the networked structures of new terrorism discussed above. It has become apparent

that new media revolutionised communications during the 1990s and 2000s and "superseded [...] traditional media sources [such as] television, radio, and the print media" (Hoffman 2006b: 17).

Secondly, because of the application of new media, the communication between terrorists and their supporters has also greatly improved, which, in turn, gave rise to a new method of recruiting. Whereas traditional terrorist organisations had to recruit at physical locations such as mosques and prisons, new terrorist organisation now mostly rely on recruitment venues online, particularly forums and chat rooms. Olivier Roy confirms that for al-Qaeda the most important place for radicalization is "neither Pakistan nor Yemen nor Afghanistan" but the "virtual community: the ummah on the Web" (2010). The use of the internet has not only made recruitment easier for al-Qaeda, it also allows them to reach a young audience in large numbers better than before. Young, alienated individuals are easily drawn into the Islamist extremist forums where they are exposed to radical ideas and terrorist propaganda (Nye 2011: 121). The internet then acts as "a catalyst for fostering extremist ideology" and subsequently helps in "the process of radicalization" of this vulnerable group (Seib and Janbek 2011: 90). It seems that radicalisation has largely become an autonomous process through the internet and it can therefore be argued that recruitment has given way to self-recruitment. The emergence of self-radicalisation and self-recruitment is a unique characteristic of new terrorism.

Thirdly, in addition to online recruitment, new members are also trained in the virtual community of the internet instead of physical camps in Afghanistan. Al-Qaeda maintains various online libraries that contain a wealth of training materials for its future members. Moreover, the organisation has released numerous videos on the internet that show in detail "how to plan a roadside assassination, fire a rocket-propelled grenade and a surface-to-air missile, blow up a car, take hostages, and employ [other terrorist] tactics" (Seib and Janbek 2011: 27). Different than traditional terrorist organisations, new members of al-Qaeda rarely receive face to face instructions and they do not meet senior members in person. The internet is furthermore a valuable tool for intelligence gathering and exploring a target's vulnerabilities. Without resorting to illegal means, it is possible "to gather at least 80% of information about the enemy" through public tools such as Google Maps and search engines (Hoffman 2006: 119). It has become clear that the preparation and planning of an attack by new terrorist organisations no longer requires a physical location. This decreases the chance of discovery by law enforcement agencies and in turn increases the success of an attack.

Fourthly, the use of the internet allows new terrorist organisations to significantly enhance their fundraising capabilities. Through its websites, al-Qaeda continually tries to garner support for its actions and attract donations from sympathisers around the world. Financial contributions are now 'just a click away' and can easily and instantly be made online. According to Gunaratna, security services worldwide have "never before encountered a global terrorist financial network as sophisticated as Al Qaeda's" (2002: 61). The terrorist group has been able to employ professional bankers and accountants who electronically manage and invest its assets across several continents. Compared with other organisations, al-Qaeda has built "the most complex, robust and resilient money-generating and money-moving network" to date (Gunaratna 2002: 61). Although attracting donations cannot be considered a new characteristic, it seems that the manner and scale in which it is done by al-Qaeda differs from traditional terrorist organisations. It enabled al-Qaeda to launch its numerous, high casualty attacks discussed in chapter 2.

Fifthly, al-Qaeda's use of new media allows the organisation to deliver unfiltered messages to its followers around the world and present itself in a better light. Hoffman explains that, beginning in the 1990s, the internet in combination with cheap video production and duplication equipment gave terrorists for the first time "the opportunity to break the stranglehold over mass communications hitherto enjoyed by commercial and state-owned media" (2006: 200). Traditional terrorist organisations were dependent on several dominant mainstream news organisations to deliver their messages to the public. These messages could be censored, delayed, or even be rejected by the media outlets. By posting videos online, al-Qaeda can easily "circumvent the gatekeepers of traditional media" and determine for itself what to show its audience and what not (Nacos 2007: 16). The success of this strategy is evident from the millions of views several graphic videos have gained through YouTube and other video-sharing sites. Most importantly, the self publication of its material allows al-Qaeda to portray itself and its actions in precisely the light and context it wishes. This "shrewdly framing [of] narratives and events" helps to justify its violence and make people "sympathetic to their cause" (Awan 2011: 53).

Sixthly, al-Qaeda's ability to present itself in a better light gave rise to an elaborate propaganda campaign. The internet and new media tools are actively used by al-Qaeda to "try to persuade people across the world that Islam and the West are at war and that the West is the aggressor" (Eedle 2005: 127). Though the dissemination of propaganda is nothing new, the ensuing battle of ideas on the digital realm of the internet is undoubtedly a unique characteristic of new terrorism. Seib and Janbek argue that after al-Qaeda's defeat by the US

military in Afghanistan, the action "shifted from a conventional battleground [...] to a virtual one" (2011: 26). On this new battlefield enabled by the internet, both the United States and al-Qaeda are competing for the hearts and minds of mainstream Muslims. The war between the United States and al-Qaeda seems to have evolved into an ideological conflict. A unique element of the digital battlefield is that for the first time terrorist organisations and states appear as equals. Even though the United States is superior to al-Qaeda on land, sea, and in the air, it "makes little sense to speak of dominance in cyberspace" (Nye 2011: 125). The application of the internet has levelled the playing field between states and non-state actors. However, some even believe that the United States is the weaker actor as it is losing more and more ground on the online battlefield (Crowley 2009: 37, Ciovacco 2009: 853-854).

Finally, it can be argued that each of the unique characteristics presented in this section have contributed to the creation of al-Qaeda's virtual sanctuary. Not only does the application of new media allow al-Qaeda to become different than traditional terrorist groups, the internet also offers it a safe haven where it can continue to exist as an ideology and inspire its members to launch attacks. Hoffman supports this view and he believes that al-Qaeda's physical sanctuaries "have been replaced with the virtual sanctuary provided by the Internet" (2006b: 16). Seib and Janbek furthermore add that al-Qaeda is now "primarily a virtual entity that exists everywhere and nowhere, an idea as much as a substantive presence" (2011: 23). The virtual and ideological aspects of al-Qaeda make it much more resilient than traditional terrorist organisations and requires a different response from counterterrorist organisations. It can be concluded that to truly defeat the al-Qaeda that emerged during the 1990s and 2000s, the United States and its allies should find a way to "eliminate [al-Qaeda's] virtual safehaven" and put a stop to its online presence (Crowley 2009: 38).

This final chapter illustrated that the application of new media by al-Qaeda enabled the organisation to replace the hierarchical structure with a horizontal, networked structure. Besides the changes in the physical world, it was also argued that the internet allowed al-Qaeda to become a player in the digital realm. The various points raised in the final section revealed that al-Qaeda has clearly set itself apart from traditional terrorist organisations. Indeed, its digital presence gave it many advantages over earlier terrorist organisations and helped to establish a virtual sanctuary. It was suggested that a new approach is needed to counter this new terrorism embodied by al-Qaeda. The findings in this chapter form a compelling case for the application of the new terrorism label.

Conclusion

The argument put forward in this thesis was that terrorism of the 1990s and 2000s is different than earlier forms of terrorism and should therefore be labelled as 'new terrorism.' It was suggested that especially an examination of al-Qaeda's application of new media could confirm the usefulness of this label.

The first chapter introduced the keywords used in the text, justified the thesis question, and revealed that much controversy surrounds the term terrorism. A brief examination of the definitional debate served to illustrate this.

The second chapter focussed on another central disagreement in the literature on terrorism known as the new terrorism debate. After conducting a quantitative analysis and examining the arguments put forward by both the critics and supporters of the new terrorism label, it appeared that the latter group presented a more convincing case. It was revealed that during 1990s and 2000s al-Qaeda exhibited several unique characteristics. The organisation was different compared to traditional terrorist groups because of its religious character, its deadlier attacks, its reliance on suicide tactics, and its global reach. However, several counterarguments were also presented which weakened the viewpoint of the supporters. It was subsequently argued that the examination of the application of new media by al-Qaeda could provide conclusive evidence for the changed character of terrorism.

An examination like this, in relation to the new terrorism debate, had not been conducted before and the third chapter therefore investigated this topic. The first section revealed that al-Qaeda's use of new media enabled the organisation to exchange the hierarchical structure for a horizontal, networked structure. The second section focussed on the digital presence of al-Qaeda and it was argued that new media and especially the use of the internet decisively separated old from new terrorism. Indeed, the application of the internet resulted in an improved connectedness between terrorists, gave rise to online recruitment venues and self-recruitment, provided a virtual training ground for new members, enhanced al-Qaeda's fundraising capabilities, and allowed the organisation to circumvent the gatekeepers of traditional media and present itself in a better light. It was furthermore argued that the war between the United States and al-Qaeda had shifted from a physical battleground to the digital realm of the internet and for the first time levelled the playing field between states and terrorists. Finally, it was observed that each of these new characteristics enabled by the internet helped to create a virtual sanctuary for al-Qaeda where it can continue to exist as an ideology and inspire its members and supporters to conduct new attacks.

With these unique characteristics in mind it can be said that the use of new media by al-Qaeda has changed terrorism to such an extent that it can no longer be viewed as a mere continuation of traditional terrorism. Especially the digital presence of al-Qaeda represents a complete evolution of terrorism not witnessed before. Terrorism of the 1990s and 2000s, dominated by al-Qaeda, is thus inherently different and should be classified as new terrorism. In conclusion, the arguments of the proponents in chapter 2 and the findings in chapter 3 decisively outweigh the counterarguments of the critics and it can therefore be said that the use of the new terrorism label is justified.

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