

# Terrorist Web Sites: Their Contents, Functioning, and Effectiveness<sup>\*</sup>

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## Introduction

The majority of the literature dealing with terrorism and the Internet focuses on cyberterrorism. In particular, it focuses on the vulnerability of critical information infrastructure(s) to cyber attack. Consistently alarmist in nature, many of these texts focus on the potentially disastrous consequences of a successful future cyberterrorist attack<sup>1</sup> while skipping blithely over the proven role played by the Internet in a vast amount of current terrorist activity.<sup>2</sup> The fact remains that despite the presence of

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<sup>\*</sup> In Philip Seib (Ed.), *Terrorism and the Media*. New York: Palgrave (Forthcoming June 2005).

many terrorist organisations online, worldwide no act of cyberterrorism has ever yet occurred. The point is not that cyberterrorism cannot happen or will not happen, but that it has not happened yet. Given this fact, the state of research into terrorist group's very real online presence is curious on two counts. First, only a tiny number of political scientists, international relations scholars, or even those whose exclusive focus is the study of terrorism, have researched terrorist Web sites.<sup>3</sup> As a cursory glance in any bookstore or library reveals, the majority of what passes for knowledge about the intersection of terrorism and the Internet is based on opinion and impression, not on social science theory or empirical investigation. Further, most of the research that is available is focused on specific groups and dispersed across space and time such that meaningful synthesis is next to impossible.

This chapter explores the primary materials provided by modern terrorists in the form of their Web sites, in an effort to map the virtual terrorist presence, with a view to highlighting the increasing role of soft power in our information society and the way in which Internet-savvy terrorist groups have wielded this.

Terrorist Web sites have not yet been the subject of any sustained academic investigation. A majority of the research and analysis pertaining to the Internet and Web sites as political tools has focused on the power of transnational advocacy groups, such as Green Peace, Amnesty International and other civil society actors, and their ability to harness the power of international communications technologies to forward their goals.<sup>4</sup> Much less attention has been paid to those groups that compose 'uncivil society,' particularly terrorist groups. This may be due to a number of factors, including the difficulty associated with fitting groups that employ violence into the various frameworks devised to categorize social movements, and a certain 'feel good

factor' that imbues the work of scholars concerned with issues of transnationalism and international advocacy.

An alternative reason why the academic community has essentially ignored Web sites maintained by terrorist organizations may be that scholars doubt the efficacy of the Internet as a political tool. Walter Laqueur, a respected figure in terrorism studies, made the following observation in 1999:

No amount of e-mail sent from the Baka Valley to Tel Aviv, from Kurdistan to Turkey, from the Jaffna peninsula to Colombo, or from India to Pakistan will have the slightest political effect. Nor can one envisage how in these conditions virtual power will translate into real power.<sup>5</sup>

This statement is doubly startling when one considers that a few lines previously Laqueur admits that audiocassettes smuggled into Iran played a key role in the Khomeini revolution. In more recent times, numerous civil society actors have conducted successful campaigns via the Internet that have had significant political effects. For example, e-mail was credited with halting a US banking plan aimed at combating money laundering; the Nobel Prize-winning International Campaign to Ban Landmines, which successfully lobbied for a treaty stopping the use, production, stockpiling, and transfer of antipersonnel mines, coordinated its activities via the Net; the Web site MoveOn.org, best known today for its efforts to mobilize opponents of both George W. Bush and the Iraq war, has attracted over two million subscribers to join its e-mail list and has instituted a US-wide TV advertising campaign paid for by online donations. In each case 'virtual' or 'soft' power was translated into 'real' power, whether financial, legal, or otherwise. These and similar successes have not

gone unnoticed by terrorist groups and their supporters who realize that establishing a meaningful virtual power-base is reliant on a well-designed Web site that performs effectively.

This chapter focuses on four core issues surrounding the functioning and effectiveness of terrorist Web sites:

- Which terrorist groups are online?
- What are the functions of terrorist Web sites?
- What are the contents of these Web sites?
- Are some terrorist sites more effective than others?

### **Which Terrorist Groups are Online?**

In 1998, it was reported that approximately half of the thirty terrorist groups designated as 'Foreign Terrorist Organisations' under the US Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 operated Web sites. Today, virtually every known terrorist group--there are approximately seventy operating worldwide--has an online presence, and many groups are the subjects of more than one site. Nationalist-separatist groups that maintain Web sites include the Irish Republican Army (IRA), *Armata Corsa* (the Corsican Army), the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in the Philippines, and various Chechen organisations. Islamist groups also maintain a prominent online presence with sites representing al-Qaeda, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, *Ansar al Islam* (Supporters of Islam), the Kashmiri *Hizb-ul Mujehideen*, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), the Pakistan-based *Lashkar-e-Taiba*, and others.

Both traditionally conceived right-wing and left-wing terrorist organisations are also present on the Web. Left-wing terror group sites include those maintained by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Turkish-based Popular Democratic Liberation Front (DHKP/C), Peru's *Tupac Amaru*, and the Japanese Red Army (JRA). Right-wing terrorist groups who maintain an online presence--though much less numerous than their leftist counterparts--include the Colombian National Liberation Army (ELN) and the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC), among others.<sup>6</sup> A relatively comprehensive list of all such sites, both official and unofficial, is maintained by an individual in the United States and is available online.<sup>7</sup>

### **Conceptualising Terrorist Activity on the Web**

The traditional mass media has long been a tool used by terrorists to pursue their goals. This is because terrorism has always been about communication. In fact, "Without communication there can be no terrorism."<sup>8</sup> Each new advancement in communication technology has resulted in new opportunities for terrorists to publicize their positions: from Marxist revolutionaries such as Brazil's Carlos Marighela's advice to his comrades to use photocopying machines to produce large numbers of pamphlets and manifestos to Hizbollah's establishment of its Al Manar television station in the early 1990s. While seeking to convey a message through their 'propaganda of the deed,' terrorists must also employ written and spoken language in an effort to legitimize, rationalize and, ultimately, advertise their actions. Now, thanks to the new communications technologies, and the Internet in particular, terrorists are, for the first time, equal communication partners in the electronic agora.

Rachel Gibson and Stephen Ward identify five key properties of the Internet that render it different from traditional media:

- (a) Volume: far larger volumes of information can be transferred easily compared with previous modes of communication.
- (b) Speed: the ability to compress data and more space for transmitting data decrease the amount of time it takes to exchange information
- (c) Format: the ability to combine text, graphics, audio, and video means that in-depth, dynamic, and visually stimulating communication is possible simultaneously.
- (d) Direction: the possibilities for two-way interactive communication are greatly expanded on the WWW as a result of the greater space and speed, but also due to the enhanced horizontal or lateral links arising out of hypertext linkage between sites.
- (e) Individual Control: the opening up of control over the direction in the sending and receiving of information means that power is decentralised to the individual user who has the choice of not only what to view, but also what to publish.

“In summary, therefore, Web-based communication has the potential to be a more immediate, dynamic, in-depth, interactive, and unedited process than is possible in conventional media.”<sup>9</sup>

What are terrorist groups attempting to do by gaining a foothold in cyberspace? In a recent report for the United States Institute of Peace entitled *WWW.terror.net: How Modern Terrorism Uses the Internet* (2004), Gabriel Weimann highlights the advantages offered by the Internet to terrorists: ease of access; the ability to evade regulation, censorship, and other forms of government control;

potentially huge audiences with a global spread; anonymous intra-group communication; rapid transfer of information; inexpensive development and maintenance of Web sites; a multimedia environment; and the ability to shape coverage in the traditional mass media, which increasingly use the Web as a source for reporting.<sup>10</sup> Weimann goes on to identify eight different ways in which terrorists currently use the Internet, which are premised upon the distinctive properties of the Internet as identified by Gibson and Ward above. These are: psychological warfare, publicity and propaganda, data mining, fundraising, recruitment and mobilisation, networking, information sharing, and planning and coordination.<sup>11</sup> Many of these uses rely on a functioning Web site, whether operated by terrorists and/or their supporters to engage in propaganda and raise funds or sites operated by others, but used by terrorists for data mining or planning and coordination purposes. If we aggregate Weimann's categories, we are left with four major--albeit sometimes overlapping--functions that terrorist groups might seek to pursue via their Web sites: information provision, resource generation, networking, promoting participation.

### *Information Provision*

This refers to efforts by terrorists to engage in publicity, propaganda and, ultimately, psychological warfare. The unmediated nature of the Internet, in conjunction with high levels of connectivity, renders it a communications medium unlike any other. There is a tendency in newspapers and on television for the primary sources of political information to be those who represent authority or who are members of the existing power structure. The British scholar Stuart Hall distinguishes between these 'primary definers' (e.g. politicians, police spokesmen, government officials), and

what he calls 'secondary definers' (e.g. political or social activists, 'reformers,' terrorists) who reside outside the existing power structure. The latter are used much less frequently by the media than are primary definers, according to Hall.<sup>12</sup> So while modern terrorists can manipulate the media into devoting newsprint and airtime to their activities, political claims, and demands, the media in turn manipulates the terrorists: "The insurgent terrorist messages are transported to the public mainly by the media and the message is thereby almost invariably abbreviated, distorted or even transformed."<sup>13</sup> Journalists and TV presenters achieve this by playing up the violent spectacle at the expense of analysis, in order to attract consumers, thus undermining the terrorists' claim to legitimacy by depicting them as merely violent--oftentimes irrational and perhaps even psychotic--and not political.<sup>14</sup> With the advent of the Internet, however, the same groups can disseminate their information undiluted by the media and untouched by government sensors. This can take the form of historical information, profiles of leaders, manifestos, etc. But terrorists can also use the Internet as a tool of psychological warfare through spreading disinformation, delivering threats, and disseminating horrific images, such as the beheading of American entrepreneur Nick Berg in Iraq and US journalist Daniel Pearl in Pakistan via their Web sites.<sup>15</sup> These functions are clearly improved by the Web's enhanced volume, increased speed of data transmission, low-cost, relatively uncontrolled nature, and global reach.

### *Resource Generation*

This refers to efforts by terrorist groups to raise funds for their activities. The immediacy and interactive nature of Internet communication, combined with its high-



reach properties, opens up a huge potential for increased financial donations as has been demonstrated by a host of non-violent political organisations and civil society actors.<sup>16</sup>

### *Networking*

This refers to groups' efforts to flatten their organisational structures and act in a more decentralised manner through the use of the Internet, which allows dispersed actors to communicate quickly and coordinate effectively at low cost. The Internet allows not only for intra-group communication, but also inter-group connections. The Web enhances terrorists' capacities to transform their structures and build these links because of the alternative space it provides for discussion and the hypertext nature of the Web, which allows for groups to link to their internal sub-groups and external organisations around the globe from their central Web site.

### *Promoting Participation*

This refers to groups' efforts to recruit and mobilise sympathisers to more actively support terrorist causes or activities. The Web offers a number of ways for achieving this: it makes information gathering easier by offering more information, more quickly, and in multimedia format; the global reach of the Web allows groups to publicise events to more people; and by increasing the possibilities for interactive communication, new opportunities for assisting groups are offered, along with more chances for contacting the group directly. Finally, through the use of discussion

forums, it is also possible for members of the public--whether supporters or detractors of a group--to engage in debate with one another.<sup>17</sup>

The coding scheme described below is designed to address two questions: Are terrorist Web sites performing the functions identified above? How well or effectively are they performing these functions?<sup>18</sup>

### Comparing Terrorist Web Sites: Methodology

Of the thirty-six organisations that currently appear on the US State Department's list of Designated Foreign Terrorist Organisations, fifteen maintain official sites.<sup>19</sup> Ten of these are available in English, and it is these sites that will be the subject of this analysis.<sup>20</sup> All ten groups, their countries of origin, and the URLs of their Web sites are listed in Table 1.

**Table 1. Terrorist Group Web Sites**

<b>Terrorist Group</b>	<b>Country/Region of Origin</b>	<b>URL of Web Site</b>
<i>Aleph/ Aum Shinrikyo</i>	Japan	<a href="http://english.aleph.to">http://english.aleph.to</a>
<i>Basque Homeland and Liberty (ETA)</i>	Spain	<a href="http://www.contrast.org/mirrors/ehj/aejh/aejh.html">http://www.contrast.org/mirrors/ehj/aejh/aejh.html</a>
<i>Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)</i>	Colombia	<a href="http://www.farc-ep.ch/pagina_ingles/">http://www.farc-ep.ch/pagina_ingles/</a>
<i>Hamas</i>	Israeli-Occupied Territories	<a href="http://www.hamasonline.com">http://www.hamasonline.com</a>
<i>Hizbollah</i>	Lebanon	<a href="http://www.moqawama.tv/page2/main.htm">http://www.moqawama.tv/page2/main.htm</a>
<i>Kach/KahaneChai</i>	Israel, USA	<a href="http://www.kahane.org/home.html">http://www.kahane.org/home.html</a>
<i>Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)</i>	Sri Lanka	<a href="http://www.eelamweb.com">http://www.eelamweb.com</a>
<i>New People's Army (NPA)</i>	Philippines	<a href="http://www.philippinerevolution.org">http://www.philippinerevolution.org</a>
<i>Kurdish Workers Party (PKK)/Kongra-Gel</i>	Turkey	<a href="http://www.kongra-gel.org/">http://www.kongra-gel.org/</a>
<i>Sendero Luminoso</i>	Peru	<a href="http://www.csrp.org">http://www.csrp.org</a>

The content analysis of the sites closely follows the coding scheme developed by Rachel Gibson and Stephen Ward in their article ‘A Proposed Methodology for Studying the Function and Effectiveness of Party and Candidate Web Sites,’ which appeared in the *Social Science Computer Review* in 2000. Although Gibson and Ward focus on political party and election candidate Web sites, they foresee their scheme as having broader applicability to the sites of other political actors such as, they say, “Internet groups, municipal governments, and civic or community-based pro-democracy advocates.”<sup>21</sup> Gibson and Ward do not specifically refer to terrorist organisations; nonetheless, their general schema was judged to be applicable to these sites also.

Gibson and Ward’s coding scheme seeks to gather evidence pertaining to basic questions applicable to all political Web sites: a.) what the purpose(s) of the sites are and b.) how effectively they deliver their contents. The scheme facilitates the comparison of sites based on indicators for information and communication flows and those for site delivery.

### *Function*

To assess functionality, the coding scheme was organised around Web sites’ broad direction of information and communication flow (ICF). Four categories of ICF are identified: downward, upward, lateral (inward or outward), and interactive. The first three categories of ICF are unidirectional (i.e. communication is predominantly one-way); downward from the organisation to the individual user, upward from the user to the organisation, outward from the organisation to other bodies, or inward to internal groupings. The latter two flows may be described as lateral. Interactive ICFs are two-

way or multidirectional contacts between groups and individuals whereby there is input from one side (usually the user) with the expectation of producing a response from the other side. Transactional communications such as donating, where the exchange is non-substantive and one-way, are considered to constitute an upward rather than an interactive ICF. Gibson and Ward draw a distinction between asynchronous or sequential interaction and synchronous or real-time exchanges within the category of interactive ICF. As a result of that distinction, which is maintained here, a search engine was considered an asynchronous interactive mode of communication because a response follows user input after a certain time delay and cannot then be subject to modification, while chat rooms are considered synchronous interactive modes of communication because they allow for free-flowing exchanges in which both inputs and responses are subject to continuous modification.<sup>22</sup>

Table 2, 'Information and Communication Flows on Ten Terrorist Web Sites', is divided into five categories. The first category, 'Downward Information Flows', is based largely on word counts of the groups' organisational histories; available documents, such as manifestos, etc.; values or ideologies; organisational structures; details of operations; leader profiles; negative campaigning; and credit claiming. The figures for 'Newsletters' and 'Media releases' refer to the number of each available on the Web site, including archived copies. The availability of a FAQ (i.e. list of Frequently Asked Questions) was coded on a simple 'present/absent' (1/0) basis. The number accompanying the category 'Targeted pages' refers to the number of groups targeted. The second category is 'Upward Information Flows' and refers to the presence or absence of donation mechanisms, merchandise for sale, and cookies coded on a 1/0 basis. Category three, 'Lateral/Horizontal Information Flows,' is focused on sites' link structures, specifically the number of links to groups supportive

[Table 2 Could be Inserted Here] of the organisation's goals (i.e. 'Partisan Links'), the number of general information sites linked to from the terrorist site (i.e. 'Reference Links'), and the number of sub-organisational groups linked to (i.e. 'Internal Links'). The final two categories deal with 'Interactive Information Flows.' Category four deals with the measure of asynchronous flows (i.e. sequential interaction): the number of opportunities available to download logos, posters, and/or screensavers; the presence or absence of online art galleries, photo archives or galleries, site searches, online games or gimmicks, e-mail lists, and bulletin boards; and the number of addresses offered through which to initiate e-mail contact. 'E-mail feedback' is classified using a four-point scale: presence of e-mail address (1), e-mail requesting comments (2), online form/poll (3), no reference (0). The final category, 'Interactive Information Flows: Synchronous' (i.e. real-time exchanges), identifies the presence or absence of chat rooms on the various sites measured on a simple 1/0 basis.

### *Delivery*

The second issue of interest is the success of the terrorist Web sites in delivering the postulated functions. This was divided into six basic components: presentation and appearance, accessibility, navigability, freshness, and visibility.<sup>23</sup> Presentation and appearance refers to the 'glitz factor.' Gibson and Ward break this component down into two sub-categories: flashiness (graphics emphasis) and dynamism (multimedia properties). The visual appeal and entertainment value that such properties add to a site are considered to make it more effective in delivering its message than, say, purely static, plain-text pages. The second component is accessibility. High levels of 'glitz' will be undermined if a site is off-line, takes a long time to load, and various

[Table 3 Could be Inserted Here] features and/or pages are inaccessible. Third, navigability is an important component of any site. A site that is easy to move around and makes it simple to locate particular information communicates its message more effectively. Site maps and search engines are factors that assist efficient site navigation. Fourthly, freshness is considered key to effective content delivery. Sites that are regularly updated will create more interest than those that are not. Stale sites deter repeat visits. Finally, measures of visibility of the site on the WWW were also included. To deliver its contents, a site must be relatively straightforward to locate. A site that is not visible on the Web is failing to deliver its contents.<sup>24</sup>

Table 3, 'Terrorist Web Site Delivery,' explores the effectiveness of terrorist Web sites in terms of their delivery of the functions stated earlier and utilising the categories identified above. 'Flashiness' was measured in terms of the total number of images appearing on the site, including those contained in photo archives and online art galleries. Images appearing on menu bars were counted only once if they were fixed as a frame to reappear on each page. The dynamism of sites was measured in terms of multimedia content using a four-point scale: moving icons (+1), audio (+2), video (+3), live streaming (+4). 'Freshness' was classified on a six-point scale according to whether the site was updated daily (6), every one to two days (5), every three to seven days (4), every two weeks (3), monthly (2), every one to six months (1), or hadn't been updated for more than six months (0). Accessibility was broken down into three categories. A count was made of the number of languages, including English, in which each site was available. The second category explored the sites' accessibility in principle by measuring whether each site had a no-frame option (+1), text-only option (whole site) (+1), text-only documents to download or print (+1), foreign language translation (+1). On a more practical level, a simple 1/0 count was

used to record whether a site was working or inaccessible on a given date (a) and a measure of the English home page in Kb was also recorded at that time (b). The number attached to 'Navigability' is based on the following calculation: navigation tips (+1), number of search engines (+n), home page icon on each page (+1), major site area links/menu bar on each page (+1), site map/index (+1). Finally, visibility was measured in terms of an advanced Google search measuring 'links in' both to the top-level English-language page (a) and the home page of the group's main Web site (b), if such existed.

## **Analysis of Content**

### *Downward Information Flows*

So what is the content of terrorist Web sites? A majority of the sites analysed provided historical background on the group and the conflict. This ranged from extensive background on Palestine, the land and its people, on the Hamas site, along with a brief profile of the group (approx. 500 words) to the Aleph site which contained a brief "apology for the Aum Shinrikyo-related incidents" and concise details of "drastic reform" of the organisation. The FARC site contained just a small amount of historical information and had not been updated to reflect the prominently displayed reference to the groups' fortieth anniversary 'celebrations' on their overall homepage. This is in contrast to the large amount of background information to be found on the NPA site, including text and pictures relating to the thirty-fifth anniversary of the group's founding. Just three sites were devoid of substantive

historical content; these were the sites maintained by Hizbollah, Kach, and the PKK. Hizbollah maintain a suite of Web sites and extensive background information on the group is provided on their Central Press Office site.<sup>25</sup> The Kach and PKK sites, on the other hand, appeared to be more concerned with current news and events than explanation of their positions based on historical events. The lack of background information may also point to a presumption on the part of the these sites' creators that visitors to their sites are already familiar with the groups' origins and the history of the respective conflicts.

Large amounts of 'official' documentation were to be found on the Web sites of the leftist organisations. The Web site of Sendero Luminoso contained a section entitled 'Documents of the Communist Party of Peru,' which included numerous reports and declarations of the group's Central Committee, including the *Programme of the Communist Party of Peru* (1988). The NPA site also contained extensive documentation including a section entitled 'Peace Talks Documents' (approx. 5,000 words) and another 'Recent Statements,' measuring more than 25,000 words. The LTTE site had available copies of two e-books entitled *Broken Promises* (1995) and *A Struggle for Justice*, the latter of which was advertised as available in hardcopy from the Tiger's International Secretariat in London.

A majority of the sites analysed contained sections or documents dealing with the groups' values or ideology. Once again the leftist group--the NPA, Sendero Luminoso, PKK, and FAR--devoted large amounts of text to explaining their ideological stance. Hizbollah were the only group to make no overt mention of their values or ideology on the site analysed, but a number of clear statements on these issues were included on their Central Press Office site. Implicitly, however, the contents of the site analysed left one in no doubt as to the group's political and



religious stance. Six of the ten sites in the study contained no information on the group's organisational structure. Two sites, those maintained by the NPA and LTTE, contained very brief references to their groups' organisational configuration. As mentioned previously, the Aleph site contained information about the groups restructuring in the wake of the 1995 sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway. In a somewhat similar vein, the FARC site contained quite a detailed rundown of their structure in a document that sought to prove the FARC's right to recognition as belligerents pursuant to the Geneva Conventions. In other words, both Aleph and FARC provided information on their organisational structure in order to make claims for legitimacy.

Details of terrorist operations were also absent from a majority of the sites analysed. Just three groups provided information about their operations. The LTTE site provided analysis and photographs of the operation code-named 'Unceasing Waves' that took place from 1996 to 2000 while the Sendero Luminoso site contained a section with text and pictures entitled 'Reports from the Battlefield.' The Hizbollah site stands out, however, as it contains more than 100,000 words devoted to 'Military Operations.' This section of the Hizbollah site provides a day-by-day accounting of Hizbollah operations from 1997 to the present. The following is a description of events on 6 April 2000:

12:00- The IR team of martyrs Mohammad Hassan Ghaddar and Hassan Abbas El-Haj attacked Aramta position with the rocket-propelled grenades striking its northern fortification and inflicting those who were inside it. 6:35- The fighters of Lebanese Resistance Brigades (LRB) targeted Rshaf position with the machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades scoring accurate hits.

Meanwhile, another group of LRB was falling upon the positions of Hemayed and Jamoussa with the suitable arms. Direct goals were chalked up, the fighters told.

The Hizbollah site also contains a gallery of photographs of dead ‘martyrs’ numbering 153. While the Hamas site does not provide text relating to their operations, the site does contain fourteen ‘martyrdom videos,’ that is video footage of persons taken previous to their engaging in suicide bomb attacks.

Just three of the Web sites had newsletters available on their sites. Three copies of the newsletter *Resistencia* were available on the FARC site (Vol.s 26, 29, 30). Issues of politics, economics, and culture were addressed in each issue. These included articles entitled ‘Variations on Plan Colombia,’ ‘Women and Their Struggle,’ ‘The Left and the Elections in the Dominican Republic,’ ‘Remembering History,’ and ‘Venezuela and Colombia: Two Brother Peoples that are Resisting the Imperialist Offensive Together.’ Nine issues of *Peru Action and News* were available in HTML format on the SL Web site. The earliest available issue dated from Summer 1997 and the most recent available issue appeared in Winter 2002. Each newsletter was six to ten pages in length and contained political commentary, statements of the Committee to Support the Revolution in Peru (CSRP), news, and other information. The NPA site had the most extensive collection of newsletters with seventy-nine copies available, all were downloadable in both HTML and PDF formats. These dated from 1998 to 2004. The site described the newsletter as follows:

*Ang Bayan* is the official news organ of the Communist Party of the Philippines issued by the CPP Central Committee. It provides news about the

work of the Party as well as its analysis of and standpoint on current issues.

*AB* comes out fortnightly. It is published originally in Pilipino [*sic*] and translated into Bisaya, Ilokano, Waray, Hiligaynon and English.

Subscriptions to *Ang Bayan* were also available via e-mail. A number of other sites also provided e-mail newsletters; these included ETA, Hamas, Kach, and the LTTE. None of these newsletters were posted online.

Six of the ten sites analysed contained a profile of the group's leader. Some of these, such as those that appeared on the Sendero Luminoso and LTTE sites, were quite extensive. The Tamil Tiger leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran, received extensive coverage on the LTTE site. The 'National Leader' section of the site contained eight interviews with Prabhakaran, 'Speeches and Messages' dating from as far back as 1984, a selection of twenty quotes, a five-second video clip, and a selection of twenty-seven portrait photographs. The SL leader, Dr. Abimael Guzmán, has been imprisoned by the Peruvian government since 1992. The SL site had a large section devoted to the activities of the International Emergency Committee to Defend the Life of Dr. Abimael Guzmán (IEC) which contained reports, conference proceedings, published advertisements, leaflets, and emergency bulletins (1995-2001), while elsewhere on the site the text of Dr. Guzmán's 1992 'Speech from a Cage' was reproduced along with accompanying photographs. The Hamas site had a prominent link on its top page to a section of the site devoted to memorialising the group's recently deceased leader, Sheikh Achmed Yassin (1938-2004). This section contained a biography of Yassin, a selection of quotes, the text of five of Yassin's speeches, and a selection of reactions to his killing from around the globe. The leaders of both Aleph

and Hizbollah have their own personal Web sites.<sup>26</sup> Neither the ETA nor the FARC Web sites identified or discussed the leadership of their organisations.

Only two of the ten sites displayed a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ). The LTTE FAQ related to the group and its origins as opposed to the Web site. The list of questions addressed in the FAQ were as follows:

1. What is Tamil Eelam ?
2. Why did Tamils in Sri Lanka want Tamil Eelam ?
3. Who is the leader of Tamil Eelam ?
4. Is Tamil Eelam a communist idea ?
5. What is the present state of Tamil Eelam ?
6. Is there religious freedom in Tamil Eelam ?
7. Can any one travel to Tamil Eelam ?
8. Who is LTTE ?
9. Where can I find more information ?

The NPA FAQ (entitled 'Q&A' and located on the menu bar in the top right of each page), on the other hand, dealt with technical issues such as downloading and unzipping files.

Those sites that show a '0' in the 'Negative Campaigning' section of Table 2 were not sites that were free of negative comments regarding their foes. Instead negative comments were spread haphazardly throughout these sites and were therefore not conducive to measurement in the same way as the negative campaigning on some of the other sites that was located in special sections or documents and therefore easily identified and measured. The ETA site, for example, contained

numerous documents detailing instances of torture, unlawful killing, and multiple other human rights abuses allegedly carried out by the Spanish authorities. In a similar vein, a large part of the SL site was taken up with criticism of the Peruvian government and its officials and their actions against SL members and supporters. The Hamas site had a section devoted to ‘Zionist Crimes,’ which contained sixty-one separate articles detailing alleged Israeli mistreatment of Palestinians. A sampling of article titles:

‘Occupation Forces Fire at Worshipers During Prayer’

‘Zionist Terrorist Forces Wound Palestinian Baby’

‘Palestinian Mother Arrested to Blackmail her Wanted Son’

‘Zionist Terrorist Sniper Paralysis [*sic*] Palestinian Child’

The same section of the Hamas site also contained four videos entitled ‘Zionist Crimes on Video’ (2 mins 36 secs), ‘Zionist Heli [*sic*] Bombing Ambulance’ (25 secs), ‘Zionist Terrorists Beating Child’ (13 secs), and ‘Zionists Terrorise Palestinians’ (2 mins 40 secs).

By far the largest amount of negative campaigning was carried out on the Hizbollah site. A section entitled ‘Israeli Aggressions’ contained hundreds of pages--over 700,000 word--detailing what appeared to be every act of Israeli aggression against the Lebanese since 1998. Below is one of the two reports filed on 15 January 2002:

Eight “Israeli” warplanes violated Lebanese airspace on Monday, a statement issued by the Army Command said. The warplanes roared over the country, breaking the sound barrier over Beirut and Tripoli in separate sorties. The statement said the planes also swooped over south Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley. In a separate statement, the United Nations condemned similar violations, which occurred on Sunday after a lull that lasted 10 days. According to the statement, Staffan de Mistura, the UN secretary-general’s personal representative for southern Lebanon, called upon “Israel” to cease such air violations across the UN-delineated Blue Line.

The list of alleged ‘aggressions’ was enormous incorporating not just violations of airspace, but torture, unlawful detentions and killings, shootings, bombings, deportations, destruction of crops and livestock, beatings of women and children, etc.

The figure occupying Hizbollah’s entry for ‘Credit Claiming’ in Table 2 is the same as the figure for ‘Operations.’ This is because detailing operations was judged to be a method of credit claiming. The LTTE entry for ‘Credit Claiming’ is a composite figure made up of the figure for ‘Operations’ with the addition of a small amount of text (approx. 170 words) that was deemed ‘credit claiming’ and was found linked from the ‘LTTE’ icon on the navigation bar at the top of the page. None of the other sites analysed were judged to contain significant amounts of overt credit claiming.

### *Upward Information Flows*

A number of sites solicited financial contributions, but none provided online donation facilities, such as a credit card payment option. A number of the sites that requested donations also had merchandise for sale. The Kach Web site had numerous requests for donations, including a pop-up box on the top page that read as follows:

Make Donations. Israel needs you now more than ever. Support Kahane.org the only organisation that has a program that could save Israel. Help us legalise the Kahane views in Israel. Only one answer, and it is not fences or Oslo. All hostile Arabs who wish to destroy Israel must be removed from Israel.

Clicking on the pop-up brought one to a page requesting donations by mail to an address in Brooklyn, New York. A telephone number was also provided. The Kach site also had a 'Shopping Centre'. For sale were books, videotapes, audiotapes, t-shirts, jewellery, Israeli and Kahane Chai flags, and stickers. To purchase, one was requested to print out the order form provided and send it, along with a check or money order in US\$, to the organisation's Brooklyn, New York address.

There was a 'Contributions' button located on the top page of the Hizbollah site, but this was not operational at the time the site was downloaded for analysis. A request for financial contributions was at one time included on Hizbollah's Al-Manar TV site and was accompanied by an account number for a bank in Beirut, Lebanon. However, all such requests for contributions now appear to have been scrubbed from Hizbollah's English-language Web sites. None of the Hizbollah sites provide items for sale.

The following request for support appeared on the top page of Sendero Luminoso's site:

We're all-volunteer, from our national office staff to our student agitators -- we rely on yearly membership dues, material purchases and contributions to pay our office rent, phone, postage and printing expenses. If you want to hook up with, support and/or join us, please contact us today by phone, fax or postal mail.

The 'Materials' section of the site offered numerous items for sale including copies of the group's newsletter *Peru Action and News*, books and pamphlets, VHS videotapes, stickers, magnets, t-shirts, pins and buttons, and music CDs. To purchase, one was requested to print out the order form provided and send it, along with a check or money order in US\$ made out to CSRP, to the organisation's Berkeley, California address. "Volume discounts (up to 40% off) are available to bookstores, teachers, and to supporters for use in community outreach." A calculator was provided at the bottom of the page to help with the math.

The LTTE's 'Online Store' had similar sorts of items for sale and operated in much the same manner as its Kach and SL equivalents, one's check or money order to be posted to an address in Toronto, Canada. The Aleph site had no items for sale, but requested that those who wished donate to the charities established to aid victims of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the US. None of the other Web sites analysed contained either requests for donations or merchandise for sale.

Just two of the ten sites analysed installed cookies.<sup>27</sup> They were the Hamas and PKK sites.



Hyperlink analysis has two measures: the number of links from a site and the number of citations linking to a site. The sites analysed addressed special interests and many of them were therefore relatively self-contained or ‘close-ended’ meaning that the sites generally did not offer extensive external links of either a partisan or non-partisan nature. The FARC site, for example, was entirely self-contained. It offered no external links whatsoever, to the extent that once one had entered the English-language section of the site there was no clear way of navigating back to the site’s top page as the ‘Home’ link only returned one to the top English-language page. Not all of the ten sites analysed were so close-ended, however. The Kach site had the greatest number of external links. A majority of these were of a partisan nature and appeared in the ‘Friendly Sites’ section of the sidebar. The Kach site also contained six reference links, which appeared in the ‘News Network’ section of the sidebar and allowed one to link to the newspapers *Ha’aretz* and the *Jerusalem Post*, among other news sources. The ETA site also had a relatively large number of reference links. However, these differed from those appearing on the Kach site in that they were links not to current affairs sources, but to sites such as the University of Minnesota Human Rights Library, the homepage of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and Amnesty International Spain. None of the other sites analysed adopted a similar linkage practice. Linking to sites maintained by organisational sub-groups is another practice that is not particularly popular among terrorist Web sites. This may be because a majority of the groups studied are centralised and their Web presence follows the same pattern, but may also stem from the fact that the present research focuses upon the groups’ English-language sites and that sub-group sites are only

available in indigenous languages. The Aleph site provided links to twelve ‘branch’ sites throughout Japan, but these were only available in Japanese. The Hizbollah site, on the other hand, provided a links page containing links to the Web sites of some twenty-three constituent organisations and various representatives of the organisation. These included links to Hizbollah’s Al-Manar satellite television station,<sup>28</sup> Al-Nour radio,<sup>29</sup> and Al-Ahed magazine;<sup>30</sup> the homepage of the group’s Secretary General, Sayed Hassan Nasrollah; and the homepage of the group’s Deputy Secretary General, Sheikh Naim Kasem,<sup>31</sup> among others. All of these sites were available in English.

The number of citations to a site is a measure of the extent to which a site is recognised among other sites that deal with the same or similar issues. There are two major ways of determining the ‘popularity’ of a site. The first is to measure the number of ‘hits’ on or visits to a site. Many pages offer a ‘hit counter’ that records the number of times a page has been visited in a given span of time, which number can serve as an indicator of the popularity of the page. This was not a viable method in this research, however, as none of the ten sites analysed provided such a ‘hit counter.’ This approach is severely disadvantaged in any event as it is relatively simple to manipulate hit counters. Further, the number shown does not indicate the number of visits by different surfers, but is the raw number of hits on the page. The upshot of this is that the page may legitimately have been hit a large number of times, but only by a small number of regular visitors. The second measure of popularity is to measure the number of links to a page from other pages. This was the method employed here. The top English-language page of each of the sites along with the sites’ overall home page, if such existed, were subjected to a Google ‘Advanced Search’ that allows one to find pages that link to specific URLs.<sup>32</sup>

In terms of visibility, some sites were considerably more prominent than others (see Table 3). The LTTE site was the most prominent of the ten sites analysed with 240 'links in' in January 2004. The Sendero Luminoso, Kach, and ETA sites were also fairly prominent during the same period. The top English-language FARC page had no direct 'links in,' but the group's Spanish-language homepage acted as a cover page for all of the FARC sites and this page had seventy-two 'links in' in January 2004. The PKK site showed a very small number of 'links in', at just eight, but this was due to the structure of the PKK sites, which did not have a cover page similar to the FARC site. However, it was possible to navigate from the top Kurdish-language page, which acted as the site's overall top page, to the top English-language page of the PKK site, and the former had just over forty 'links in' in January 2004.

### *Interactive Information Flows*

Some sites were highly interactive while others were much less so. Just half of the sites analysed provided site search facilities. The Kach site had the most interactive features, including a site search. There were posters and flyers for download, thousands of photographs (of the Kahane family, protests, parades, funerals, etc.), cartoons, jokes, 'pre-state underground music,' etc. Contact information was provided in the form of an e-mail address and a telephone number. The site also contained an online poll. In addition, the Kach site was the only site with an online gaming section, which contained five games in which players were supposed to kill Ehud Baraq, Shim'on Peres, and Yasir Arafat, amongst others. The aim of one of the games, entitled 'Escape of the Oslo Criminals,' was described as follows:

The year is 2010. Red Alert ! Red Alert ! The insane and dangerous Oslo Architects have escaped from their High Security Mental Asylum and are heading towards PA! You must stop them from reaching the safety of their friends of the PLO and prevent the Israeli citizens from lynching them.

When challenged by a reporter about the games, David Ha'ivri, a Kach member, replied: "Each week, Jews are murdered. There are more dangerous things than this game. The people who appear in the games gave weapons to the terrorists who murder Jews. It's just a game for children on the Internet."<sup>33</sup>

While none of the sites investigated had chat room facilities, the Kach site was the only site with a bulletin board forum. This forum was quite active with 610 members, 578 separate topics, and over 5,800 posts.

The Hamas sites had the most items available for download with an archive of over 600 screensavers available. Artistic renderings have long been important propagandistic devices.<sup>34</sup> This is reflected not just in the Hamas screensavers, but the online art galleries contained on two of the sites. There are twenty-nine separate art works displayed on the SL site, mainly paintings, line drawings, and a small number of wall murals. A majority of these were colourful, but crude posters with slogans such as 'Break the chains! Unleash the fury of women as a mighty force for revolution!' and 'Long live the invincible People's War!' They were contained in the sections 'Art in Support of the Revolution' and 'Revolutionary Art of Peru.' Many of the images were also available as fridge magnets. According to the site's creators:

The art displayed here was mainly created by imprisoned fighters and supporters of the PCP. The materials to produce these artworks had to be smuggled into the prisons by friends and family. The art has since made its way around the world. Many of the artists were killed in the prison massacres of June 1986 and September 1992.

The ETA site also had an online art gallery. However, this 'virtual gallery' was a great deal more sophisticated than its SL equivalent. It contained ten video installations and photomontages with audio, accompanied by information about the various artists. One of the montages, 'The Liberation of Navarre,' featured a naked woman in grainy black and white curled in the foetal position, slowly unfolding the length of her body, only to find herself in an enclosed space, unable to escape. The gallery also contained a montage of photographs of wall murals, from scrawled words to complex paintings, accompanied by a short explanation of this practice.

Five of the sites analysed had online photo galleries or archives. As mentioned earlier, the Kach site contained thousands of images of the Kahane family, the funerals of murdered Israelis (including the Kahanes), etc. The Hizbollah site contained over 150 photos of dead 'martyrs' along with an archive of some 200 still-images from Al-Manar television. The LTTE site also had an extensive photo archive containing over 400 images. This archive was searchable by both category and key word. Some of the categories included 'Warrior Statues' (19 photos), 'Elephant Pass Victory' (287 photos), 'Tamil National Leader' (27 photos), 'Liberation Tigers' (49 photos) and 'Tiger Operations' (26 photos). These categories were then divided into sub-categories. So, for example, 'Liberation Tigers' was divided into 'Black Tigers' (7 photos), 'General Photos' (12), 'Men Fighters' (11 photos), 'Sea Tigers' (7

photos), and 'Women Fighters' (12 photos). There was also the facility to send these images as e-cards.

As mentioned, the Kahane site was the only site with an online gaming section, but a number of the other sites included less sophisticated games and gimmicks. The ETA site contained a clickable map of the Basque country and an interactive map of the city of Pamplona, along with real-time information on the weather in the area. This site also contained a Basque language primer. The Hamas site contained thirteen poems linked from the site's top page; the NPA site also included poetry and two albums of 'revolutionary' music. Like the NPA site, both the LTTE and SL sites also contained music recordings. The Hizbollah site contained four cartoons, while the Kach site contained eighty-four. A majority of the latter were pro-Israel/anti-Arab, while some twenty-four were anti-Semitic cartoons that had appeared in the Arab press. In addition to the musical offerings and e-cards mentioned above, the LTTE site also had clickable maps, an online quiz, and a 'Memory of the Day' section, while the SL site offered free stickers and/or a free newsletter to anybody who wished to post the CSRP a stamped, addressed envelope.

The Aleph site had the most e-mail contacts, with seventeen addresses listed. The LTTE provided four separate e-mail addresses, ETA supplied three, and the NPA two. The Hamas, Hizbollah, Kach, and FARC sites each provided one e-mail address. The PKK and SL sites were the only sites not to provide e-mail contact details. Instead, the SL site invited visitors to contact them via postal mail, phone, or fax. In addition to e-mail contact details, a number of the sites also provided online forms or polls. Sites soliciting such feedback included both SL and the PKK, along with Aleph, the NPA, Kach, and FARC. Half of the sites analysed offered visitors the opportunity to sign-up for e-mail newsletters. However, these newsletters were not archived on

any of the five sites--ETA, NPA, Hamas, Kach, LTTE--that offered this facility and so their content remains unknown.

The least interactive sites were those maintained by FARC and the PKK. These sites had no items for download, neither online art nor photo galleries, no games or gimmicks, and no e-mail lists. While the PKK site had a search facility, the FARC site did not even include this basic feature.

### *Terrorist Web Site Delivery*

Half of the sites investigated could be described as 'glitzy.' The Kach site, due to its very large number of images, was the flashiest of the sites analysed. Other sites containing large numbers of images were the Hamas, LTTE, Hizbollah, and Sendero Luminoso sites. With just eight images, the FARC site was the least glitzy of all.<sup>35</sup> Regarding the second component of the glitz factor, audio and video were available on six of the sites: ETA, NPA, Hamas, Hizbollah, Kach, LTTE, and SL. All of these sites, excepting the SL site, also contained moving icons. The Aleph, PKK, and FARC sites contained neither audio nor video, nor moving icons.

The NPA, Hamas, and Hizbollah sites were the most up-to-date. All three had new material added every one to two days. The Aleph and ETA sites, on the other hand, had not been updated for more than six months. In fact, most of the material on these sites appeared to date from 2001. The remaining sites had been updated at various points in the preceding six months.

Eight of the sites analysed were available in more than one language. The Hamas and LTTE sites were only available in English. However, there are other Web

sites associated with these groups available in an assortment of other languages, including Arabic and Tamil respectively. The FARC site had the most translations. It was available in English, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, and German. However, the Portuguese and German sites were inaccessible at the time this research was undertaken. The PKK site was available in four languages: English, German, Kurdish, and Turkish. The Aleph, ETA, and Kach sites were all available in three languages. All three sites were available in English, while the Aleph and Kach sites were also available in Russian and the groups' native languages, Japanese and Hebrew respectively. The ETA site, while predominantly in English, also had Spanish and Basque language components. Three further sites were available in both English and the groups' native language. These were the NPA (Pilipino), Hizbollah (Arabic), and Sendero Luminoso (Spanish) sites.

The top mark a site could have scored in terms of accessibility was four. However, none of the Web sites performed well in this category, and the top mark actually scored was two, by the PKK site, which had both foreign language translations and text-only documents for printing. The Hamas and LTTE sites, because they did not have foreign language translations, performed very poorly, receiving zero points, while the remainder of the sites scored just one point (for foreign language facilities). None of the sites were offline during January 2004, the period during which the sites were downloaded for study. Gibson and Ward adopt a sensible rule of thumb when it comes to the time it takes for a home page to load. They say that a home page size greater than 30Kb will mean the page contains multiple graphics and will therefore take a long time to load for the average home user.<sup>36</sup> Just three of the sites investigated had homepages greater than 30Kb. The largest of these was the Kach site at 55Kb, followed by the PKK site at 50.5Kb, and



lastly the ETA site at 45.5 KB. The FARC homepage at just 1Kb loads instantly,<sup>37</sup> as do the Hizbollah (6Kb) and Aleph (7Kb) pages.

If accessibility was not a top priority on any of the sites, navigability was an issue that received more attention. The top-scoring site was that maintained by the CSRP for Sendero Luminoso. The SL site included a search capacity, navigation tips, a home page icon on each page, a menu bar on each page, and a sitemap linked from the top page. The NPA site was also easily navigable due to the provision of navigation tips, a home page icon on each page, major site area links, and a site map linked from the top page. The most difficult sites to navigate were the ETA and Kach sites. The ETA site had a menu bar on each page, but no search facility or navigation tips, while the Kach site provided a search facility, but no site map or navigational tips, which would have increased the user-friendliness of this very large site.<sup>38</sup>

## **Conclusion**

As far back as 1982, Alex Schmid and Janny De Graaf acceded that

If terrorists want to send a message, they should be offered the opportunity to do so without them having to bomb and kill. Words are cheaper than lives. The public will not be instilled with terror if they see a terrorist speak; they are afraid if they see his victims and not himself...If the terrorists believe that they have a case, they will be eager to present it to the public. Democratic societies should not be afraid of this.<sup>39</sup>

Certainly those who maintained the Web sites analysed here were eager to get their views across. But how well did these Web sites deliver the functions postulated at the beginning of the chapter? In terms of information provision, the sites were an unmitigated success. A majority of the sites contained large volumes of information about the groups' history, heroes, founders, mindsets, and motivations that would be difficult for most people to access without the aid of the Internet. If information provision was clearly the primary function of the sites, then promotion of participation was a close second. This refers not to the recruitment of persons to take part in terrorist activities, but the mobilisation of supporters and sympathisers to more actively support the terrorists' causes whether through linking from their own sites to the terrorist sites, printing out and pasting-up the posters supplied for download on a number of the sites in their local areas, or contacting the groups via the various avenues highlighted on the Web sites and getting more directly involved. Funnelling money to terrorist groups is also a form of participation, of course. A number of the sites analysed sought to raise funds for their activities via their Web sites either through directly soliciting donations or offering merchandise for sale. Perhaps the least satisfactory aspect of the Web sites analysed, in terms of their postulated functions, was the use of the sites for networking purposes. Most of the sites analysed were quite centralised and provided little or no links to either sub-groups within the organisation or to other, perhaps similar or sympathetic, groups around the globe. Having said that, some of the sites were linked to by quite a large number of other sites.

In terms of delivery, the sites differed quite markedly. A number of the sites were quite glitzy and had significant multimedia content, while others were static and dull. While a small number of the Web sites were updated regularly, many were

updated only intermittently, and two had not been updated for more than a year. Many of the sites were available in more than one language, thus giving them a global reach. However, the sites scored low on other measures of accessibility, such as the availability of text-only documents for printing. Easy navigation was a hallmark of a significant number of the sites, which provided search capacities, site maps, homepage icons on each page, and major site area links.

Two sites stand out in terms of their functioning and effectiveness. These are the Kach and NPA sites. The Kach sites, although its design was somewhat amateur, delivered very effectively on the functions postulated. It was crammed with information and commentary; contained thousands of photographs of the aftermath of attacks on Israelis, the funerals of those killed in attacks, etc, all meant to serve as evidence of the rightness of the groups ideological position; had an online gaming section and numerous other gimmicks, including an online store; and was the only site to have a functioning discussion forum. The NPA site, on the other hand, was considerably smaller than the Kach site, contained considerably less images, and had neither an online store nor a discussion forum. Nonetheless, the NPA site was remarkably well designed, both in terms of appearance and navigability, and was updated regularly. The site contained large amounts of information about the NPA and its activities; had a 'Culture' section including musical recordings and poetry; contained copies of the group's newsletter stretching back a number of years; and provided numerous ways of contacting the organisation, including the mobile phone number of the NPA Press Officer.

The FARC site was in marked contrast to the Kach and NPA Web sites. This site was amateurish both in its appearance and overall structure. It had not been updated for some time, was difficult to navigate, and contained only a small amount

of information about the FARC and its activities. (In contrast to the English-language pages analysed here, however, the FARC's Spanish-language site had a professional appearance, was regularly updated, chockfull of information, and easily navigated). The remainder of the sites analysed met with varying, but generally high, levels of success in terms of their functioning and effectiveness.

What is clear from this analysis is that terrorists are not limiting themselves to the traditional means of communication; they increasingly employ the new media to pursue their goals. The terrorists of today, like those of yesteryear, are keen to exploit the traditional mass media while also recognizing the value of more direct communication channels. And, as has been pointed out, "if what matters is openness in the marketplace of ideas...then the Web delivers an equal opportunity soapbox."<sup>40</sup>

## Endnotes

1. See Ariana Eunjung Cha, "Cyberspace Security Czar Worries About 'Digital Pearl Harbour'," *Washington Post*, November 5, 2001; Barton Gellman, "Qaeda Cyberterror Called Real Peril," *Washington Post*, June 28, 2002; Tania Herschman, "Cyberterrorism is Real Threat, Say Experts at Conference," *Israel Internet*, December 11, 2000; Jerrold M. Post, Erich Shaw, and Keven Ruby, "From Car Bombs to Logic Bombs: The Growing Threat from Information Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Summer 2000); Dan Verton, *Black Ice: The Invisible Threat of Cyberterrorism* (California: McGraw Hill, 2003).
2. For overviews of terrorist use of the Net, see Maura Conway, "Reality Bytes: Cyberterrorism and Terrorist 'Use' of the Internet," *First Monday*, Vol. 7, No.

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[http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue7\\_11/conway/index.html](http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue7_11/conway/index.html); Technical

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3. A sampling of research on terrorist Web sites: Maura Conway, "Cybercortical Warfare: The Case of Hizbollah.org," *European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) Joint Sessions of Workshops*, Edinburgh, March 28 – April 2, 2003, <http://www.essex.ac.uk/ecpr/events/jointsessions/paperarchive/edinburgh/ws20/Conway.pdf>; Brigitte Nacos, *Mass-Mediated Terrorism: The Central Role of the Media in Terrorism and Counterterrorism* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002); Yariv Tsfati and Gabriel Weimann, "www.terrorism.com: Terror on the Internet," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol 25, No. 5 (September-October 2002); Michael Whine, "Cyberspace: A New Medium for Communication, Command, and Control by Extremists," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* Vol. 22, No. 3 (August 1999), pp. 231-245; Michael Whine, "Islamist Organisations on the Internet," *Terrorism and Political Violence* Vol. 11, No. 1 (1999), pp. 123-132.
4. See, for example, W. Lance Bennett, "Communicating Global Activism: Strengths and Vulnerabilities of Networked Politics," *Information*,

*Communication, and Society*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (2003), pp.143-168; Harry M. Cleaver, "The Zapatista Effect: The Internet and the Rise of an Alternative Political Fabric," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (Spring 1998), pp.621-631; Nick Couldry and James Curran (Ed.s), *Contesting Media Power* (New York: Rowman, 2003); Wim Van De Donk, Brian Loader, Paul Dixon, and Dieter Rucht (Ed.s), *Cyberprotest: New Media, Citizens, and Social Movements* (London: Routledge, 2003); Peter I. Hajnal (Ed.), *Civil Society in the Information Age* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002); Leander Kahney, "Internet Stokes Anti-War Movement," *Wired News*, January 21, 2003, [http://www.wired.com/news/culture/0,1284,57310,00.html?tw=wn\\_story\\_related](http://www.wired.com/news/culture/0,1284,57310,00.html?tw=wn_story_related); Sagi Leizerov, "Privacy Advocacy Groups Versus Intel: A Case Study of How Social Movements are Tactically Using the Internet to Fight Corporations," *Social Science Computer Review*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Winter 2000), pp.461-483; Wan-Ying Lin and William H. Dutton, "The 'Net' Effect in Politics: The 'Stop the Overlay' Campaign in Los Angeles," *Party Politics*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (2003), pp.124-136.

5. Walter Laqueur, *The New Terrorism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.262.
6. There is a tendency to equate far-right or 'hate' groups with terrorist groups, especially among Internet researchers. Such an equation does not hold up under scrutiny; Web sites maintained by terrorist and hate groups differ markedly in terms of appearance, content, functioning, and effectiveness. Analyses that uncritically lump terrorists and hate groups--and their Web sites--together include Kelly R. Damphousse and Brent L. Smith, "The Internet: A Terrorist Medium for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" in Harvey W. Kushner (Ed.), *The*

- Future of Terrorism: Violence in the New Millennium* (London: Sage, 1998), pp.208-224; Brian Levin, "Cyberhate: A Legal and Historical Analysis of Extremists' Use of Computer Networks in America," *American Behavioral Scientist*, Vol. 45, No. 6, pp.958-988; Nacos, *Mass-Mediated Terrorism*, pp.103-130.
7. Bob Cromwell's 'Separatist, Para-Military, Military, Intelligence, and Political Organisations' is available online at <http://www.cromwell-intl.com/security/netusers.html>.
  8. Alex P. Schmid & Janny De Graaf, *Violence as Communication: Insurgent Terrorism and the Western News Media* (London: Sage, 1982), p.9.
  9. Rachel Gibson and Stephen Ward, "A Proposed Methodology for Studying the Function and Effectiveness of Party and Candidate Web Sites," *Social Science Computer Review*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (Fall 2000), p.304.
  10. Weimann, *www.terror.net*, p. 3
  11. *ibid.*, pp.5-11.
  12. Ronald D. Crelinsten, "Power and Meaning: Terrorism as a Struggle Over Access to the Communication Structure" in Paul Wilkinson and A.M. Stewart (Eds.), *Contemporary Research on Terrorism* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987), p.420.
  13. Schmid & De Graaf, *Violence as Communication*, p.110.
  14. Crelinsten, "Power and Meaning," p.421
  15. Reuters, *Malaysia PM Says Web Terror Sites Unacceptable*, May 14, 2004, <http://www.reuters.co.uk/newsArticle.jhtml?type=internetNews&storyID=5145293&section=news>; Weimann, *www.terror.net*, p.5.

16. For example, the Internet provided a channel, not just for the American public, but publics worldwide, to reach out financially to those affected by the events of 9-11. The day before the attacks, the American Red Cross's Web site had 20,959 visitors and gathered \$1,024. On the day of the attacks, the number of visitors skyrocketed to 243,974 with people making contributions at the rate of one per second. More than \$1 million was contributed in the space of twelve hours, and the American Red Cross went on to raise \$39.5 million in the following seven days. The most the organisation had managed to raise online previously was \$2.5 million, in response to the earthquakes in India and Central America earlier in 2001. A number of Internet companies also banded together to raise money for charities aiding victims of the attacks, more than \$57 million was raised in the first week alone on the websites of six companies: Amazon.com, AOL Time Warner, Cisco Systems, eBay, Microsoft, and Yahoo.
17. Gibson & Ward, *A Proposed Methodology*, pp.305-306; Weimann, *www.terror.net*, p.8.
18. Gibson & Ward, *A Proposed Methodology*, p.306
19. Some sites are clearly more official than others. There is no doubt, for example, that the Hizbollah Web sites were established and are maintained by the Hizbollah organisation. The same is true of the LTTE site. Other sites were established and are maintained by organisations with close ties to the concomitant terrorist organisation. This is true of the Committee to Support the Revolution in Peru (CSRP) who founded and maintain Sendero Luminoso's Web site. Sites such as the latter are of a quasi-official nature;



sites not represented here are those founded and maintained by supporters who appear to have no direct ties to the groups for whom they cheerlead.

20. All Web sites were downloaded in January 2004 with the exception of the Hamas site, which was downloaded in May 2004. Since the contents are changing all the time, the present analysis can only provide a snapshot of Web sites at one point in time.
21. Gibson & Ward, *A Proposed Methodology*, p.302.
22. *ibid.*, p.306.
23. Gibson and Ward included a seventh category, responsiveness, which tested the speed and quality of the response to an e-mailed request for information. This category was not included in this research as a number of researchers in this area advised me that, based on their experience, responses to such a general request were unlikely to be forthcoming. I will explore the issue of responsiveness in future research nonetheless.
24. Gibson & Ward, *A Proposed Methodology*, pp.308.
25. The CPO site is online at <http://www.hizbollah.org>.
26. Joyu Fumihiro's official site is online at <http://www.joyu.to>. Nasrollah's personal homepage may be accessed at <http://www.nasrollah.org>.
27. Cookies are pieces of information generated by a Web server and stored in the user's computer, ready for future access. They are embedded in the HTML information flowing back and forth between the user's computer and the servers and were devised to allow user-side customisation of Web information. Cookies make use of user-specific information transmitted by the Web server onto the user's computer so that the information might be available for later access by itself or other servers. Web servers automatically gain access to

relevant cookies whenever the user establishes a connection to them, usually in the form of Web requests. For more information on cookies, check out

<http://www.cookiecentral.com>.

28. <http://www.manartv.com>

29. <http://www.alnour.net/>

30. <http://www.alahed.org>

31. <http://www.naimkassem.org>

32. Google was chosen because it is the world's leading Internet search engine. It ranks Web pages using software called PageRank. PageRank relies on the uniquely democratic nature of the Web by using its vast link structure as an indicator of an individual page's value. In essence, Google interprets a link from page A to page B as a vote, by page A, for page B. But, Google looks at more than the sheer volume of votes, or links a page receives; it also analyses the page that casts the vote. Votes cast by pages that are themselves "important" weigh more heavily and help to make other pages "important." For more, see <http://www.google.com/technology/index.html>.

33. Foreign Broadcast Information Service, "Right-Wing Internet Site Urges Players to Kill Oslo 'Criminals,' Arafat," *FBIS-NES-2002-0214*, February 14, 2002.

34. See Karen S. Johnson-Cartee and Gary A. Copeland, *Strategic Political Communication: Rethinking Social Influence, Persuasion, and Propaganda* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), pp.141-142.

35. There are a number of limitations to using the raw number of graphics to judge flashiness; see Gibson and Ward, *A Proposed Methodology*, p.313.

36. *ibid.*, p.313.

37. The top FARC page (i.e. the Spanish-language homepage from which all the other sites are linked) is slightly more graphical at 14Kb.
38. 'Visibility,' the final site delivery variable, was addressed in the *Hyperlink Analyses* section above.
39. Schmid and De Graaf, *Violence as Communication*, p.170.
40. Pippa Norris, *Digital Divide: Civic Engagement, Information Poverty, and the Internet Worldwide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p.172.

