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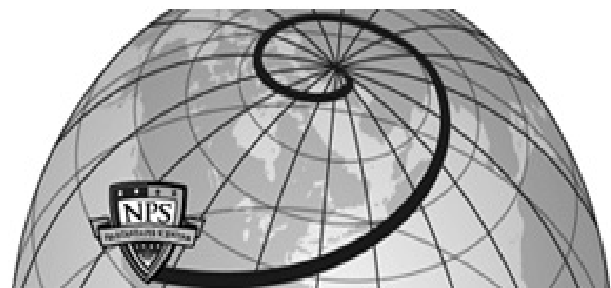

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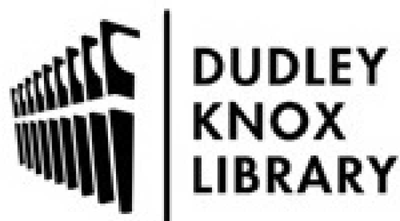

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The End of War as We Knew It? Insurgency, counterinsurgency and lessons from the forgotten history of early terror networks

JOHN ARQUILLA

ABSTRACT *The growing potency of networked organisations has manifested itself over the past decade in the fresh energy evident among terrorists and insurgents—most notably al-Qaida and Hezbollah. Networks have even shown a capacity to wage war toe-to-toe against nation-states—with some success, as can be seen in the outcome of the First Russo-Chechen War (1994–96). The range of choices available to networks thus covers an entire spectrum of conflict, posing the prospect of a significant blurring of the lines between insurgency, terror and war. While history provides some useful examples to stimulate strategic thought about such problems, coping with networks that can fight in so many different ways—sparking myriad, hybrid forms of conflict—is going to require some innovative thinking to go along with more traditional introspection about the relevant lessons of history.*

Even an unconventional war can fall prey to conventional wisdom. In this first great global struggle between terror networks and nation-states (the 'global war on terror', or GWOT), it has taken the form of two basic, widely held assumptions: 1) that terror has just emerged as a full-blown form of warfare in its own right; and 2) that this conflict is utterly unique. Both of these assumptions are dismissive of history. Being guided—or rather mis-guided—by them overlooks important lessons from earlier periods in the long history of the use of terror as a military tactic and the history of terrorism more generally. Although terrorism may only recently have come to be viewed as a way of war being waged on a global scale, it has nonetheless been resorted to frequently throughout the course of armed conflict.

Greater awareness of earlier instances of the systematic use of terror as a tool of war will help us to identify some common principles that may prove applicable to the present struggle with al-Qaida and related organisations. And beyond the various historical cases that involved the significant use of terrorism, it may also be possible to elucidate important similarities between

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the tactical use of terror and what are regarded as more traditional forms of warfare. To this end this article first examines terrorism as a general historical phenomenon, and then focuses on some of the most salient cases of the use of terror in war—including an important example from the American colonial era. This is followed by a reconsideration of the main strategic precepts thought to apply to warfare overall, with a focus on revisiting these ideas to improve our understanding of the current war on terror. This leads to a discussion of the implications of the apparently forgotten history of terrorism for the strategy and doctrine that is central to what members of the US government have now taken to calling 'the Long War'.

Terrorism as a distinct form of war

Although there are literally dozens of differing definitions of terrorism—from official government statements to scholarly formulations—all have in common the notion of engaging in deliberate attacks on non-combatants as a means of influencing the attitudes and actions of nations, leaders and their mass publics. Viewed in this way, terror can be seen to have co-existed with war since ancient times. The Romans in particular sought to ensure loyalty—or at least quiescence—from those they conquered by means of the exemplary use of lethal force against the innocent.

What the Romans called 'punitive war' was emulated by many throughout the Middle Ages and on into the Renaissance. None was ever better at this form of terror than the Mongols who, in order to encourage cities to surrender rather than to stand a siege, made examples of those that did resist by slaughtering virtually everyone within the walls if they had to be stormed.[1] As Caleb Carr notes, this form of 'state terror' was a widespread practice until the ethical and practical lessons of the Enlightenment began to be distilled in the 18th century and a more humane, limited sort of 'progressive war' emerged in the campaigns of Frederick the Great and his contemporaries.[2]

The deliberate targeting of civilians by national or imperial military forces lessened dramatically throughout the 19th century—with the notable exception of the innumerable colonial wars of the period. But it was the emergence of air power early in the 20th century that put state terror back in business. From the start, theorists of air power spoke and wrote in terms of terrifying enemy civilian populations into surrender without the prior need to defeat their various armies and navies: an early notion of 'shock and awe', if you will. Italian General Giulio Douhet, one of the first apostles of air power, even went so far as to call for bombardment of hostile populations with chemical weapons—a recommendation that Mussolini would eagerly take up in his war on Ethiopia in the mid-1930s.[3]

While nobody at the time emulated Mussolini's example by employing poison gas in aerial attacks, World War II would see air power applied relentlessly against civilians, the deliberate fire bombings of Hamburg, Dresden and Tokyo being the prime examples. Then of course there were the nuclear strikes against the population centres of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

In all these cases save for Hamburg, the outcome of the war was already completely determined by the time of the attack, yet terror methods were used anyway.

For all these applications of state terror, there is scant evidence that terror has actually worked as a strategy. Carr argues that from ancient Rome to the modern world it *never* worked.[4] However, as I see it, the Mongols applied their particular brand of terror quite effectively, encouraging their victims to surrender their cities without fighting. But the Mongols may be an exception to the rule. As to the dozens of strategic bombing campaigns mounted over the past century, it is hard to find any that have worked as intended—from the Battle of Britain in 1940 to the bombing of Baghdad in 2003. On this point, Robert Pape's thoughtful examination of air power is very much in sync with Carr's analysis.[5]

Terrorism perpetrated by non-state actors

It is important to note at this point that even many centuries ago terrorism was not the sole prerogative of the state—although states and empires have indeed been the predominant practitioners throughout most of history. An important exception arose in the late Middle Ages, when a bitter terror war erupted and was waged for centuries in the Mediterranean between Christian corsairs led by the Knights of Malta and the Muslim 'pirates' of Barbary. The Christians raided, pillaged and murdered with a will along the coasts of North Africa, while the Muslims struck at the main trade routes, islands and some ports on the European side of the sea. On both sides combatants were goaded into action by government or religious leaders, but in this centuries-long conflict virtually none of their attacks was accompanied by officially constituted military forces.[6]

This protracted struggle went on as long as it did because neither side had the will to muster enough strength to deliver a knockout blow. Muslim raiders were small, highly mobile and widely distributed, greatly complicating any effort to eradicate them. On the Christian side the corsairs did operate from a central hub—the island fortress of Malta—and an Ottoman sultan eventually tried to conquer the island in the mid-16th century. But his 40 000-man expeditionary force failed in the face of one of the most heroic defences in all history, led by just a few thousand Knights of St John.[7] The long Mediterranean terror war was finally terminated shortly after the Napoleonic wars, when the Concert of Europe (the European Community of that time) encouraged France to invade and to begin colonising the North African territories where the Barbary pirates had been based.

Another protracted terror war was launched in the first half of the 18th century in North America, when France encouraged native American tribes to murder any English settlers who strayed too far west from their settlements on the Atlantic seaboard. This awful campaign had a profound religious element, as the tribes most closely associated with these brutal attacks on the frontier were converts to Catholicism—and they were often led in the field by fanatical Jesuit priests.[8] Beyond church support for this brand

of terror, it was authorised by the kings of France, and practised right up until the final conquest of Canada by British and colonial American forces in 1760.

From a military perspective this French-inspired terror campaign had significant strategic and tactical merits. Such attacks allowed the French to make up for their serious numerical inferiority in North America by forcing English colonists to focus on the defence of settlements all along the frontier.[9] Also, their ability to fight in small bands and to traverse forest terrain swiftly and secretly allowed them to strike by surprise repeatedly.

In the end, however, these terrorist tactics were defeated by both innovative military units and tactics, and by the increased level of effort that outrage at such barbarism catalysed. Thus the colonists first developed counter-terror forces capable of 'ranging' the frontier—the genesis of the American special forces tradition—both to defend the innocent and to track and then retaliate against the attackers. Beyond this nimble new approach to field operations, the sheer scale of the atrocities committed by the Indians, which reached their peak in the Fort William Hentry massacre, finally drove colonists to respond decisively. Impelled by accounts of these horrific events, the settlers spared no expense in raising the size of forces necessary both to deal with the terrorist threat and soon thereafter to help British regular forces drive the French from North America itself.

The fall of the French empire in North America hardly brought about an end to the use of terror as a form of warfare, however. For during the Revolutionary War, both insurgents and loyalist Tories—each side amounting to about a third of the general populace—regularly struck at each other in the most brutal ways. Women and children were sometimes the targets of such terror, and both sides had much of which to be ashamed. British military forces, frustrated by their general inability to come to grips with hit-and-run raiders—particularly in the South—sometimes encouraged or directly joined in these depredations. Despite their devotion to such practices, neither side gained much from engaging in acts of terrorism—although this aspect of the war should be distinguished from the performance of Revolutionary guerrilla leaders, who focused on attacking British forces and did achieve quite a bit in the course of their campaigns.[10]

In the 19th century perhaps the best-known examples of pure terror warfare conducted by non-state actors occurred in the area of the American 'border states' in the years before and during the Civil War. There, especially in Kansas and Missouri, factions arose either in favour of or opposed to slavery; their political struggles for control quickly spawned terror.[11] As was the case with the American Revolution, these Civil War-era atrocities did very little to affect the outcome of the larger conflict. But they did sow seeds of discontent and foster a climate of retribution that poisoned much of the post-war atmosphere.

This edgy, blurry relationship between insurgency and terrorism persisted throughout the century after the American Civil War. In China, for example, the Boxer Rebellion of 1900 that aimed to evict foreign powers seen as occupying and exploiting the Middle Kingdom featured attacks on both

Western militaries and the civilians who were in China alongside them. The Boxers were put down effectively. But this did not prevent them from being emulated by other movements trying to throw off colonial control. However, the difference that emerged in several other uprisings in this period was in the refinement of a guerrilla warfare doctrine that for the most part repudiated terror as a preferred means of expelling foreign occupiers.[12]

This is hardly to suggest that the guerrilla wars of the 20th century were clean affairs; but it does imply that insurgents' primary targets were often occupying militaries and their related governmental representatives. However, the several exceptions to this rule, where terror crept back in to the calculus of rebellion, are most instructive. For example, the Mau Mau insurgency in Kenya during the 1950s employed terror tactics as a primary means of pursuing its aim of expelling British forces and colonists. Beyond targeting European settlers, the Mau Mau also assassinated fellow Kenyans seen as co-operating with colonial rule.[13]

Initially the British tried to defeat the insurgents with air raids and 'sweeps' by conventional ground forces. Neither of these methods had much effect on the distributed, loosely networked bands of Mau Mau fighters. Eventually, however, the British seized upon one officer's notion of creating their own small bands of 'pseudo-gangs' drawn from among detainees. The pseudo-gangsters, initially no more than 50 divided into seven teams, were sent out in the field to help locate Mau Mau groups and camps, guiding British strike forces to them. This *ruse de guerre* proved wildly successful, and was largely the reason that the Mau Mau were soon put out of business.[14]

Perhaps the most skilful blending of insurgency and terror can be found in the case of the Vietnamese communists' 30-year struggle to expel first French and then US forces that blocked their path to power. Throughout the three decades of this conflict the insurgents alternated between conventional and unconventional military tactics, and between periods of terror bombings in cities and assassinations of colonial-friendly headmen in rural areas. Thus, pure guerrilla warfare occasionally gave way to major conventional offensives: Dienbienphu (1954); Tet (1968); Easter (1972) and a final country-wide assault (1975). And terror tactics, while almost always used to some extent, tended to rise in frequency to support ongoing conventional offensives.[15]

Another example of a 'Vietnam model' can be discerned in the insurgency in El Salvador during the 1980s, where field operations of the FMLN rebels were supported by terror strikes in cities, attacks against public infrastructure, and campaigns of assassination against rural mayors and other government officials. The most interesting aspect of the Salvadoran case is that, contrary to counterinsurgency efforts in Vietnam, in this instance the insurgents/terrorists were kept from achieving their war aims. Not by large American ground forces and bombing, but by a small advisory mission working to improve the Salvadoran military and to exploit the excesses of the FMLN in ways that reduced popular support for the rebellion. In the end the insurgents were blocked militarily and their terrorist acts boomeranged on them.

When the Salvadoran government put out peace feelers to the FMLN, successful negotiations were soon concluded.[16]

But this wasn't the only model out there. An alternative was necessary for those who could not ever hope to confront their betters in a traditional way. So, while the Vietnamese communists were perfecting their mixture of conventional, irregular and terrorist tactics, there were others on the rise whose own doctrines eschewed classical military operations—which even Mao Zedong thought were necessary at the 'culminating point' of a campaign to achieve a decisive victory.[17] Instead, these other insurgents sought to craft a different way to win simply by wearing down the will of their opponents through a mix of guerrilla warfare and acts of terror.

The most salient example of this dual guerrilla/terrorist model is provided by the Algerian war for independence from 1954 to 1962. The FLN waged a skilful guerrilla campaign for several years against the French military. They also struck repeatedly using terror against Algerians who sympathised with their colonial overlords, and against French settlers—the so-called *pieds noirs*. In the event the counter-insurgent effort succeeded in defeating both the guerrilla cells and their terrorist nodes—but only by means of employing the most brutal interrogation methods. Ultimately the French won their campaign on the ground, but lost the larger 'battle of the story', at home and in the eyes of the world community, and soon granted the Algerians their independence.[18]

There was yet a third fundamental approach to insurgency that emerged in the 20th century, one that relied almost exclusively on terror tactics.[19] The archetypal case of this mode of conflict was the campaign by Israeli nationalists to create an independent state of Israel that would serve as a haven for Jews in the wake of World War II. These insurgents had no field army, and had very little hope even of being able to wage guerrilla warfare against the British, who still maintained a mandate over Palestine. So the insurgents relied for the most part upon acts of terror. In this instance, however, it was terror with a conscience, featuring strict rules of warning and engagement designed to minimise casualties among the innocent. The approach apparently worked, convincing the British that Palestine had fallen victim to what Maurice Tugwell calls the 'asset-to-liability shift'.[20]

It was this third model of insurgency that ushered in the 'modern age of terror', which began in the late 1960s. But, in this era, those who have chosen to emulate the Israeli model have seldom been as thoughtful about providing warning or employing violence in discriminate ways.

The 'modern era' of terrorism

It is ironic that the terror-based mode of insurgency pioneered by early Israeli nationalists should be emulated and expanded upon by radical Muslims seeking a Palestinian state, whose principal target over the past three-and-a-half decades has been Israel itself. Aside from whatever inspiration they may have received from the success of the 'Israeli model' of insurgency, it had at this point grown clear, from the outcomes of the Six Day War (1967) and the Yom Kippur War (1973) that Israel could not be defeated militarily. Even the

guerrilla War of Attrition (1969–70) had proved a failure. So the terror option was probably the only way to continue the struggle with any hope of achieving ultimate success.

The Muslim terror war that raged against Israel—and sometimes against the USA and others sympathetic to the Israeli cause—differed on a very basic level from the earlier fight against the British over Palestine. In the former case Muslim terrorists undertook far more indiscriminately violent actions that often tended to alienate even those most sympathetic to the cause of the dispossessed Palestinians. By the mid-1980s it was clear that a terror strategy alone would not work and so in 1987 the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) inspired a civil insurrection, an *intifada*, designed to recoup public sympathy even as it discomfited the Israelis. After six years of this, enough progress in the court of global public opinion had been made to impel the Israelis to sign the Oslo Peace Accords. Seven years later, in 2000, a new *intifada* erupted that continues today, and which is accompanied by continual acts of terror, as well as negotiations.

The Palestinians have not been alone in pursuing a largely terror-based form of insurgency. The Irish Republican Army (IRA), for example, conducted a similar type of campaign starting in the late 1960s, when the 'troubles' that bedevilled British rule in Northern Ireland began.[21] In their case, however, the IRA were generally able to limit the amount of opprobrium heaped upon them by trying, to the extent possible, to strike primarily at 'military targets'. This was a rule of engagement often honoured only in the breach; and even some strikes against British soldiers have been seen as inappropriate (eg targeting and killing army band members). Overall many problems arose for the IRA as a result both of its inability to do much military harm and of the negative public reaction to its acts of terror against innocent noncombatants. In the face of a clearly failing terror campaign, the IRA has for the past decade sought a negotiated solution, its only credible hope for achieving an eventual political success.

By 1993, with the end of the first Palestinian *intifada* and the start of a serious shift in the IRA towards negotiation, it seemed clear that the modern age of terror might end well. The USSR, which seemed to have encouraged some radical groups during the Cold War, had dissolved and the total numbers of terrorist acts committed world-wide each year was dropping—yet another very positive development. But by 1994 hopes for an end to terror would be dashed, for it was in that year that the first Russo-Chechen war broke out. During the course of this conflict (1994–96), Chechen insurgents revitalised and perhaps even transformed the whole business of irregular warfare, as their small bands of fighters drove Russian forces out of the country in pitched battles.[22] Beyond the battlefield the Chechens engaged in several spectacular but not particularly bloody terrorist attacks (eg seizure of a Black Sea ferry; hijackings of passenger planes) that were designed to call attention to and gain sympathy for their cause.

The truce that ended the first war with a Chechen victory in 1996 soon showed signs of fraying around the edges, and was completely broken less than four years later. In the wake of several terrorist attacks in Daghestan

and a series of apartment-building bombings in Russia—in which both forensic evidence and intelligence reports implicated the Chechens—the Russian government felt the need to reconquer Chechnya. In the years since the conflict resumed, army and *spetsnaz* forces have reoccupied the country and shown their ability to prevail in head-to-head confrontations with Chechen insurgents. Thus there have been few large pitched battles, and not even very much guerrilla warfare. Instead, the Chechens have shown an increasingly deadly sophistication as terrorists. They have, among other things, seized opera houses and schools, and put suicide bombers on two passenger flights, bringing both down. In short, there appears to be no end in sight to the terror war they have unleashed upon the Russians.[23]

Some Chechen fighters first went into action against the Russians when the latter were occupying Afghanistan during the 1980s. But many more travelled there after the Russians left, joining in the ongoing civil wars and eventually linking up with the emerging al-Qaida network. Indeed, the Chechens would become some of the premier fighters in Osama bin Laden's organisation during the 1990s. It may even be that, in the years after the first Russo-Chechen war, the growing penchant for engaging in terrorist acts throughout Russia was fomented by those Chechens who had become even more radicalised through their exposure to and association with al-Qaida.

Of course bin Laden's network was built up of far more than Chechens, as thousands of aspiring *mujahideen*, the products of a global recruiting pool, went to train in Afghanistan. There they were taught to take the fight to 'apostate' rulers of Muslim countries—and to the 'far enemy', the USA, which cast a huge shadow across the Islamic world. But these and other details of the al-Qaida war will be considered in the next section. For now, it should suffice to observe that the notion of terror having just emerged as a way of war in its own right must be sharply amended in light of the historical record. Seen in this light, al-Qaida reflects an interesting mix of older, enduring terrorist traits, and the more modern shift towards a focus on terror as a form of strategic attack, rather than simply as a form of guerrilla or insurgent warfare.

Are the terror war's characteristics unique?

From the outset of the GWOT the point has been made repeatedly that it is an entirely new kind of war. From this point of view it will not end in a 'surrender ceremony on the deck of the *USS Missouri*'. Instead, it will probably go on for decades (hence the recent invocation of the Long War by the Bush administration). Yet the war waged against al-Qaida, its affiliates and its real or imagined state sponsors, has often as not looked like previous wars. To be sure, a remarkable mix of small teams of special forces, closely interconnected with attack aircraft, brought about the fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in what might be called a 'war to change all wars' late in 2001. But then there was also 'shock and awe' strategic bombing and a march up Mesopotamia in Iraq during the US invasion in 2003, both highly redolent of traditional warfare. And in each case the ruling logic was that a terror network could be defeated by attacking nation-states. How can this

traditional focus persist, if the terror war differs so radically from what has come before?

Perhaps the answer is that, for all its strange newness, the current conflict nevertheless has many features in common with earlier wars. The key question then becomes: 'What strands of strategic thought might improve our ability to understand the terror war?' With this in mind, I consider in this section a few broad concepts about this conflict that highlight its similarities with what has come before—while noting the key differences as well—and which may provide us with some intellectual handholds as we begin to grapple with the way ahead.

It may be that the single most important similarity between terrorism and traditional warfare is in its inherently strategic nature. That is, terror, though waged by small hit squads, may have much more in common with strategic bombardment than with small-unit tactics. Indeed, the Hezbollah terrorist organisation's operations in the war with Israel during the summer of 2006 consisted, for the most part, of a missile bombardment of civilian targets. Whether it is air or missile strikes, or terrorist attacks by small groups of zealots, all feature the ability to strike directly at an adversary's non-combatant population without the prior need to defeat its armed forces in the field. Throughout military history, this condition was achievable only rarely (eg the corsairs of Barbary and Malta in the middle ages; native tribes raiding the American frontier in the 18th century). But the rise of air power a century ago made engaging in strategic warfare from the outset of any conflict a reasonable proposition. HG Wells portrayed it first, perhaps best, in *The War in the Air* (1908), a chilling tale of terror from the sky whose main points were embraced and repeated again and again by major military theorists of air power in the ensuing decades.

Both aerial bombing and terror strikes are designed, in theory, to work by undermining the will of enemy civilians to support their governments' continued prosecution of a given war. The underlying construct is that the ongoing threat of random death—from the sky or elsewhere—will be more than a civil society can bear. Psychology aside, both forms of war also seek to impose severe and growing economic costs on their targets. Both also feature a great degree of flexibility, in terms of just who may be targeted. Certainly more suppleness than one could hope to find in the other forms of military power. A most important similarity, however, may be a point derived from reflection on the histories of air power and terror: neither has 'worked' with any kind of regularity. In the case of air power, a century of bombardment campaigns yields very few examples of actual successes.[24] The brief survey undertaken earlier in this article suggests that terrorism has proven a bit more successful, but only at the margins. Neither has been a showstopper, in part because the fundamental human response to such attacks has always been a mix of rage and resolve—not psychological collapse.[25]

There are also differences between air power and terror that must be considered. The most obvious is that aerial bombing, while inherently more destructive than terror, may be both psychologically and economically less disruptive. During World War II about 600 000 German civilians were killed

in the course of over three years of sustained allied bombardment. But the industrial production of the Third Reich continued to rise, and the will of the German people was never broken. By way of contrast, the 9/11 attacks on the USA were over in minutes, destroyed just a few buildings and killed only a few thousand people. Yet they forever changed the way Americans would look at the world—and caused several hundreds of billions of dollars of economic damage, perhaps as much as $1 trillion, according to some estimates.

Another key difference between the two forms of strategic warfare has to do with what might be called 'entry costs'. Developing a potent air attack capability entails huge expenditures and requires great technological prowess. Terror does not, as it can be mounted on a shoestring budget. Next there is the offence–defence balance to consider. The 1930s-era British statesman Stanley Baldwin asserted that 'the bomber will always get through', yet it was clear even back then that a fleet of bombers had to rely, at least to some extent, on supporting forces able to clear the air ways for them. Missile bombardment, of course, avoids this problem, as Hezbollah has recently proved, but may eventually have to contemplate some form of interception threat also. As far as Baldwin's comment is concerned, it should perhaps be updated to incorporate the notion that 'the terrorist will always get through'. But here too we should qualify this assertion, given the huge efforts being taken to provide at least some homeland defences against terrorist attack (something which has precipitated considerable debate as to the actual substance of the threat to US territory).[26]

The third major difference between traditional strategic bombardment and terror has to do with weapons of mass destruction. In the 60+ years of the nuclear age, the USA remains the only country ever to have attacked using nuclear weapons, right at the outset of the era in 1945. The remarkable record of forbearance ever since may be attributed in part to normative inhibitions about using such weapons against an opponent not similarly armed (for example, it would have been unthinkable for Britain to have responded to the Argentine invasion of the Falklands/Malvinas Islands with nuclear weapons). And in the case of enemies who *both* possess such weapons, mutual deterrence is thought to be quite robust (as in the case of the Soviet–US cold war rivalry). But if a terror network were to obtain even a few nuclear weapons, or a biological warfare capability, then neither normative inhibitions nor mutual deterrence would be likely to obtain. Terrorists would instead have strong incentives to use or threaten the use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), because they would enjoy enormous coercive bargaining power and almost surely would not have to worry about having a 'homeland' of their own that could be threatened with nuclear retaliation. In short, if there is ever to be a 'nuclear Napoleon', he will more probably than not be a terrorist.

The future of terror

As can be seen from the discussion of 'strategic attack', terror is not inherently unique as a mode of conflict—certainly not at the most conceptual level. And there are at least three other elements that have long been

important in more traditional wars, and which continue to feature prominently in this one as well. They all tend to benefit al-Qaida and its allies more than those who struggle against the terror networks. This is a troubling point that merits our attention. The three other concepts worth reflecting upon are briefly discussed below.

Surprise attack

One of the canonical principles of war affirms the power of surprise and most, if not all, wars reflect some use of it. Surprise can be used in a strategic way, often at the outset of a war. The Japanese assaults on Russian forces at Port Arthur in 1903 and on US forces at Pearl Harbor in 1941 are classic cases of strategic surprise. At the tactical level surprise can be used to fool an adversary about the specific place or time of an attack. In the latter phases of World War I, for example, commanders regularly rejected long preparatory bombardments in favour of launching assaults after just a few minutes of shelling, so as to preserve surprise. Half a century later, in the Vietnam War, heliborne assaults would routinely feature much 'touch-and-go' feinting that strove to divert enemy troops from massing at the actual landing zone chosen. Such is surprise at the tactical level in traditional warfare.

For al-Qaida, surprise comes with relative ease, as it employs very small units of manoeuvre that nevertheless have quite substantial destructive and disruptive power: the smaller the force, the easier to conceal movement and intent. And so, even though we are in the sixth year of the GWOT or the Long War, our adversaries can rely on retaining the ability to strike with surprise. We well know that they will be coming, but we seldom have clear notions about where or when the next strike will occur. Witness the major strike at Bali in 2002, the waves of smaller attacks across a swath of the Muslim world in 2003, followed by another major attack in Madrid in 2004 and others in London in 2005. A happy exception to all this was the British pre-emption of a major terrorist attack in the summer of 2006 that aimed to down 10 airliners over the Atlantic Ocean. But this sort of coup has remained rare. Beyond strategic and tactical surprise, however, al-Qaida has clearly also thought about what might be called 'doctrinal surprise'—the best example of which was the notion of turning airliners into guided missiles. Terrorists are no doubt continuing to think of other novel modes of attack.

For our part, strategic surprise is difficult to maintain in an open, media-driven democratic system where almost all our major war moves must be debated publicly—occasionally acrimoniously and often endlessly. Sometimes even tactical surprise is fatally compromised, as in the second battle of Fallujah in late 2004, before which the city's residents were given some weeks' warning of the impending assault by the US marines so that they could evacuate. This guaranteed that most of the foreign fighters being sought would also have time to flee. In the realm of doctrinal surprise, however, the counter-terror coalition has had its innings too, as the innovative use of air power and special operations forces in Afghanistan in the closing months of 2001 did appear to have taken the Taliban and al-Qaida well off balance,

quickly toppling them from power there. Even so, they have rebounded, and continue to mount guerrilla and terrorist attacks from their new haven in Waziristan (see Rothstein, 'Less is more' in this issue).

Organizational structure

Throughout the long history of conflict, there has been an ongoing action–reaction process underway in the organisational realm. It has revolved for the most part around the fundamental tendency of armed forces to maximise their ability to strike with the greatest mass possible. The Greek phalanx, for example, was a concentration of heavy infantry whose shock power was great enough to defeat the numerically far larger but less cohesive forces of the Persian Empire and others. But eventually the phalanx was challenged, and mastered, by the Roman legionary formation, which consisted of interlocking small units (ie the *maniples*, or 'handfuls' of infantry). Again and again this theme would re-emerge over the centuries, right up into modern times.

For example, the massed battalions of the 16th century Spanish army would be overtaken in the 17th century by the small, flexible Swedish formations pioneered by Gustavus Adolphus that mixed musketeers and pikemen. In the 18th and 19th centuries regular forces of most leading states would have to learn 'bush fighting' formations and tactics in order to cope with irregular insurgent groups. But by the 20th century, mass would re-assert itself. Even so, the huge army corps-sized units of World War I were soon bloodily crushed by heavy, rapid and accurate firepower. It would take the creation of very small teams of 'storm troops' pioneering infiltration tactics to eventually restore the balance on the battlefield—an innovation that helped lead to the rise of modern manoeuvre warfare doctrine.[27] Even guerrilla warfare itself can be seen as a response by the 'small and the many' to the power of the 'few and the large'.

So it is in this terror war, where traditional military power is being challenged once again by greatly empowered small units of dedicated enemies. And, with the sole exception of the first few months of the special-forces-led campaign in Afghanistan in 2001, it has proven difficult for the US military to embrace fully the notion of focusing organisational redesign around the notion of a force comprised of the small and the many. In part, resistance to transformational change of this type grows from existing organisational inertia; but the concern has also been expressed that the military must remain ready to fight a large conventional war.[28] To this concern I would say that a military rebuilt around nimble, networked small units supported by leading-edge bombardment and stand-off attack systems would defeat an enemy which massed its forces in the open more easily than an adversary that kept its fighters dispersed and generally in hiding.

Intelligence gathering

The last major concept from traditional warfare that I believe is especially relevant to terrorism pertains to the problem of 'knowing'. Many, if not

most, battles and wars have been decided in favour of the side that knew more about its enemy's dispositions and intentions. In biblical times the Midianites would surely not have been defeated had they known how weak the force that Gideon led against them was. Later on the Byzantines created an extensive defence-in-depth system for their empire, comprised of a network of small outposts whose principal job was to relay information about Muslim and other raiders to the empire's heavy cavalry forces. These would quickly ride to the threatened areas and destroy or drive off the attackers. This sort of sensory network, though relying on alarm riders and signals rather than telephone and radio relays, is organisationally the same structure adopted by Britain's Fighter Command during the Battle of Britain in 1940. Even though a strand of strategic thought takes the position that intelligence gathering may have less impact on outcomes of wars than we might think,[29] the abundance of examples from all periods of history—and virtually all conflicts—suggests otherwise.

The principal intelligence gathering challenges in the current conflict stem from the 'hiders – finders dynamic' that characterises it. The terrorists simply cannot stand much open fighting, and must hide: not only their fighters, but also their combat support, command, logistical and other functions. Even in a 'virtual haven' like Waziristan, al-Qaida operates under continuing pressure to remain as hidden as possible if it hopes to maintain any links to the network at large. So, in the wake of the loss of its Afghan 'hub', al-Qaida has become far more loose-jointed than ever in order to survive the relentless search to rip apart its various cells and nodes around the world. The challenge for those fighting the terrorists is to identify the proper means for improving their 'finding' capabilities.

The dominant American intelligence gathering strategy to date has been to rely on a traditional, technology-heavy approach to the problem of locating the enemy. Thus, the existing suite of satellites and other watching and listening systems continues to be relied upon primarily. Financial tracking tools are being redirected to go beyond the detection of criminal activity to search out the spoor of terrorists. To the extent to which 'softer' means of intelligence gathering have been employed, the effort has been focused upon the use—and sometimes the abuse—of detainees. The earlier, pre-industrial history of intelligence gathering in wartime features many methods that might prove useful to attempts to grow a greater non-technological capacity for intelligence gathering. With detainees, for example, I refer back to the earlier example of the British recruitment of some to serve in counter-terror 'pseudo-gangs'. Surely, whether they are drawn from detainees or not, infiltrators can be of great service in a war like this one. A further example from history about how to locate a distributed terror network can be seen in the way the Mongols destroyed the Cult of the Assassins. Although these terrorists operated from over 100 locations across south and central Asia, the Mongols succeeded in capturing their ideological leader and using him to smoke out the others.[30] Some variant of this approach (eg deliberately going after much lower-level leaders to roll up cells in various regions) should perhaps be considered.

There are no doubt other concepts from the history of conflict that will prove useful in improving our understanding of the GWOT or the Long War. In this section I have selected three that seem to bear particular relevance to the problems we confront, and which suggest strongly that this conflict is not unique in the annals of war. A search for other relevant concepts would surely produce more similarities; but these three are a good place to start and give us much to think about. The notion of strategic attack, for example, should encourage us to consider where al-Qaeda might take the war in its next phase. The terror networks' inherent advantages in mounting surprise attacks should prompt an examination of countermeasures. And the impediments to organisational redesign and to improved intelligence gathering must also come under scrutiny. In the final section of this paper, I suggest a few initiatives that might take us forward in each of these areas.

Lessons from history and a call for an 'information strategy'

In answering the two questions that have guided this article—which are about the 'newness' of terror as a form of war and its distinctness from what has come before as a mode of conflict—I have found ready evidence suggesting that both can be answered in the negative. Terror has been a part of war for a long time, and many centuries ago began to slip the bonds of the national and/or imperial 'monopolies' on its practice. Beyond this sense of its lasting presence in history, there are also abundant signs of terror's conceptual similarity with war as we have generally conceived it for millennia.

What then are we to make of such findings? For it is not enough simply to say that terror has been around for a long time and that it has many features in common with traditional warfare. It is necessary next to dive deeper into the insights that history provides us; and to recalibrate our strategy, or at least to reflect about our choices in a more informed way. For example, from the body of historical evidence analysed earlier in this paper we should be prompted to ask some further questions, such as: why has terrorism generally failed as a mode of war? Can the risk of surprise attack ever be mitigated? What are the organisational requirements for fighting networks? How can the right sort of intelligence be systematically gathered?

As one who has spent much of his time over the past decade-and-a-half thinking about matters related to 'information strategy', I am increasingly inclined to see answers to each of these questions coming from the informational domain. With regard to the low 'success rate' of terror,[31] it seems clear that revulsion at and resistance to acts of barbarism against innocent civilians have been the common responses throughout history. France, for example, gained a tactical edge in the Seven Years' War in North America by its fomenting of terror on the frontier; but it suffered a huge strategic loss because these atrocities mobilised and unified its enemies to an unprecedented degree. In more modern times the German bombing of Warsaw, Rotterdam and then various English cities in the early phases of World War II simply helped to fortify the will to resist of those under attack

and those watching from afar—who would come together eventually to defeat Nazism.

Similarly al-Qaeda's attacks on the USA in 2001 immediately galvanised a global alliance against terrorism. That this unity was soon frayed by the controversial invasion of Iraq in March 2003 does not undermine the basic point that terrorism almost always elicits a negative reaction—from its targets and from those who merely observe such acts. The venture in Iraq does, however, make abundantly clear that the USA is also vulnerable to charges of wrongly bringing war to the innocent. The thousands of dead Iraqi civilians—victims of 'shock and awe'—and numerous images of the maltreatment of detainees later discharged from custody have undermined the clarity of purpose that so empowered the first phase of our counter-attack on terror. The lesson here is that even those waging a just war remain obligated to wage it in a just manner.[32]

And so concepts of field operations should be revised to reflect this key aspect of information warfare: the 'battle of the story'. It is not enough to try to compartmentalise a 'war of ideas' around radio and television stations that are under friendly ownership and control. Opinions, ideas, reactions, all are more profoundly affected by what is being done militarily than by what is said. With this in mind, it is high time to develop a willingness to amend and adjust military strategies based on concerns raised by insights from information strategy. If one can make this leap, then perhaps there will be less outcry against one's own actions, and a return of focus to much more appropriate objects of outrage: the terrorists themselves.

My thoughts about the three other questions also tend towards finding answers that derive from the information domain, and which emphasise the crosscutting nature of these key issue areas. When it comes to the problem of surprise attack, for example, an information-strategy-related answer is that only organisational redesign along networked lines will vastly improve the ability to manage the information that comes into the system. Optimising the use of one's own data is seldom explicitly addressed, however. Even by those in charge of 'information operations' (IO), a point made evident by the absence of any mention of the concept of information management from the Pentagon's so-called 'IO roadmap'. And while reorganisation of US intelligence-gathering entities was called for by the 9/11 Commission—and swiftly enacted by the executive and legislative branches of the US government—the kind of changes effected had very little to do with networks and far more to do with creating a vision of ever greater central control. If it is true that 'it takes a network to fight a network', then there is still a very long way to go.[33]

So far the three types of information operations initiatives that I have sketched out in response to key terror war challenges can all be undertaken without much reference to the actions of the enemy. Whatever al-Qaida does, its opponents can remain in full control over their own behaviour towards non-combatants. This is also true with regard to the process of organisational change, whether there is clear freedom to choose to build either new networks or traditional hierarchies, or something in between with which to manage

information and intelligence. But there is at least one aspect of the information domain that requires a great deal of interaction with the enemy: the realm of psychological operations and deception. Unfortunately, both of these 'speciality items' on the IO menu have tended to focus on targeting traditional militaries rather than terror networks. This must change, as these are just the sorts of means that can be employed ethically and effectively in pursuit of the war aims of the counter-terror coalition.

One need only look back to the deceptions employed against Abu Nidal in the 1980s—which convinced him that he had been betrayed by his own operatives and led to the destruction of his network a generation ago—to see that there are other ways to cripple al-Qaida.[34] And even if there is neither the willingness nor the ability to mount an actual psychological offensive against Osama bin Laden and his allies, there should at least be some thinking along the lines of deceiving the terrorists. They should all be made to worry that those who hunt them actually *are* in the process of penetrating their networks and turning trusted agents away from the cause. Deceptive 'stings' can often work as well as some direct actions in the field.

Conclusion: the end of war as we knew it?

It seems clear to all that the Long War cannot be won by strictly military means. Even if the enemies of the terrorists 'transform' their field forces to improve the effectiveness of the hider–finder campaign—and this is worth doing—decisive victory will only come when potential terrorist recruits are dissuaded from joining the cause, and persuaded that their own sacrifices are likely to be for naught. If there is to be any hope for such a result, it lies in cultivating a deeper understanding of the role of information strategy in this conflict, and of its being inextricably intertwined with the military actions being taken. Indeed, it may be that, in terms of the Long War thus far, and in what is likely to come, ideas and beliefs have, in important ways, begun to trump traditional warfighting. In this respect, then, war as we have known it may indeed have come to an end.

Notes

This paper has grown from a talk on the terror war given by the author in April 2005 to representatives of the US Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations/Low Intensity Conflict. Their comments and suggestions, along with those of Bob O'Connell and David Tucker, are much appreciated. The views expressed here are solely the author's and do not represent official US Defense Department policy.

1 The Mongol use of such terror tactics is described in detail by James Chambers, *The Devil's Horsemen: The Mongol Invasion of Europe*, New York: Atheneum, 1985; and Jack Weatherford, *Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World*, New York: Crown, 2004.

2 On this theme, see Caleb Carr, *The Lessons of Terror: A History of Warfare Against Civilians; Why It Has Always Failed and Why It Will Fail Again*, New York: Random House, 2002.

3 Giulio Douhet, trans Dino Ferrari, *The Command of the Air*, New York: McCann, 1942. Although he did not adopt Douhet's call for the use of chemical weapons, similarly terror-oriented themes were also developed at the time in Alexander de Seversky, *Victory Through Air Power*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1942.

4 As Carr puts it, 'the strategy of terror is a spectacularly failed one'. See Carr, *The Lessons of Terror*, p 11.

5 Robert A Pape, Jr, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996.
6 The best history of this long struggle is Peter Earl, *Corsairs of Malta and Barbary*, London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1970. The USA became involved near the very end, early in the 19th century. On our confrontation with the 'Muslim terrorists' of that time, see ABC Whipple, *To the Shores of Tripoli*, New York: William Morrow, 1991.
7 See Ernle Bradford, *The Great Siege*, New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961.
8 Francis Parkman called these terror campaigns 'partisan warfare' in his *Montcalm and Wolfe: The Decline and Fall of the French Empire in North America*, New York: Collier, 1964 (1884).
9 As Parkman reckons it, the English colonists totalled slightly more than one million, over 10 times the number of French settlers, explorers and traders. See *Ibid*, pp 38 – 47. See also Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754 – 1766*, New York: Vintage Books, 2000, pp 14 – 18.
10 On this last point, the activities of the partisan leaders Sumter, Pickens and Marion were seen as crucial to wearing down regular British forces during the decisive campaign in the South. As to the brutality between Tory and rebel, Thomas Fleming recounts this vignette:

> A South Carolina rebel named Reed was visiting a neighbor's house when the man's wife saw two loyalists approaching. She advised Reed to flee, but Reed said they were old friends and went out to shake hands. The loyalists shot him dead. Reed's aged mother rode to a rebel camp in North Carolina and displayed his bloody wallet. Twenty-five men leaped on horses and soon executed the murderers.

Fleming, *Liberty! The American Revolution*, New York: Viking, 1997, pp 311 – 312.
11 See Thomas Goodrich, *Black Flag: Guerrilla War on the Western Frontier, 1861 – 1865*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999. For a remarkable eyewitness account of this kind of war, see John McCorkle (as told to OS Barton), *Three Years With Quantrill*, New York: Buffalo-Head Press, 1966.
12 At the same time as the Boxer Rebellion, other insurgencies were underway in South Africa and the Philippines—both of which were more purely military (but highly unconventional). Indeed, to the extent to which terror tactics were employed in these conflicts, they were more the product of the respective British and American counter-insurgent forces. On Lord Kitchener's 'ruthless methods' against the Boers, see Byron Farwell, *The Great Boer War*, New York: Harper and Row, 1976, esp pp 346 – 365. On the Philippine War, see Brian Linn, *The United States Army and Counterinsurgency in the Philippines, 1899 – 1902*, Charlotte, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000.
13 For an overview of this conflict, see Wunyabari O Maloba, *Mau Mau and Kenya: An Analysis of a Peasant Revolt*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993.
14 The best account of this counterinsurgency was written by Frank Kitson, the officer who had championed the pseudo-gang idea. See his *Gangs and Counter Gangs*, London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1960. It is important to note that, in addition to the failure of more conventional military approaches to dealing with the Mau Mau, the British also engaged in some ethically questionable practices with regard to detainees and the general indigenous population. See Caroline Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya*, New York: Henry Holt 2005. Similar charges could be made against the British for their behaviour towards both prisoners and the general civilian populace during the Boer War.
15 Robert Asprey, *War in the Shadows*, New York: William Morrow, 1994, esp pp 792 – 829, offers a concise description of the North Vietnamese concept of operations. The best analysis of the communist use of terror tactics in this war is William Colby, *Lost Victory: A Firsthand Account of America's Sixteen-Year Involvement in Vietnam*, New York: Contemporary Books, 1989.
16 For an overview of this conflict, see Jose Angel Moroni Bracamonte & David Spencer, *Strategy and Tactics of the FMLN Guerrillas*, London: Praeger, 1995.
17 Mao's emphasis on an ultimate shift to conventional offensive operations is made clear in his essay, 'Strategy in China's revolutionary war', in *Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-Tung*, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1963, pp 95 – 145.
18 See Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954 – 1962*, New York: Viking Press, 1977.
19 The first type being an insurgency that blended conventional and unconventional military operations with occasional acts of terror; the second being a mix of irregular warfare and terror.
20 See Maurice Tugwell, *Herzl Street*, New York: Xlibris, 1997. Caleb Carr rebuts this view of the utility of Zionist terror tactics, noting that the 'vicious terrorism' of the Stern Gang and the Irgun, far from intimidating Palestinians, became the 'operational model' for the Palestine Liberation Organisation. Carr, *The Lessons of Terror*, pp 213 – 214.
21 On the first 25 years of this conflict, see J Bowyer Bell, *The Irish Troubles: A Generation of Violence, 1967 – 1992*, New York: St Martin's Press, 1993.

22 Carlotta Gall & Thomas de Waal, *Chechnya: Calamity in the Caucasus*, New York: New York University Press, 1998 offer a compelling, detailed history of this war. John Arquilla & Theodore Karasik, 'Chechnya: a glimpse of future conflict?', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 22 (1), 1999, pp 207 – 230, focus on the role of small units and networking—but also on the various acts of terror employed—in this conflict.
23 For a sobering assessment of the current state of affairs, see Mark Kramer, 'The perils of counterinsurgency: Russia's war in Chechnya', *International Security*, 29 (3), 2004 – 05, pp 5 – 63.
24 This is one of the central themes of Pape, *Bombing to Win*. For an argument that air power can sometimes prevail on its own, see Andrew L Stigler, 'A clear victory for air power: NATO's empty threat to invade Kosovo', *International Security*, 27 (3), 2003.
25 See Mark Clodfelter, *The Limits of Air Power*, New York: Free Press, 1989; and Stephen T Hosmer, *Psychological Effects of US Air Operations in Four Wars, 1941 – 1991*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1996.
26 John Mueller has recently argued that 'the massive and expensive homeland security apparatus erected since 9/11 may be persecuting some, spying on many, inconveniencing most, and taxing all to defend the United States against an enemy that scarcely exists'. J Mueller, 'Is there still a terrorist threat?', *Foreign Affairs*, 85 (5), 2006, pp 2 – 8.
27 Bruce Gudmundsson, *Stormtroop Tactics: Innovation in the German Army, 1914 – 1918*, London: Praeger, 1995. Linking storm troops to the militaries of antiquity, Lynn Montross, *War Through the Ages*, New York: Harper & Row, 1960, pp 744 – 745, notes that 'the armies of 1918 were bringing up to date the ancient tactical duel between the legion and the phalanx'.
28 For a good account of the policy debate that has revolved around this point, see Nina Bernstein, 'Strategists fight a war about the war', *New York Times*, 6 April 2003.
29 Perhaps the most articulate spokesperson for this point of view was Carl von Clausewitz, whose *On War* advanced the view that 'friction' and the 'fog of war' would inevitably undermine efforts to know what was going on. A more recent critique of the role and value of intelligence is found in John Keegan, *Intelligence in War*, New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2002.
30 On this see Weatherford, *Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World*, pp 178 – 180.
31 There is some debate about this. See, for example, Alan Dershowitz, *Why Terrorism Works*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002, who concludes that terror poses such an effective threat that some civil liberties may have to be sacrificed to improve security.
32 On the ethical and practical problems that arise when the principle of 'non-combatant immunity' is violated, see Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, New York: Basic Books, 1977; and James Turner Johnson, *Just War Tradition and the Restraint of War*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981.
33 President Bush's Executive Order 13355, signed many months before the creation of a national intelligence directorate, called for the networking of our existing intelligence agencies. It is unfortunate that such a positive step should be undermined by hierarchical habits of mind.
34 The takedown of the Abu Nidal organisation remains to some extent a classified affair. But there has been some public mention of the psychological operations and deceptions employed. See, for example, Faye Bowers, 'A lesson in defeating a terrorist', *Christian Science Monitor*, 15 November 2002, pp 1, 4; and David Tucker, *Skirmishes at the Edge of Empire: The United States and International Terrorism*, London: Praeger, 1997, pp 40 – 42.