

International Terrorism and Intelligence
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I. Introduction

This essay reviews the ways and means, which govern the response of intelligence organizations in Europe and across the Atlantic to the challenges posed by the *El Qaeda* led terrorist activities of the pan-Islamic jihad against Western civilization and in particular against the symbols of the US financial and military power centers such as the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. The intelligence network needed does not exist in its optimal form to day and should therefore be developed further – rapidly of course.

The essay tries to present the major components of the current *World Islamic Front*, also called pan-Islamic terrorism and identifies the ways and means in which the USA and Europe defend themselves against the threat of new militant terrorist attacks against their social fabric, their institutions and infrastructure.

II. The worldwide threat of Pan-Islamic trans-national terrorism

By way of spectacular assaults against the United States on September 11, 2001 the border-crossing Islamic terrorism - initiated and conducted by non-state structures -challenged not only America as such but also symbolically the global capitalist system and thus – next to the USA - other social structures and nations as well. As of now, the situation created on September 11, 2001 dominates the current international situation for all countries albeit in different circumstances and roles.

Today's structure and order of battle of the trans-national pan-Islamic terrorism was established in 1998 with the active participation of high-ranking members of the *Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood*. Bin Laden and his Egyptian allies signed the documents about the formation of the „*World Islamic Front*“. The movement maintains links with like-minded organizations in 55 states. During the war against the Soviet invasion of the country the militant Islamic movement originated on the battlefields at the foothills of the Hindukush in Afghanistan in the early eighties. Today the movement seeks to unite Muslim believers and to eliminate the threat posed to the Islamic world, its religious forces, values and social structures - according to them - by modern western civilization symbolized by the USA.

- *Al Qaeda* seeks to fight the symbols of the modern civilization - in New York and Washington, but also elsewhere
- The movement fights against the traitors of the Islamic beliefs, the so-called un-Islamic Arab-Islamic states that sided with the United States and
- They fight against Israel and the international institutions at the disposal of the modern civilization and those countries and nations sharing the ideas and principles of the modern civilization in Europe and Asia.
- On June 23, 1996 the movement signed and adopted the „Jihad against America because the USA „occupied Saudi Arabia with its two Holy Sites.“

On February 22, 1998 the movement adopted a declaration on the „Jihad against Jews and Crusaders.

Al Qaeda should be seen as the first trans-national terrorist movement of its kind, namely fighting for a global objective in order to frustrate the crusading onslaught of the capitalist modern civilization against the Islamic world.¹ Until recently non state terrorist organizations were concerned about regional issues such as *Action directe* (France), *R.A.F.* (Red Army Faction, Germany), *Brigade rosso* (Italy), *Hisbollah* (Lebanon), *HAMAS* (Palestine). Only some of the money oriented international Mafia organizations specializing in illegal drug traffic, money laundering, illegal car trafficking and trading with human beings, maintain a kind of global networks. These structures are extremely militant, however their goals are non-political, unless they aim at disabling state structures in pursuit of their material objectives.²

- *Al Qaeda* developed new ways of warfare, such as turning planes into rockets (against the World Trade Tower and the Pentagon). As early as 1988, Rick Rescorla, the Officer in charge of Security with the Company *Dean Witter/Morgan Stanley* urged his company to move the headquarters from the World Trade center to a on store building on the other side of the Hudson River, because of the high degree of probability that the World Trade Center could be destroyed by aircraft flown purposefully into the World Trade Center. This Security Officer guided to safety all 2.700 staff members of the company he served on September 11, 2001 after the tower was hit by the terrorist piloted civilian airliner. He himself died under the tower when it collapsed.
- The „fighters“ of *Al Qaeda* are recruited from all over the world - from 40 to 55 countries serving a global cause not a regional one, thus creating a new structure of terrorist fighters. However, most of the fighters a declared Muslims, and the main structures emerged from the Afghan war of the eighties. Therefore, also the *Al Qaeda* pan-Islamic militant movement cannot deny its regional origins, and a discrepancy emerges between the claim of representing a pan-Islamic movement and the limited targets in the Near and Middle East. This can be shown when analyzing the way in which other Muslim populated countries react to the challenges by the extremists. It is to be expected hat with the loss of its „safe haven“ in Afghanistan the *Al Qaeda* movement will lose a great deal of its potential.
- The *Al Qaeda* structure consists of decentralized network structures - including elements of hierarchy and of isolated elements, for reasons of security.
- Bin Laden controls a personal capital amounting to more than 250 million \$ - inherited to a large degree from his father - a construction entrepreneur in Saudi Arabia. An amount of 20 to 50 million US\$ are needed to maintain operations annually. Various methods are used for communication and transfers of funds, including the traditional Arabian hawala system.
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¹ Schneckener, „Netzwerke des Terrors - Charakter und Strukturen des transnationalen Terrorismus“, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Berlin, 2003

² Wieck, Hans-Georg, „Transnationale Gefährdungen der internationalen Sicherheit“ in Band 2, „Neue Deutsche Außenpolitik“, Oldenbourg, 1995;
Neusel, Hans, „Internationale Kriminalität“, in Band 3, „Neue Deutsche Außenpolitik“, Oldenbourg Verlag, 1996

- According to US sources the *Al Qaeda* network includes structures in more than 55 countries. The training facilities were used in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Sudan. The main textbook used comprises 7.000 pages and draws its lessons from the Afghan war.

The *Al Qaeda* Network and the Taliban Rule over Afghanistan

In Afghanistan the Taliban rulers guaranteed the freedom of operations for Al Qaeda. This organization was established during the Afghanistan war in 1982 in response to the Soviet invasion, that began in December 1979. The Afghan defense forces were supported by Saudi Arabia with money, the USA with equipment and Pakistan. However after the withdrawal of the Soviet forces the battle for control over the country continued among rival forces in Afghanistan. In 1988, after the death of the *Al Qaeda* leader Abdollah Azzam - a member of the Muslim Brotherhood - his deputy, Osama Bin Laden followed him as leader of the Structure. (born 1957). In cooperation with leading members of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood Bin Laden transformed the regional operating structure into the pan-Islamic terrorist structure of the „*World Islamic Front*“ engaged in a global war against modern civilization as symbolized by the USA that threatens the Islamic way of life and value system. New tactics were applied such as parallel assaults against US targets, for instances the attacks on the Embassies in Tanzania and in Kenya and the use of sleeper structures. However in spite of the global strategies developed it can be doubted whether the Al Qaida will outlast its loss of the Afghanistan basis, it can be expected that a certain re-orientation on targets in the original areas of operation will take place.

Of course, a war situation in Iraq may change the pattern for the global structure of the *World Islamic Front* may take place.

- Undoubtedly, the Bin Laden movement causes serious problems for the Islam structures all over the world. There will be schools of learning and social structure seriously opposed to the fundamentalist approach preached by bin Laden and his consorts. It is important to follow closely the dialogue within the Islamic communities and states with large Islamic populations.
- Also, there is a need to closely follow the apparent attempts by *Al Qaeda* to acquire knowledge and means in the field of means of mass destruction and rocket capabilities. There is no indication that they succeeded producing such weapons - until now.
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III. The Reaction of the West

1. The Anti-Terror Coalition

The Western world responded to the new global threat with the formation of a broad Anti-Terrorist Coalition. Supported by special forces from some countries, among others the Federal Republic of Germany and Great Britain, the USA destroyed in cooperation with Afghan forces from the northern provinces of the country the Taliban rule over Afghanistan.

The elimination of the Taliban structure was important since they had given the *Al Qaeda* movement operational freedom in Afghanistan. Some experts say that *Al Qaeda* guided the Taliban forces. The international Anti-Terror-Coalition also brought about the UN supported formation of a transitional government under Karzai. In 2002 the national Afghan assembly (Loya Jirga) established a provisional government and decided to organize national elections within the next few years. It remains to be seen whether the internationally recognized and a supported Karzai-Regime will be in a position to remain in control of the whole countryside.

Until now the elimination or capture of the Taliban leader Omar and of the *Al Qaeda* leader Osama bin Laden could not be achieved. It cannot be excluded that some Taliban- and Al Qaeda elements remained operational and continue to do so in Afghanistan. Pakistan joined the Anti Terror Coalition, however the internal situation of Pakistan remains precarious. On the occasion of the most recent local elections Islamic political alliances prevailed in Beluchistan and in the Northwest frontier region (Peshavar). Nevertheless it has to be said that Pakistan remains a crucially needed ally in the struggle against Islamic fundamentalism.

Undoubtedly the current concentration of the USA and of some allies on the threat posed by the possession and use of weapons of mass destruction in the hands of Saddam Hussein/Iraq constitutes a major weakening of the efforts of the USA and of its allies in the conduct of the political and military campaign against the Pan-Islamic Terrorist Organization – put together by bin Laden and in the efforts to establish an early warning system concerning future assaults by the terrorists. According to some US sources - and President Bush supports this version - Iraq and these terrorist organizations are interconnected.

At present, efforts in the USA and in Europe are concentrated on the improvement of the internal security structures and for emergency situations.

Recently the newly established US Ministry for Homeland Defense was inaugurated. It comprises 170 000 employees. This reflects the new legal situation in the USA that affected the rights of all citizens and transformed the United States into a state of war.

In Europe governments agreed to strengthen the powers and competencies of „EUROPOL“, a European organization set up by governments in order to ensure effective cooperation of the police of all member states of the European Union in the fields of combat against international Mafia and terror organizations. 34 police organizations are thus interlinked. EUROPOL also co-operates with the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) that is in charge of the internal US efforts against criminality in the country. An agreement about the cooperation across the Atlantic is in preparation.

In Germany as elsewhere the issue is discussed in what way and on which occasions Federal German forces should or could be deployed in support of the police efforts against criminality. Also, German Forces are deployed for the protection of US Military installations in Germany. There are efforts under way to improve the crisis management capacities of the Federal Government and of the federal states - including plans to revive civil defense structures that were used under the conditions of war.³

³ Meier-Klodt, Cord, „Einsatzbereit in der Kriser? - Entscheidungsstrukturen der Sicherheitspolitik auf dem Prüfstand“, Study prepared by „Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik“, Berlin, 2003.

Intelligence Organizations - for external security and for internal security - focus, of course, nowadays on the activities of the *Al Qaeda* network, their activities, procedures, plans and mechanisms, including the flow of funds, weapons, plans and persons. It is quite obvious that a great deal of information about activities initiated by *Al Qaeda* was available prior to September 11, 2001, but was not correlated to the planning of attacks of that international terrorist activities, such as the training as pilots of US civilian aircraft, undergone by young Arabians in the USA for the execution of terrorist suicidal attacks with airplanes.

2. Prevention of terrorist acts of aggression

The worldwide Anti-Terrorism Coalition could reduce - if cooperating effectively - considerably the freedom of maneuver of *Al Qaeda*. This was achieved in Afghanistan and in parts of Pakistan, but here is room for improvement, in particular by improving the exchanges among intelligence organizations and police, and secondly by improving the instruments of internal security in the USA and in Europe.

3. Combating the causes for terrorist movements and improving the framework conditions of countries predominantly Muslim

Does the Western world strive for a partnership relationship with other living civilizations or does the Western world treat other living cultures with neglect and a sense of superiority? Next to the need for comprehensive answers to this complex question, the Western countries have to reinforce dialogue among Islam forces and among the representatives of the various religions in order to combat abuse of religion for political reasons. It is difficult to imagine that a terrorist powerful Islamic organization would be in a position to impose its will on the complex Islamic world. The Western structures should know more about the thinking of various Islamic forces about bin Laden and his terrorist movement.

IV. The Role of Intelligence in Combating trans-national Islamic Terrorism

1. Based on the experience gained during the *Cold War* with the „*Early Warning System*“⁴ of the North Atlantic Alliance in order to gain sufficient time for the deployment of the NATO Defense forces against an impending attack by Soviet Bloc forces against NATO Europe, it appears highly desirable to establish - based on intelligence provided from various countries - a comprehensive situation assessment on each and everything known with regard to the potential and deployment of the *Al Qaeda* terrorist organization in the Near Middle East and around the world. It takes quite an effort to bring about such an early warning system with

⁴ The „Early Warning System“ of the North Atlantic Alliance was based on intelligence gathered and analyzed with regard to all activities of the Soviet Block countries related directly or indirectly to the armed forces and their deployment for attack on NATO-Europe. The information gathered referred to all aspects of communication and transport as well as civil defense and the mobilization capabilities.

regard to militant actions of *Al Qaeda* for instance by way of suicidal assault against targets in the West or elsewhere. Without systematic analysis of all activities and information directly or indirectly connected with the *Al Qaeda* potential. The lack of analysis of such information was fatal in the case of the training of Arabian pilots in flight schools in the USA, pilots who later on crashed with captured civilian aircraft into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. The training was known to FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation), but no particular investigation was undertaken in order to throw light into the background of this unusual practice. Detailed information about persons and communication systems as well as planning processes are as important to obtain as well as the information deriving from Taliban and *Al Qaeda* fighters taken prisoners as the result of the Afghanistan campaign of the USA and their allies in 2002. The figures regarding the *Al Qaeda* fighters trained in Afghanistan and Sudan differ widely - between 5.000 and 50.000 fighters from 40 to 55 countries. Almost all *Al Qaeda* fighters who were taken prisoners had spent some time in Afghanistan or Pakistan. The establishment of such a situation report resembles partly up to a degree the puzzle that the German Federal Police put together with regard to crimes committed in Germany and their relationship to activities of a number of trans-national criminal Mafia Organizations. This exercise has been undertaken since almost 10 years and has been beneficial for the law enforcement institutions in Germany and Europe.

It is a question whether *Al Qaeda* is in a position to recruit and train new volunteers after the loss of Afghanistan as a safe haven. It is disquieting that still *Al Qaeda* fighters and some of the leading figures including Osama bin Laden can manage to operate in the border region of Afghanistan and Pakistan, since operations against them are feasible in a limited, in a restricted way only. The capture of Sheik Mohammed as one of the leading figure of bin Laden organization is somewhat promising.

Al Qaeda has operated in Afghanistan only, at least mostly during the eighties. After assuming political control over *Al Qaeda* in the late eighties Osama bin Laden transformed *Al Qaeda* in cooperation with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood into a pan Islamic militant organization aiming at challenging the principles of modern civilization and its power centers such as the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in September 2001. His campaign aims also against Saudi Arabia as an un-Islamic state that allowed the USA to occupy the country and the two holy sites in Saudi Arabia.

2. Round Tables and such reunions with government representatives as well as with the police of national intelligence organizations are needed in order to establish a common basis of knowledge and assessment. In Germany such round tables are in operation with regard to the illegal export of dual-purpose goods and of war material. Such round tables would be welcome also on the international stage. They do exist at EUROPOL that interconnects more than 34 police and intelligence structures in Europe regarding *Al Qaeda*. There is also a certain degree of cooperation with FBI, USA.

3. Strengthening of Intelligence Capacities and improvement of access to sensitive information regarding individuals in the USA and in Europe

Norman Mailer, a worldwide known literary figure in the USA expressed his concerns in an article published in International Herald Tribune on February 25, 2003 with the headline „Gaining an Empire, losing Democracy“ and thus describes the change of priorities in the agenda of the current US President George Bush. This concern is shared by many a people

within the USA, but also in Europe regarding the issue of much needed access by law enforcement agencies and intelligence organization to personal data and communication than permissible until now under the constitution and the law. Jonathan Stevenson, editor of Strategic Survey and Senior Fellow for Counter Terrorism at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London (IISS) comments in his article on *How the Europe and America defend themselves* (Foreign Affairs, New York, March/April 2003)⁵ the efforts of both - the US and of the European Union and its member states - in the field of counter-terrorism. The author comes to the conclusion that the USA fare so much better with their activities than Europe. In his opinion the scope of activities against regional and local forms of terrorism as experienced in Europe decades ago, are much too weak and irrelevant in connection with the new threat posed by the pan-Islamic terrorism. As an example he cites the tedious negotiations between France and Great Britain about the closure of the Sangatte refugee camp near Calais - located in the neighborhood of the Channel tunnel - a likely target for a rocket attack. Many refugees from Afghanistan were settled at that Refugee camp.

The USA established recently a new Ministry the Ministry for Homeland Defense with about 170 000 employees. The establishment of this ministry will lead up to a far reaching reorganization of intelligence and police activities with regard of terrorist activities in the USA. The new legislation includes curtails also the rights of the US citizens for his personal sphere that means his Human Rights situation in the country. The Ministry for Homeland Defense is in the process of establishing operational plans for five different types of emergencies (Homeland Security Advisory System). Also, about 56 „Joint Terrorism Task Forces“ will be established each of which will include central, regional and local components. There will also be a Foreign Terrorists Tracking Task Force“ aiming at preventing the entrance into the USA of individuals identified as terrorists.

In **Europe** substantial improvements were introduced in air traffic regarding its security environment. A joint networked national border control structure and a joint data basis for visa-applications and fingerprints was introduced. However, the author of the essay on international security measures comes to the conclusion that Europe - until now - has not done enough and that the USA security is hampered by the lack of sufficient countermeasures in Europe. This judgment is not justified, however it can be stated that the USA maintain a much larger and more effective global system for information collection regarding potential terrorist attacks, and wherever and when ever they cooperate with EUROPOL or individual countries and their security system full cooperation is assured and a number of successes can be noted. So - it is not the alleged lack of security efforts of individual European countries that hampers the effectiveness of Europe's defense but the lack of a globally working European information collection system regarding the identification of suspected persons and their activities. However even there, there are regional areas in which data collection undertaken by Europeans is more effective than that of the United States, for instance in North Africa.

The author also remarks that there are considerable differences between the USA and Europe with regard to the identification of potential threats. European institutions tend to differentiate among more radical and more moderate terrorist groups, whilst the USA perceive of all Islamic structures as potential risks. It should be noted, however, that in recent months restrictions

⁵ Stevenson, Jonathan, „How Europe and America defend themselves“, Foreign Affairs, March/April 2003, New York (pages 75-90)

regarding intelligence activities with regard to Islamic religious associations have been abandoned. The author - somewhat biased against the European continental structures - refers to the fact that there are about 15 million Muslims in Europe - 4 percent of the population, which in general are not integrated into society - and a mere 2 percent of Muslims among the US population, however firmly integrated into the American way of life. European countries - in his opinion - hesitate to take strong actions against Islamic structures for fear of militant reactions by the Muslim population among them. That is not correct - in all fairness. Not only are the USA concerned about the growth of the Black Muslim movement in the USA and in US prisons in particular, nor are these Islamic groups integrated into the US population. World famous sportsman Mohammed Ali has been the symbol of political dissent in the USA representing blacks, adopting Islam believes for reasons of their dissent with the USA as such. The reluctance for adopting quickly and without thorough debates the curtailment of rights of the individual citizen is a reaction to the still vivid recollection of totalitarian statehood in our countries on the continent in the not too distant past. There are also signs of concern that by enhancing the rights and obligations of European Institutions the national sovereignty may be undermined too much. Eventually the European countries are concerned about their internal security also for other reasons - namely the migration pressure from Eastern Europe to the Central and Western European countries.

However, by and large, the significance and effectiveness of EUROPOL is recognized in all European countries - even the United Kingdom and by the USA that is in the process of signing in cooperation agreement with EUROPOL. So far as internal security matters are concerned, the much waited for „one telephone number in Europe for the US authorities“ does exist today. It may be recalled that Henry Kissinger asked when discussion with Europe the perspectives of a Common European Foreign and Security Policy: „What telephone number can I dial, when I want to get an answer to the question: What is the European policy on that or that international issue.“

Regarding extradition to the USA of individuals arrested in Europe - on the basis of European or US information - there are difficulties, since European countries need assurance that the persons involved will not face a death penalty, which is banned in Europe. Also personal data protection sometimes constitutes an obstacle. However, so far AS I could establish practical solution could be found in each case. However, Jonathan Stevenson continues to be worried about the differences of approach towards the terrorism problems we are facing nowadays. It is important not to conclude from differences of approach that there are differences in the goals pursued in parallel and cooperation to cope effectively with the issues of pan-Islamic terrorism. And, it appears that the cooperation of the US institutions with EUROPOL and the expansion of the EUROPOL authority are promising in this respect. Also, it appears that we should improve the intelligence assessment capabilities of common European Institutions such as the European Council and of the European Commission.

It appears that Germany - in comparison with the United States - never downgraded the importance of human intelligence as opposed to signal intelligence in particular in the Near and Central Asian regions. The reason is to be found in the exposure of Germany to internal German terrorist groups seeking the destruction of the democratic and market oriented political structure of Germany. This terrorist structure „Red Army Fraction - R. A. F. - had close links with communist countries of the Soviet controlled Warsaw Pact but also with

countries in the Near and Middle East (Syria, Lebanon, Yemen). However, it is to be recognized that human sources in the Near and Middle East are not always very reliable.

V. Assessment of the current Situation and of the Threat posed by trans-national Terrorism

According to a report of the International Herald Tribune on February 28, 2003 the danger of new terrorist attacks against targets in the United States receded considerably. That may so - or not. Certainly it is impossible to keep a nation and its public transport systems and other institutions in a high state of alert all the time. It is acceptable that the state of permanent alert can be reduced should there be a rather comprehensive knowledge of the structure and whereabouts of the *Al Qaeda* network. Such a degree of knowledge is needed for a credible early warning system. We could sleep rather well during the cold war, mostly let me say, because structures and deployment areas of the forces of the Warsaw Pact countries were well known and the early warning system was capable to recognize fairly early any major changes in the military posture and activities of the Warsaw Pact countries. Is that also the case regarding the *Al Qaeda* Forces? Doubts in the respect cannot be overlooked. After the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, about 1.600 suspects have been arrested, 180 in Europe. Recently a court in Hamburg sentenced the terrorist Mossadeque, a man who was in charge of the planning for the assaults on September 11, 2001.⁶

Nevertheless, it is important to engage the institutions concerned in a project to establish an effective early warning system with regard to the threats posed by *Al Qaeda* and related structures. Without such a framework a great deal of information will remain unused, unrelated to other developments and facts. It appears that in particular in France there is available a fair amount of integrated knowledge capable to assess new facts and indications leading up to prevention of attacks - because of a great deal of experience in dealing with the Arab and Islamic world around the Mediterranean.

Schneckener deploras in his report the poor degree of cooperation among intelligence organizations - on the national as well as on the international level.

So far as the structural approach to the issue of trans-national terrorism is concerned, it is important to undermine the social, political and economic conditions that constitute the breeding ground for such extremist movements. We face negative trends as a result of the Iraq conflict, the ongoing conflict about the future of Palestine and the unsettled situation in Afghanistan to name a few of the circumstances for the emergence of trans-national militance.

However, there is as well a need for an enlarged dialogue with the Islamic world and its spiritual and philosophical centers.

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⁶ Schneckener, Ulrich, „Netzwerke des Terrors - Charakter und Strukturen des transnationalen Terrorismus“, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Berlin, Dezember 2002

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