

# Terrorism as a Global Threat: Models and Defence Strategies\*

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## Resumo

Este texto corresponde à comunicação de abertura da Conferência “Terrorism as a Global Threat” em que se procura fazer um enquadramento geral sobre as várias vertentes do terrorismo internacional e o desenvolvimento da Conferência que teve lugar no IDN.

É de particular importância toda a evolução ocorrida depois de 11 de Setembro, mas também os antecedentes da Al Qaeda criada em Março de 88 e o resumo de acções de sucesso das medidas contra-terroristas que de um modo quase sempre discreto conseguiram diminuir a capacidade operacional daquela organização. Por outro lado, os objectivos do terrorismo transnacional encontram-se em todo o mundo com consequências muito gravosas na economia e no turismo.

## Abstract

*This text corresponds to the welcome speech of the Conference “Terrorism as a Global Threat”, which gave a general framework about the different angles of the transnational terrorism as well as a prospective about the incoming Conference which took place at the IDN.*

*It deserves to be underlined all the evolution after the 9/11, as well as the history and background of Al Qaeda which was created in March 88, and also the sum-up of several successful measures of counter-terrorism, which usually, in a very discrete way, have decreased the operational capacity of that organization.*

*It is also important to say that the targets of transnational terrorism are spread all over the world and its consequences are very heavy in the economy and tourism.*

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\* Palavras de abertura do então Director do Instituto da Defesa Nacional à Conferência Internacional com o mesmo título, promovida no IDN em 1 e 2 de Julho de 2004.

It is my privilege as Director of the National Defence Institute and host of this Conference on "Terrorism as a Global Threat: Models and Defence Strategies" to welcome all of you. Terrorism is a subject of major concern posing multiple challenges to political leaders and governments. Therefore all opportunities to study this threat to our societies and values, and discover ways to fight and defeat it, should not be overlooked.

I extend my congratulations to the Research Center of Financial Economics - Centro de Investigação de Economia Financeira (CIEF), to the Army Command and Staff College - Instituto de Altos Estudos Militares and to the Military Academy- Academia Militar for their joint initiative, appealing to the national and international scientific community to get their help in finding answers and strategies of how to deal with terrorism, the scourge of our days.

This Conference has some tradition as it takes place every two years and our tribute must be given to the Military Academy and to the Research Centre of Financial Economics since they have been and they are the core of this organisation, its structure, subjects and lecturers. We, at the National Defence Institute are only the shelter, the place and the support for this purpose.

I will now address our speakers. Be welcome and thank you for your participation. In particular I wish all foreign guests a pleasant stay in Portugal. I wish that your work and participation in this Conference will be fruitful for everybody, and I also hope that you will have a chance to enjoy our good weather and sunshine.

As I said modern terrorism, which we consider as having started on September 11 2001, had indeed started years before - remember the WTC attack of 1993 and many other actions - puts a number of questions and challenges. On September 11 2001 the targets were well defined: the World Trade Centre as a symbol of globalisation and the Pentagon in Washington, as the symbol of American power. On 12 September 2001 the Security Council of the United Nations passed Resolution 1368 labelling the attacks as "*a threat to international peace and security*" and recognising the inherent right of individual or collective self defence. As you will remember this was understood as an authorisation for the use of military force against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, which was sheltering Ossama Bin Laden and his followers. On 28 September 2002 Resolution 1373 declared that "*...acts, methods and practices of terrorism are contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations...*" and established very specific measures to combat terrorism, forcing states to deny forms of financial support to terrorist groups; to suppress the provision of safe havens, to share relevant information with other governments, to co-operate with them in the investigation, detection, arrest and prosecution of alleged terrorists; to criminalize

active and passive assistance to terrorists in national laws and to become party to the relevant international conventions. This resolution also established the Counter Terrorism Committee (CTC) made up of all 15 members of the Security Council, which has since become the UN's leading body to promote collective action against international terrorism. Its mandate is to bring member states to an acceptable level of compliance with Resolution 1373 and the related conventions and protocols.

In 2001 the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice elaborated a Plan of Action against Terrorism as part of the Vienna Declaration of 2000 in which Member States expressed their commitment *"to do their utmost to foster universal adherence to the international instruments concerned with the fight against terrorism"*. A Global Programme against Terrorism was launched in October 2002 designed to deliver assistance to Member States through the revision of domestic legislation and advice on drafting enabling laws; to facilitate and provide training and in-depth assistance on the implementation of the new legislation against terrorism to national administrations. Koffi Annan declared then *"Terrorism is a global threat with global effects; ... its consequences affect every aspect of the United Nations agenda - ...By its very nature, terrorism is an assault on the fundamental principles of law, order, human rights and the peaceful treatment of disputes upon which the United Nations is established..."*

The September 11 attacks also led the European Union to react, not only politically, but also in the fields of money laundering and in the third pillar of Justice and Home Affairs. Many files which had been pending for a long time were closed and important decisions were taken on a wide range of issues. In so doing it became evident that the fight against terrorism extends well beyond the military action and involves economical, financial, social, diplomatic and other measures. The European Council adopted a Common Position on the application of specific measures to combat terrorism on December 27, 2001, later changed into a framework decision on April 18, 2002 following a proposal by the European Commission and advice of the European Parliament.

In the text *"terrorist act"* is defined as one of a number of intentional acts, which, given its nature or its context, may seriously damage a country or an international organization, and committed with the aim of (i) seriously intimidating a population; (ii) unduly compelling a Government or an international organization to perform or to abstain from performing any act or (iii) seriously destabilizing or destroying the fundamental political, constitutional, economic or social structures of a country or an international organisation. This definition is followed by a detailed description of these acts, such as personal attacks which may cause death or affect the physical integrity of a person, kidnapping or hostage

taking; seizure of aircraft, ships or other means of public or goods transport; manufacture, possession, acquisition, transport, supply or use of weapons, explosives or of nuclear, biological or chemical weapons, as well as research into and development of such weapons; interfering with or disrupting the supply of water, power or any other fundamental natural resource; damage to transport systems, information systems, infrastructure, etc.

Analysing this extensive and diversified list of actions it is possible to infer that internal and external security are more and more intertwined. Therefore although Armed Forces have a role in the fight against terrorism, in what concerns non-state actors they have to work closely with security forces and the intelligence communities among others. On the other hand terrorism should not be seen isolated from organized crime, failed states and weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

One flaw of the counter terrorism approach, of which Europe is often accused, deals with the tendency to target operational cells and overlook support cells that disseminate propaganda, recruit members, forge false identities, facilitate travel, or obtain supplies. It is well known that financial support and recruitment of members in Europe, or in the United States or Canada, have as final destination terrorist groups active in Algeria, Morocco, Chechnya, Afghanistan, Iraq or the Philippines. Taking advantage of traditional liberal and freedom attitudes in the West, terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda and affiliated groups have slowly but steadily built a strong network of members, sympathizers and collaborators in the West.

This constitutes a major danger and requires the development of a new legislative frame that would enable detention on the base of intelligence reports. This legal support is still far from being achieved in most of western countries.

But let us watch now how terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda have developed over the years and how such a group has changed its organizational structure, its geographical scope and, finally, its operational methods.

Al-Qaeda was created in March 1988. For ten years it grew in size and strength. Its headquarters were initially located in Pakistan, then in Afghanistan, moving to Sudan in 1991 and back to Afghanistan in 1996. After the U.S. military action of October 2001 in Afghanistan, Al-Qaeda started a very fast process of decentralization. The main core suffered heavily both from the military action in Afghanistan and from counter terrorist actions all over the world. More than 3000 members were arrested in more than 100 countries in the two years after 11-9. It is estimated that after the September attacks Al-Qaeda strength shrank from a few thousand members to a few hundred. But the strongest

component which can be considered as its centre of gravity are now the associated groups from the Middle East, Asia, Africa and Europe that Al-Qaeda trained during the 90's. That clearly indicates that Al-Qaeda changed shape from a single terrorist group into a worldwide movement organized as a complex, diversified and loose network of affiliations.

After a relatively long period of calm, the Bali attacks of October 2002, where more than 200 Indonesians and foreigners (mostly Australians) died, were the starting point of a wave of strikes. These attacks were imputed to the Jemaah-Islamiya a group active in South East Asia. Shortly after, in May 2003 through its affiliated group al-Sirat al-Mustaqeem Al-Qaeda struck in Casablanca. The Istanbul attacks of November 2003 came next and not long ago Saudi Arabia became a new target. The nature of these attacks not only followed a new pattern of strikes coordinated in time and space, but indicated that Al-Qaeda had not lost its capability of controlling and activating its associated groups. Many of these actions were suicide bombings, a form of operations probably learned from Hezbollah, which was internationally recognized as the strongest terrorist group before the emergence of Al-Qaeda.

Many were led to think that Europe would not be a target. But the Madrid attacks of 11<sup>th</sup> March 2004 have clearly shown how wrong they were, and how vulnerable Europe remains to terrorism. Although the ability of terrorist actions against hard targets or well defended facilities has apparently declined, the terrorist threat has instead shifted to soft targets such as population centres and infra-structure, causing mass fatalities and making inevitable the death of innocent people. Such targets are too numerous to protect, and unfortunately everything shows that the West will not be able to change the present trend of events and intentions of the terrorists, despite the fact that according to intelligence reports in the last two years more than one hundred attacks were disrupted or deterred in planning or preparation phases.

The risks are even greater when one considers the possibility of the use of weapons of mass destruction by terrorist groups. Bruce Hoffman a notorious terrorist expert in *"New Forms of Terrorism and the threat of Terrorist use of Chemical, Biological, Nuclear and Radiological Weapons"* states that:

"...even a limited terrorist attack involving a chemical, biological, or radiological weapon on a deliberately small scale could have disproportionately enormous consequences, generating unprecedented fear and alarm and thus serve the terrorists' purpose just as well as a larger weapon or more ambitious attack with massive casualties could."

I have described the nature of the threat the world faces in our days. It is mainly a general feeling of insecurity posed by acts of terrorism that the terrorists exploit: fear of the

unknown, uncertainty of when and where the next strike will occur. Not only people but also Governments have become very sensitive to the political implications of terrorist attacks as the electoral results in Spain after the 11-M attacks clearly demonstrated.

On the other hand there are economical implications that can in no way be ignored. When terrorism persists for long periods of time or take place in or near countries or regions that depend heavily on tourism, these regions may suffer heavy economic losses. Our distinguished keynote speaker, Professor. Todd Sandler, has studied the economic effects of terrorism in Spain and Greece and concluded that terrorism also reduces inflows of foreign direct investment. A parallel study regarding Israel reached similar conclusions. Terrorism can therefore lead to a general slowdown of economic activity of a region or country.

The recent wave of terrorist actions against oil and petrochemical infrastructures in Saudi Arabia and in Iraq itself are intended to affect the price of oil worldwide and consequently the stability of the global economy.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen**

There are many ways of fighting terrorism. I have already mentioned the intelligence community, the security forces, the armed forces, but many other organizations and agencies could have been mentioned. The key word to an effective fight against terror is cooperation. A statement by NATO of March 12, 2001 following on the same line of those already mentioned from UN and EU pledged the commitment of the organisation “ ...to undertake all efforts to combat the scourge of terrorism... We stand united in our ideas that the ideals of partnership and cooperation will prevail”.

However if international cooperation is indispensable, national cooperation is also of paramount importance. National security is a very sensitive national issue - it is one of the pillars of national sovereignty. Citizens require their governments to provide them a safe and secure environment to their daily activities. Therefore it is the duty of every government to make all necessary efforts to ensure an effective cooperation among all subordinated agencies responsible for the various aspects of counter terrorism within states.

But the fight against terrorism cannot be limited to governmental agencies. It is also the duty of every single citizen and of the various communities of civil society. Consequently there is a role for the academic and scientific communities in trying to understand the phenomenon of terrorism, to get new insights and devise defence strategies.

I understand this as being the purpose of the Conference. Today and tomorrow we have a number of presentations by national and foreign distinguished scientists that are supposed to give answers to our concerns and offer solutions to the many problems posed by terrorism.

I wish again much success in your work.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.