

B-post

The purpose of this article is to give an introduction to the challenges low intensity conflicts and asymmetric warfare represent. Most low intensity conflicts today take place in the so-called Third World, even though other parts of the world also have experienced this form of generally long lasting conflicts/wars.

While many had expectations about a more peaceful world after the end of the Cold War, the number of "larger" (but more often locally based) conflicts continue to be about 30 per year, also after 1991.

It was on the basis of these general developments that the term (concept) "asymmetric threat" was developed during the 1990s, a concept which is being increasingly discussed. The threats in question are the challenges that have become more important in the aftermath of the Cold War. The new threats differ from the threats of the traditional concept of war, a concept which is based on heavily equipped military forces facing other military forces of the same shape. During the Cold War, this kind of "symmetric" threat formed the basic challenge of the West and its defence- and security systems.

The asymmetric threats that face the developed world are of a very different character than the threat of a conventional invasion. Today, many claim that that the unconventional threats are a greater challenge to the West than the conventional means that are at the disposal of states that refute and challenge Western influence, for example in the Middle East and Asia.

In this report, emphasis will be placed on the main features of the asymmetric threats that have developed in the aftermath of the Cold War. The first two chapters of this paper discuss the development of so-called asymmetric threats and terrorism in general. The third chapter is a case study on the developments after September 11th and the developments in Afghanistan.

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Asymmetric Warfare and Terrorism – An Assessment

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Asymmetric Warfare and Terrorism – An Assessment

By Professor Nils Marius Rekkedal

*“The tyrant dies and his rule is over,
the martyr dies and his rule begins.”
Søren Kierkegaard*

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 ABOUT THIS PAPER

The first two chapters of this paper discuss the development of so-called asymmetric threats and terrorism in general. The third chapter is a case study on the developments after September 11 and the developments in Afghanistan.

1.2 THE “UNCONVENTIONAL THREATS”

The much-discussed so-called *globalisation* has led to significant changes in the world economy. A central feature in this connection is the fact that the recent liberalisation of autocratic states has brought about new and significant chal-

allenges for the new “liberal regimes.” Among other things, increased privatisation of various states’ core functions, like the power monopoly of the state, which has traditionally been based on police and military power, has led to problems in many of the new so-called democracies.

In general, developments in computer technology and telecommunications, with the ever-increasing data transfer rate, have clearly had an impact on the international security agenda. Groupings that represent a threat to the existing state of things now have a better chance to influence future developments. Society has become increasingly open, and for most people, information has been made available in global networks “at the click of a mouse.” These factors have resulted in a dramatic change in the need for intelligence and the ways in which this intelligence is collected and used.

It was on the basis of these general developments that the concept “asymmetric threat” was developed during the 1990s, a concept which is being increasingly discussed. The threats in question are the challenges that have become more important in the aftermath of the Cold War. The new threats differ from the threats of the traditional concept of war; a concept which is based on heavily equipped military forces facing other military forces of the same shape. During the Cold War, this kind of “symmetric” threat formed the basic challenge of the West and its defence- and security systems. The asymmetric threats that face the developed world are of a completely different character than the threat of a conventional invasion. Today, many voices claim that the unconventional threats are a greater challenge to the West than the conventional means that are at the disposal of states that refute and challenge Western influence, for example in the Middle East and Asia.

While these new threats have been developing, the 1990s have also been characterised by the first relatively small increase in the number of low intensity conflicts (LIC) since the 1960s and early 1970s. Examples of the new threats are the constantly rising number of capable actors in the field of chemical, biological and electronic warfare, and also the increasing amount of extremist groupings. These groupings normally concentrate on a single or a few essential issues and tend to wear blinkers while promoting them. Extreme environmentalists, fundamentalist religious groupings, ethnic groupings and political/ideological groups may all serve as examples of extremist groupings. Altogether, these groupings are responsible for the increasing num-

ber of attacks on the forces that they wish to oppose. These forces may be the police and the military capacity of the state in question, the religious symbols of an adversary, state and private property, and other symbols that they perceive as threats against their own strong convictions. At the present, larger and smaller acts of terror are frequently being conducted, most of them in third world countries. To be able to face these new challenges we must improve our ability to map and analyse the threats. This means that we must get a deeper understanding of the underlying factors that form the basis of the asymmetric attack methods that are being developed and used. This should obviously be a prioritised task for all military and police intelligence organisations.¹ In this report, emphasis will be placed on the main features of the asymmetric threats that have developed in the aftermath of the Cold War. We will also shed some light on possible consequences and results of the new attitudes and trends we observe subsequent to the September 11 2001 terror acts against the US.

We will start by describing the more traditional views on what is often referred to as “unconventional threats” in the political and military debate. We may ask the following questions: What are the real developments in the West? Is the threat really increasing? It is difficult to answer these questions with a simple yes or no, since developments greatly depend on a combination of both internal developments in the country in question and threats that are “imported” to Western countries. As an example, the so-called globalisation has facilitated the swift (and sometimes covert) physical transfer of individuals from various conflict areas. This often leads to large movements of refugees within a certain country. The refugees’ goal is often to reach “the Promised Land” (Europe or The US). Consequently, they often also affect the neighbouring countries. This easy and fast physical and electronic transfer of humans and information poses a new set of challenges to the Western security services and to the military establishment.

1.3 WHAT ARE THE THREATS?

In the beginning of the 1990s, the American professor Samuel Huntington, researcher at Harvard University for several years, wrote a much discussed (and criticised) article for the periodical *Foreign Affairs*. In the article he presented his views on developments after the Cold War and the characteristics

of future conflicts. In connection with the recent developments in Afghanistan, the British historian John Keegan has written an editorial in the Daily Telegraph. Keegan's editorial is based on Huntington's article. Keegan wishes to point out some long-term historical lines which he maintains are of relevance to the analysis of present-day developments.

(Huntington) Rejecting the vision of a New World Order, proposed by President Bush senior, he insisted that mankind had not rid itself of the incubus of violence, but argued that it would take the form of conflict between cultures, in particularly between the liberal, secular culture of the West and the religious culture of Islam. Huntington's "clash of civilisations" was widely discussed, though it was not taken seriously by some. Since September 11 (2001) it has been taken very seriously indeed.

If I (Keegan) thought Huntington's view had a defect, it was that he did not discuss what I think the crucial ingredient of any Western-Islamic conflict, their quite distinctively different ways of making war. Westerners fight face to face, in stand-up battle, and go on until one side or the other gives in. They choose the crudest weapons available, and use them with appalling violence, but observe what, to non-Westerners may well seem curious rules of honour. Orientals, by contrast, shrink from pitched battle, which they often deride as a sort of game, preferring ambush, surprise, treachery and deceit as the best way to overcome an enemy.

This is not to stereotype Afghans, Arabs, Chechens or any other Islamic nationality traditionally hostile to the West as devious or underhand, nor is it to stereotype Islam in its military manifestation. The difference in styles of warfare is borne out by the fact of military history. Western warfare had its origins in the conflicts of the citizens of the Greek city-states who fought to defend the strictly defined borders of their small political units. Beyond their world the significant military powers, however, were nomads, whose chosen method was the raid and the surprise attack. Once they acquired a superior means of mobility, in the riding horse, they developed a style of warfare which settled people found almost impossible to

resist.

The Arabs were horse-riding raiders before Mohammed. His religion, Islam, inspired the raiding Arabs to become conquerors of terrifying power, able to overthrow the ancient empires both of Byzantium and Persia and to take possession of huge areas of Asia, Africa and Europe. It was only very gradually that the historic settled people, the Chinese, the Western Europeans, learnt the military methods necessary to overcome the nomads. They were the methods of the Greeks, above all drill and discipline. The last exponents of nomadic warfare, the Turks, were not turned back from the frontiers of Europe until the 17th century. Thereafter the advance of Western military power went unchecked. One Islamic state after another went down to defeat, until in 1918 the last and greatest, the Ottoman empire, was overthrown. After 1918 the military power of the Western world stood apparently unchallengeable.

The Oriental tradition, however, had not been eliminated. It reappeared in a variety of guises, particularly in the tactics of evasion and retreat practised by the Vietcong against the United States in the Vietnam war. On September 11, 2001 it returned in an absolutely traditional form. Arabs, appearing suddenly out of empty space like their desert raider ancestors, assaulted the heartlands of Western power, in a terrifying surprise raid and did appalling damage².

In a newspaper article in October 2001, the British historian Sir Michael Howard similarly maintained that there is “little new under the Sun”, also when it comes to rebellion and terror.

*History can provide many parallels and precedents for the conflict ahead. When President Bush warned the American people that they were facing “a new kind of war” he was quite right. Apart (as *The Times* has pointed out) from the expedition of the Marines to deal with the Barbary pirates at the beginning of the 19th century, it will be something new in the American experience.*

But the Europeans of the Middle Ages, to say nothing of the

Romans, would have found nothing strange about it. They were used to fighting **latrunculi** — robbers, pirates, brigands, outlaws, “the common enemies of mankind”. But the Romans distinguished between this and war against a “legitimate” enemy, **legitimus hostis**. This distinction was inherited by the medieval Church, and was eventually established in our own doctrines of “the just war”.

It is worth bearing this in mind when we are discussing whether we are embarking on a “just war”, or even war at all. One of the most important criteria of a “just war” in the Middle Ages was whether it was waged by a “lawful authority”. In the aftermath of the decline of the Roman hegemony, Europe was ruled by a myriad squabbling warlords. Some, through the support of the Church and the Emperor, achieved “legitimacy”, and founded what eventually became “states”. Others dwindled to the status of robber barons, whose use of force was illegitimate and against whom force could legitimately be used — and without any of the restraints that applied in wars between “legitimate” authorities. It was only after the extirpation of such *latrunculi* from European society in the 14th and 15th centuries that any kind of peaceful order was possible. There is, of course, a world of difference between these *latrunculi* and robber barons on the one hand, and the religious fanatics with whom we have to deal today. But what they have in common is their status as outlaws, whose use of force is illegitimate and in whose suppression force can legitimately be used. That the use of force against such people constituted war of a kind was generally accepted, but the Romans called this *guerra*; something quite distinct from *bellum*, war waged against a “legitimate enemy”.

The distinction may seem semantic, but in fact it is profound. For most people today, perhaps the Americans most of all, war means *bellum*: armed conflict with a distinct and sovereign political entity, Wilhelmine or Nazi Germany, Tojo’s Japan, Saddam Hussein’s Iraq; a conflict waged against an enemy who can be defeated in the field and on whom peace can be imposed by armed forces to whose requirements and operations all other national

activities must be subordinated.

For the Americans it was Pearl Harbor all over again. In Britain there have been curious overtones of 1914, with right-wing intellectuals welcoming the end of a long period of decadence and the opportunity to show they were made of the same sterling stuff as their grandfathers...

...Over the past 500 years Western states have been so successful in establishing a monopoly of violence within their own territories that such a guerra has become a matter primarily for the police. But a quite useful analogy with the situation we face today is that which confronted European states, not least Britain, in maintaining order in their imperial possessions. There also we were faced with rebels who challenged the established order, often using terrorist tactics, who saw themselves as “freedom fighters” and were often prepared to martyr themselves in their cause. There also they attracted considerable external support, not least from the United States.

Success in dealing with them demanded that they should be isolated from the rest of the population, and not accepted as their champions. In dealing with them, the use of armed force was usually ancillary, wisely termed in the British Army “Operations in Aid of the Civil Power” and anyhow used as a last resort. The introduction of martial law, when it occurred, was almost always a confession of failure and made matters considerably worse. We had to leave both Palestine and Ireland with our tails between our legs. Those are the precedents which terrorists study in devising their strategies. How widely are they studied in the US Army today?

Today we are threatened by a transnational conspiracy, not against any specific national or imperial authority, but against the entire international order. In dealing with it the rhetoric and expectations of “war” are counter-productive and much military experience irrelevant. With skilful political management and patient police-work, backed up where necessary by armed force “in aid of the civil power”, this particular conspiracy can, perhaps, be eradicated. But “the war against terrorism” cannot be won, for terrorism will always be available as a weapon in the hands of

people desperate and ruthless enough to use it. One would like to believe that the world is becoming so peaceful, just and prosperous that such people will soon no longer exist. But I would not like to bet on it. ³

Keegan attributes the “Oriental predilection” to a style of warfare that depended on the mobility of the horse to conduct raids and surprise attacks to conquer parts of Asia and Europe. Keegan sees a relationship between the North Vietnamese and FNL tactics of evasion and retreat during the Second Vietnam War and a return to “an absolutely traditional form” on September 11 when the attackers “appearing suddenly out of empty space”. The West’s answer to the attacks is likewise traditional: relentless and massive retaliation against the terrorists in a struggle between “settled, creative, productive Westerners and predatory, destructive Orientals.”

Sir M. Howard looked on the terrorists from another perspective. He argued that using the term “war” elevated the al-Qa’eda terrorists to the status of belligerents when they are no more than criminals are. Terrorism is a dangerous anti-social activity – much like drug trafficking – that can be reduced to minimum levels but never totally eliminated. Furthermore, war sets in motion a national psychology, stoked by the mass media, that demands political leaders take immediate military action, preferably conducted with great violence. Sir Howard described the terrorists as neither representative of nor approved by Islam (as a religion). The terrorists are the ones able to appeal to the disaffected in Muslim states, and those unable to come to terms with the challenges to Islamic culture and values – “at war” with the West and its “un-godly”, secular and materialistic culture. He foresees that the terrorist network will continue to exist – weakened but still dangerous enough to require an extended campaign of “secrecy, intelligence, political sagacity, quit ruthlessness, covert actions that remain covert, (and) above all infinite patience.” ⁴

Thus far (March 2002) the West’s response has followed Keegan’s model, being relentless, violent and (partly) successful at driving Taliban and al-Qa’eda out of the major part of Afghanistan. But a clear-cut “classical” victory is not at hand.

1.4 HOW DO WE DEFINE ASYMMETRIC WARFARE?

I find it important to underline a fact that is often misunderstood. As the quotations above illustrate, asymmetric warfare is *not* a new historical factor.

In its most purist form, **asymmetric warfare** is basically a method to exploit one's own strengths in order to fight the relative weaknesses of the enemy. In general, asymmetric threats are therefore used when one of the parties realises that it is not capable of facing the enemy with so-called *conventional* means. There may be many reasons for this. One party may simply lack the necessary political and military strength to face the adversary, which in turn makes it necessary to use other means to withstand the pressure.

Iraq under its president Saddam Hussein may serve as an example of this kind of dilemma. In 1991 they tried to fight a coalition led by the US with conventional forces. They were militarily beaten and had to accept that Kuwait regained its independence. However, the regime in Baghdad never accepted any political defeat but chose to continue its policy of confrontation with the West/US by other means. Iraq has ignored all criticism from the rest of the world and has – in spite of embargoes and sporadic military actions against the country – continued to defy the West. As a result, the US has had to keep large and expensive military forces in the region, and at the present we see no quick and easy solution to the problem. Evidently, the regime in Baghdad remains safely in power. Maybe it is time to ask who really won the Gulf War? There is no doubt that it is possible for a state to take on great powers like the US by facing the enemy with asymmetric means, even if this would be impossible by the use of conventional military means. In today's political reality, the asymmetric challenges to the West generally come from the second and third world, from states or groupings that wish to fight the developed world. However, asymmetric thinking and methods of action may also be used against multinational companies, transnational financial institutions and/or other kinds of international organisations like the UN.

An well-organised adversary of the West/US will employ weapons and tactics that include an element of surprise. This is to prevent the enemy from facing the attack in a planned and structured manner. Use of asymmetric means may reduce the significance of the enemy's technological superiority or even turn it against him. Asymmetric attacks presuppose that the attacker wishes to exploit the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of the enemy.

A skilful actor that gives priority to asymmetric warfare will *design a strategy*, the purpose of which is to fundamentally change the battleground. The attacker may choose to operate in an environment that makes it difficult for the enemy to use his superior heavy equipment effectively. This also includes air power. As an example, the insurgent may choose to fight in larger cities or developed areas. By choosing to fight in an unfavourable area (as seen from the stronger part), he may force the enemy to choose between great losses of human lives or letting the enemy get away. By making it difficult for a strong enemy to effectively exploit his military capacity, the enemy is degraded, and this makes his military superiority less relevant. There are simply very few good targets to take out if a primary objective is to reduce the personnel casualty of ones own forces or the collateral damage to the local civilian population.

There is often a widespread fear of the so-called “CNN-effect”, which means that media is able to transform the attitudes towards the military efforts in a given area from positive to negative in a very short period of time. This may be done by attaching weight to the negative sides of the military efforts, like reporting about civilian casualties in the battle zone. The reports of American soldiers being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu in 1993 may serve as a classic example of this fast way of influencing the opinion. Shortly after, the political leadership in Washington obviously felt the pressure, and since the conflict was not important enough for the Americans to continue, they gave up their political objectives and withdrew from the conflict.

Asymmetric threats may manifest themselves in many ways, but the general feature is that the weaker party wishes to avoid the main forces of the adversary. A skilfully led rebel movement will seek to develop methods that may limit/control its losses. It will only fight when it is certain that the fight will be to its own advantage. At the *strategic* level, a skilful asymmetric actor will wish to exploit the fears of the civilian population. This will reduce the support for the democratic processes in democratic countries. Alternatively, in regimes where democracy has not prevailed, it will undermine the support for the regime in power. Skilful rebels will also make sure that the regime’s alliances with other states and groupings that oppose the rebels are compromised. In this connection, threats have a strong *psychological* effect and come

as a supplement to ordinary physical destruction, which always frightens the population. If ordinary people feel that the state is unable to protect them, their loyalty to the regime in power may be rapidly reduced.

As mentioned above, a good example of asymmetric warfare where the anti-Western coalition was victorious is the UN Operation in Somalia in 1992/1993. The end result was that the West in reality gave up. Through a deliberate campaign directed against the international force (and especially against the American contingent), one of the clan fractions was able to prevent any normalisation of the situation, which would have threatened the power base of the fraction. Potential attacks against international forces or Western citizens (especially Americans), and also against Western properties or territories, increases the need for flexible and sometimes unconventional responses to meet the security requirements of the deployed forces. Possible ways to react in the conflict area of interest may include *Peace-Support Operations* (PSO) or other kinds of Western efforts.

At the *tactical* level, an adversary may force the main actor to shift tactics. This may be achieved by launching attacks that are difficult for the Western forces to prevent or defend against, or by playing on the Western fear of taking military casualties. This may include sporadic terrorist actions or possibly larger attacks, both physical and electronic, on critical Western national infrastructure. Probably the most spectacular attack until now is the terrorist attack on American symbols like the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon in September 2001. An asymmetric enemy may also threaten to perform terror acts or produce and spread negative descriptions of complicated Western-dominated crisis management and Peace-Support Operations. He may also seek to bring about economic breakdown, civil disobedience and organised crime.

The Colonial Wars in the 1950s and 60s may serve as an example not only of the potential but also of the *limitations* of asymmetric warfare. The challenges that face us today in approximately 30 ongoing low intensity conflicts are the same as they were at that time. Western forces are involved in several of these conflicts, and especially in Peace-Support Operations. The main future threats, however, will probably be different. In connection with the ongoing asymmetric conflicts, the threat of *Weapons of Mass Destruction* (WMD) represents a new dimension. Such weapons are now being devel-

oped in many countries in the Middle East and Asia, and the production includes inexpensive means of delivery for these weapons. The rapid spread of ballistic missiles is a potential threat to Western countries, which has led to the American plans to develop an anti-ballistic missile defence, to which Russia and China are extremely critical. There are also other means to break down an organised modern society. In this connection, the rapidly increasing significance of information systems and electronics in general is very important. Even though the West is clearly in the lead, this is no guarantee that information technology may not be used against the West.

The numerous attacks with computer worms and viruses are only a “warm-up” to what may come in the future. We have probably only seen the beginning of what may turn into a “cyberwar” within a 10-15 year perspective. The significance of future information operations (IO) is hard to predict but it is not a given fact that the West will have the upper hand in the future. Many people regard the IO threat as limited. Assessments have also been made on the probability that WMD weapons/systems may actually be used. There is an increasing number of actors in the second and third world that have such weapons at their disposal. We may no longer rule out the possibility that WMD weapons may be used.⁵ It would be naive not to assume that terrorist groupings will have effective biological and chemical weapons at their disposal within a 5-10-year perspective.⁶

In conflicts where rebels face regimes that are supported by the West, a skilful rebel leadership will probably choose to fight by asymmetric principles. It is also probable that the various kinds of threats will come from very different groupings that are able to co-operate against what is perceived as a common enemy: the West and all it represents. A thought experiment may illustrate this. There is a distinct possibility that conventional terrorism and guerrilla warfare may be combined with “cyber-attacks” on infrastructure. The purpose will then be to damage important military (government-friendly) information- and communications systems. In such a situation, even a Western great power could suffer greatly if the attack were to be launched by a highly motivated, well educated and well-equipped grouping, even if it were to consist of only 50 members. An attack like this could have a far greater effect than the size of the grouping would indicate (again we need only to refer to the terrorist attacks against New York and Washington). We should,

however, remember that until now, nobody has perished as a result of an information operation. If the purpose is to frighten and kill, the terrorists still have to use conventional weapons and explosives (or WMD in the future?).

There is an obvious need to improve the collection and analysis of intelligence in order to face the new threats. The purpose of gathering this intelligence is not only to produce warnings and threat assessments, but also to support military operations in areas where the use of asymmetric warfare may be expected. We may question whether the traditional Western post-Cold War processes of intelligence collection and analysis have been adapted to dealing with the new challenges. The processes of intelligence collection and analysis should be continuously developed to ensure that real options are available to face unexpected (e.g. asymmetric) threats. There is great need for improved and cost effective collection, processing and analysis of intelligence. There is also great need to customise intelligence for the *users*, which could enable them to deal with the new kinds of asymmetric threats. We have reason to question whether the traditional means of collection are the best options we have to face the new asymmetric threats.

The goal should therefore be to create “tailored” or user-adapted intelligence. Alternatively, the intelligence organisations could deliver raw information directly to the users, information, which they could process and analyse themselves. The latter is hardly the path to follow, given the huge experience and insight that is needed to understand and predict these new threats.

Traditional intelligence is presently based on a comprehensive use of technology. Today, 10 years after the Cold war, it is still marked by the demands that originated from the need to meet a possible major attack from the Soviet Union. Even though technological equipment is still vital to monitor and register the traditional challenges, it is hardly sufficient to face the increasing number of “low-tech” rebel movements and terrorist organisations. Technological surveillance is still important to monitor electronic activity and communications, including the electronic use of space. There is reason to emphasise that to avoid surprises, electronic monitoring of transnational terrorist bases in various countries and also of activity in countries like North Korea and Iraq.⁷

However, effective use of intelligence against asymmetric threats cannot be based solely on electronic means of collection. We should bear in mind

that in the third world, orderlies/messengers, drums and smoke signals are still important means of communication that work well in local areas. Only a limited number of Westerners are able to “read” this kind of communication between rebel groups. Accordingly, there is a need for human intelligence (HUMINT) and a comprehensive use of open source intelligence (OSINT) to acquire a sufficient amount of acceptable intelligence about conditions in the second and third world. Without such intelligence it may prove impossible to reveal the anti-Western plans of the more qualified terrorist groupings. The challenges are enormous, and when dealing with this type of conflicts, another resource will prove to be essential; regional experts (specialists on the regions in question) who are familiar with the local culture and mentality. Without such insight it is difficult to find the appropriate (and well-adapted) countermeasures.

1.5 THE ASYMMETRIC THREATS

At the present there exist *several definitions* of asymmetric threats. Most of these definitions are Western, and the majority is made by Americans who prepare the military doctrines. It is important to notice, however, that other views on asymmetric threats and modern threats do exist. Especially China and some other industrialised countries that are sceptical about the West and Western thoughts in general have made theoretical contributions in this field.

One central US document is the “US Joint Publication 1, Joint Warfare of Armed forces of the United States”. In the document, “asymmetric engagements” are defined as “battles between dissimilar forces.”⁸

The American research and development institution “US Defense Advances Research Projects Agency” (DARPA) maintains that asymmetric warfare is: “warfare activities with fewer and less-easily specified objectives.” Asymmetric warfare normally involve “small numbers of actors and/or force-participants, using unconventional tactics that often have high impact (political or material) relative to the force level involved.”⁹

The technological gap between *the developed world* and the *developing countries* in terms of scientific and military advances is becoming larger each day. However, there is a steady increase in technology that is available to developing countries and various “angry actors” that wish to cause damage to

the more industrialised nations. New technology is becoming available and affordable at an ever-increasing pace. These new actors already have a larger range of weapons and technology at their disposal, which may be used against the West. This is in stark contrast to the situation during the Cold War, when military technology (and technology in general) tended to be jealously guarded by the superpowers. The rapid increase in “cheap” air transport and the unrestricted transfer of knowledge and information (e.g. via the Internet) represent new and unprecedented possibilities for asymmetric actors.

By exploiting simple technology and developing well-adapted tactics, a group may seriously harm the effect of the enemy’s superior weapons and means of communication. Both *high* and *low-tech* countermeasures may be used to exploit the known vulnerabilities of even the most advanced Western weapons systems. As an example, information operations may harm critical Western infrastructure, including major computer networks. This could paralyse the whole system of communications, transport, power production and industrial production for a period of time. Other kinds of information operations could be to manipulate the media or conduct other kinds of psychological operations. Thus, information operations may be the enemy’s tool to exploit the “uncontrollable” international news industry. The Taliban regime and especially bin Laden himself attached weight to this means of controlling the media when they “guided” the few journalists who were allowed into the country, with the obvious goal of making them describe the American bombing as “barbaric”. Also in previous conflicts in the 1990s this means of influencing Western decision-makers via the media has proved fairly effective, last time during the conflict in Kosovo in 1999.

A nightmare scenario is of course non-conventional attacks by well trained terrorists equipped with chemical or biological weapons. Use of such weapons could seriously interfere with Western military operations.

But in practice, this kind of warfare is far more dangerous if so-called “rough states” should find it suitable for the purpose to give terrorist groups access to such weapons. The use of this kind of weapons against civilian targets, with the objective to undermine popular support for interventions against “rough states” and/or terrorist organisations, seems to be a much more probable scenario today than just a few years ago. It may also be an effective means to prevent states (especially in the third world) from supporting or

joining Western coalitions. In this connection, a representative of the British Ministry of Defence has stated:

Our increasing dependence on high technology to provide our battle-winning edge, and the widening disparity between our military capabilities and those of potential adversaries, may lead potential aggressors to adopt alternative weapons or unconventional strategies, (including) asymmetric warfare.” According to the British view, the reason for this is that “integration of information systems into military operations offers significant advantage, but also introduces new vulnerabilities.”¹⁰

The fact that British forces 10 years ago (1991, in the Gulf War) faced an adversary who had chemical and possibly biological weapons makes us take the asymmetric threat very seriously indeed. For the same reasons, Great Britain has allocated significant resources to the improvement of the chemical and biological defence. Many resources have also been spent on research in this field. The ambition is to enable the country to warn against asymmetric attacks, to fight them, and to be able to restore the country in the aftermath of such attacks.

In early 2001, the American Department of Defence warned that the national information structure was very vulnerable. The *Central Intelligence Agency* (CIA) also stated/warned that the two main threats against American national security are hostile information operations and the use of WMD. These were considered to be the two most realistic threats against the US *before* the terrorist acts on September 11th 2001. The use of WMD could be the means an opponent needed to face the conventional and nuclear superiority of the US, and the attack would be a direct hit against the US. In a press release, the *US Defense Intelligence Agency* (DIA) stated that:

“Many forms of asymmetric attack are possible- (including) terrorism, guerrilla operations and the use of WMD”. In the spring 2001, the DIA also stated that: “ Because of our dominant military position, we are very likely to be the focus of numerous asymmetric strategies, as weaker adversaries attempt to advance their interests

while avoiding a direct engagement with US military on our terms. If forced into a direct conflict with USA, those same adversaries are likely to seek ways of levelling the playing field”.¹¹

The new American Quadrennial Defense Review predicts that American forces and the US will be faced with “increasingly sophisticated asymmetric challenges involving the use of chemical, biological and possible nuclear weapons; attacks against the information systems of our forces and national infrastructure.”¹² We also have to be prepared for rebellions, terrorism and major environmental catastrophes. The document also states that future enemies may:

“... employ asymmetric methods to delay or deny US access to critical facilities; disrupt our command, control, communications and intelligence networks; or inflict higher than expected casualties in an attempt to weaken our national resolve”.

It is also worth noticing that usually; the conception of asymmetric treats refers to extremists from the Middle East who has a limited ability to damage Western interests. Also, terrorist acts are usually viewed as local and/or regional in scope. But subsequent to September 11, this view will have to be nuanced. In 2000, the Chinese People’s Army published a series of studies on military theory, in which asymmetric warfare and connected tactics are regarded as important factors in any future conflict with the West (read: the US). Possible tactics are:

... “hacking into web-sites, targeting financial institutions, terrorism, assassinating US financiers, using the media and conducting urban warfare are among the methods considered by the PLA, these studies are driven by the efforts of the PLA to modernise their IW/IO capabilities”.¹³

According to these new theories, the Chinese maintain that at the present, no country is able to face the Western conventional and nuclear capacity. This is why the People’s Army has attached great weight to the development of new

technology in the fields of information operations and “cyber warfare”. This includes the use of viruses to neutralise or possibly wipe out the enemy’s political, economic and military information, including his command and control infrastructure. The Chinese expression used in this new school of military theory is “unrestricted warfare”. Spokesmen of the People’s Army claim that by a systematic use of information operations and other means of “unrestricted warfare”, China could very well be able to outmanoeuvre Western high-tech sensors, electronically guided weapons systems and their countermeasures. The People’s Army also maintains that through an advanced and well-prepared IO campaign combined with systematic attacks on the enemy’s computer networks, China will be able to place the enemy’s population in a state of panic. The objective is to paralyse the enemy’s electricity supply, banking system, telephone/communications system and mass media.

Asymmetric thinking includes most areas in a modern society. Modern asymmetric thinking presupposes that well-adapted strategies and tactics are developed. The purpose of this is to create a battlefield where one’s own weapons and trained personnel can compensate for the adversary’s *strong sides*. In this study we find it useful to define asymmetric threats as an attempt to turn the adversary’s strong sides against him, to turn them into weaknesses. This is done by means that are clearly different from the “normal” ways of conducting operations.

2 ASYMMETRIC WARFARE – INSTRUMENTS AND MEANS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the future, two enemies that enter into war against each other will have to handle an array of new threats. To create a proper defence, an actor has to be prepared to disrupt, degrade or directly destroy the military capacity of the enemy. According to recent studies, asymmetric actors may be subdivided into the following main groups.¹⁴

1. The increasing number of states in the second and third world that have WMD at their disposal already pose a significant threat to Western military dominance. The challenge will become especially acute if the access to such weapons is combined with access to long-range ballistic missiles or

cruise missiles. Even though we have reason to believe that these states lack the knowledge to make use of such weapons systems in a short-term perspective, the very existence of these weapons is a major threat to regional security. This is especially the case since even important allies may hesitate to intervene militarily against regional aggression if they fear that WMD may be used against them.

2. The use of so-called “cyber-based warfare” and the build-up of a selection of high-tech sensors, communication systems with weapon systems to match are in itself a significant challenge. This kind of *niche strategy*, with clear priority given to technology, is not only capable of destroying the enemy’s military and civilian information systems, but also enables an actor to conduct attacks on the enemy’s infrastructure. Such attacks may, if well conducted, cause severe damage to the increasingly information-based Western economies.

3. By choosing the right strategy, an adversary may be able to face the superior Western military capacity. He may choose to fight in major cities or in inaccessible jungle terrain. These are typical examples of areas in which it is difficult to employ traditional conventional forces like Western air power or large military fleet concentrations. So-called “targeting” – the ability to find and analyse target data before attacking concrete targets – is also rendered difficult under such circumstances.

4. The concept of *command and control warfare* should also be re-evaluated. Today, the term is mainly used on the operational and tactical levels. Nevertheless, in the fight against terrorism, it may prove effective to go for the leaders of the terrorist organisations. The main reason for focusing on bin Laden is not because he planned the terrorist act on September 11, but because his very person (to himself and others) represents some kind of “personified god”, a kind of new Arabic “Saladin” to many Muslims. It is often this kind of leadership (under the right circumstances) that inspires “angry young men” to become foot soldiers in terrorist and rebel movements. If such leaders can not be neutralised, rebellions will keep emerging. (If J. Keegan’s analogy holds true, the al-Qa’eda terrorists and its protectors are reverting to a traditional pattern of evasion and retreat, and one might expect future terrorist attacks (“ambushes”) against Western (especially US) targets in response.)

The threats these actors pose may be characterised by the terms WMD, information operations and non-conventional operations (NCO). In reality, the phenomena have existed in some shape or other since the dawn of organised warfare. The new element is that in the last decade, the possibilities to carry out such threats have increased dramatically, and correspondingly, the potential significance of this kind of warfare has also increased.

What is new is not that groups and states make use of armed force against each other. The new element is that the new technology enables even small and politically marginal groups to implement fanatic visionary plans in a much more spectacular and destructive way than was possible only 50 years ago. Dedicated and fanatic groups do not even need to have advanced technology at their disposal. Even simple means may be sufficient to create a major asymmetric effect at the local/tactical level.

Neither should we forget that the weapons most used in low intensity conflicts are machetes and Kalashnikov automatic rifles. A new feature may be that if terrorists or rebels manage to choose the right high-tech means, the effect may be very strong in local scenarios. It may prove sufficient to use burning oil drums to “blind” laser guided weapons, or use inexpensive but specialised jammers to counter various types of electronically guided weapons. Civilians have also been used as “human shields” to protect own forces. This often takes place in densely built-up areas in order to prevent the enemy from using his most harmful weapons without risking the “CNN-effect”. These factors primarily affect Western forces, not only because Western forces always wish to minimise the risk of so-called “collateral damage”, but also because it is important to their home opinion that the country’s forces should be on “high moral ground”. If used correctly, such “unconventional means” may be very effective, especially from a terrorist leader’s point of view.

2.2 RELEVANT ASYMMETRIC METHODS

We should bear in mind some common features of the methods used by the four main groups of actors mentioned above. The first is that any threat may be carried out in a variety of ways. The range, speed and accuracy in the carrying out of threats have increased in the last few years. Traditional means of delivery are usually fighter-bombers, missiles, rocket systems and Special

Forces. Alternative asymmetric means of delivery are suitcase bombs, commercial vehicles and aircraft, and various public means of transportation, including aircraft, vessels and private cars. In fact, the most destructive asymmetric attacks on civilian targets in North America and Japan since 1960 were never based on military platforms. Accordingly, threats based on the following factors have gained increased significance:

- High tech sensors, communications equipment and weapons systems delivered by “rough states” or non-state actors like transnational criminal organisations.
- The use of civilian resources like the Internet and images taken by commercial satellites, and also the increasing amount of stray advanced weapons from the Soviet era could facilitate better operational planning and correct *targeting*. This could increase the damage caused by asymmetric attacks.
- Ironic as it may be, the West has made the task increasingly easy for asymmetric actors by becoming (unnecessarily?) dependent on the enormous amounts of information that is distributed on the mostly unregulated Internet.
- In most cases, both state organs and the populations of Western countries in general are now extremely dependent on their national critical infrastructures, and especially on government and private servers, telecommunications and Internet servers. These are all possible targets for asymmetric attacks. Consequently, one of the most prioritised questions for Western states is how to face the possible and destructive “cyber” or “cyber-based” attacks.

In the development of information technology, the West is clearly in the lead. Satellites with IR capabilities continuously monitor large parts of the world. But the vulnerability of Western states to “cyber-based” information operations and also to the more traditional types of information operations like psychological warfare and perception warfare has increased. Ironically enough, the more digitalised the World gets, the more vulnerable it becomes to electronic attacks. Both states and their armed forces are developing in a direction that make them more vulnerable to such attacks. Weapon systems that are

based on mini computers are used in precision attacks. E-mail has become an absolute necessity for military communication. The whole system of logistics has become digitalised. An aspect that further increases our vulnerability is the fact that in logistics, our minds are set on delivery “just in time”. This kind of mentality already represents a problem in industry and production even in peacetime. A minor work conflict may rapidly halt production in a third country. There have been numerous examples of this already in Western countries.

So-called “insiders”, “rogue hackers” and possible hostile military jamming- and eavesdropping systems may exploit these developments. When it comes to registered security breaks, with the subsequent loss of data and therefore also economic losses, the guilty part is in most cases one’s own employees and not external hackers, as we are often led to believe by the mass media. Furthermore, the use of non-technological information operations directed against much more capable and technologically advanced conventional forces was demonstrated during the Kosovo air campaign in 1999, when Belgrade to a great extent “won” the psychological war against NATO.

In terms of cyber-based information operations, the West is becoming increasingly vulnerable as the capacity within the field grows. This is the case not only for the military sector, but also for civilian and commercial life.

One of the more well-known virus attacks was a so-called *distributed denial of service*, directed against Internet-based companies like Yahoo, Amazon and E-bay in 1999 and 2000. Another virus that caused significant damage was the “I LOVE YOU” e-mail virus in May 2000. (It has been estimated that the damage caused by the latter virus cost Western business approx. US\$ 7 billion.)

In the spring 2001 the FBI, according to US newspapers, reported that the amount of cyber attacks in the US had doubled in one year. There is also a genuine threat that asymmetric adversaries may conduct information operations strategically on the cyber- and psycho-political arenas. The purpose would then be to create mass hysteria in the civil society. This kind of “cyberwar” may reduce the state leadership’s ability to make rational decisions. While, until now, amateur hackers are the ones that have attracted most publicity, the real threats are based on the skills of professional hackers (*cyber mercenaries*). These are extremely competent individuals who normally work in state institutions or in private intelligence centres serving the open market. It is

their profession and they are often very good at it.

A good example of the latter is the Colombian drug cartels' widespread use of *cyber mercenaries* to install and operate extremely advanced and wiretapping-proof communications systems. Similar developments have been registered in Amsterdam, where local criminals have used professional hackers to monitor and disrupt police communication- and information systems in the city. The typical amateur hacker has a limited scope. He is satisfied with "playing in his own office" and does not travel around much in comparison with the professional hacker, who is very mobile indeed. The professional hacker works for whoever pays well, almost as an ordinary "workman". This is mainly why intelligence organisations take a keen interest in the connections between terrorist organisations and hackers. The Soviets and the countries of the former East Bloc educated many skilful hackers. This was part of the development of information warfare as a possible "weapons system". Even though the Soviet Union and the Communist Bloc are now part of history, a number of "wild cards" remains. These are remnants of the previous surveillance and intelligence communities. These people are now available on the open market. It is also simple to buy so-called "directed-energy weapons" that may be used to "boil" unprotected circuit boards. Such weapons may still be purchased legally in the Baltic states.¹⁵

An well-organised asymmetric adversary may – at least in theory – at any given time initiate a *strategic* economic operation directed against private economic interests in parts of the West. One of the main fears is that the attacker may exploit the various systems of *E-payment* – electronic systems for transfer of money – on which world trade has become totally dependent. If such a situation were to emerge, it would be very difficult to handle effectively in a short-term perspective. One reason for this is the limited security that is built in the existing financial systems. It would take time for Western governments and the international community to fight this kind of threats. To turn off the computers is no more a realistic alternative.

2.3 INFORMATION OPERATIONS AND "NON-CONVENTIONAL OPERATIONS"

In general, information operations (IO) are actions taken to reach one's own objectives. The purpose is normally to influence decision-makers. This is achieved by influencing the adversary's information and/or information sys-

tems while at the same time protecting one's own information and/or information systems. The target may very well be the opponent's national economy, which means that could be launched on public telecommunications, computer networks, finance and banking systems, and also the energy supply (the national grid, oil and gas distribution). Since we have become extremely dependent on information and information systems to make the necessary decisions, IO assaults represent a very important asymmetric threat to the West. This dependency on information systems makes it possible for hostile individuals and/or organisations to conduct operations that may severely harm us. Information operations become especially dangerous if they are combined with terror attacks, for instance with chemical weapons. As an example, we may imagine the situation if an asymmetric actor were to attack the communications system of a major city's rescue service, while at the same time launching a terror attack against civilians. This could in turn be combined with manipulating the mass media, and would create a powerful synergy effect. The effect would greatly exceed the effect gained if only one of the methods was to be used. At the present, it has been registered a number of cases where information operations have been conducted to infiltrate or disturb military and civilian IT systems, including systems of command and logistics. The usual procedure has been to enter the systems, modify data and withdraw, preferably without the user's knowledge.

Offensive information operations may be subdivided into three categories:

1. Psychological operations. The ability to influence the will of another society. This manipulation includes not only political and diplomatic positions and attitudes, but also the issuing of communiqués, and more traditional methods like distribution of leaflets, radio- and television broadcasts. Today, data communication is also being “dumped” on individuals of authority, like politicians, journalists and other “useful idiots” who may influence the opinion. The effect of the message may be enhanced by use of covert or overt acts of terror, like taking hostages or threatening to kill large numbers of people.

2. Attacks on Infrastructure. In this connection we primarily mean activities that may damage information systems to such an extent that it will influence military operations or hamper the functions of civil society. There is

a wide spectre of such activities, ranging from attacks on computer networks or on the enemy's EW capabilities, to direct *physical destruction* of fixed or mobile installations. The means include everything from traditional hacking, co-ordinated reconnaissance, computer infiltration, and manipulation, to so-called "slow-down" attacks on private companies and/or various government institutions.

3. Diversionary manoeuvres (deception, maskirovka). The purpose of this kind of operations is to confuse the enemy by manipulating, distorting or falsifying information. The main goal is always to make the adversary act contrary to his own objective interests. He should – if possible – do so voluntarily. One tactic is to manipulate the mass media. "Weak" journalists may be given information that they wish to hear, and parts of this information may be "adapted" in a way that parts of it may be "verified". Sheer propaganda may also be used if it is adapted to the audience one wishes to reach. The new digital possibilities to manipulate images and movies may strongly influence the "angles" that the TV companies choose for their various reports.

It is important to notice that cyber-terrorism is not only about how to destroy electronic systems, but also how to hinder the collection of information that may be transformed into intelligence. The intense focus that has been put on the various kinds of electronic destruction often ignores the potentially more effective use of IT in connection with terrorism. By this we mean the connection between intelligence collection, counterintelligence and misinformation.

2.4 REBELS AND TERRORIST LEADERS WILL ALWAYS EXPLOIT SO CALLED MESSIANISM

2.4.1 General Remarks

The Taliban regime in Afghanistan had by March 2002 been neutralised, and it is now time to try to understand the system of beliefs that formed the basis for their rule in Afghanistan and the international consequences it brought about.

2.4.2 *The Logic of the Taliban Regime*

The Taliban and Osama bin Laden's war against the US was not really "politics by other means" in the Clausewitz sense. Neither should terror acts be regarded as part of the "cosmic battle" we find in Islam, a battle which should transform the world.¹⁶

In hindsight it is clear that various motives influenced the political priorities of the Taliban through the 1990s and also in late autumn 2001, when they chose to wage war against the US rather than surrender Osama bin Laden and his foreigners the aftermath of the terror attacks on September 11.

A central feature that has been ignored in the mass media up to the present is the Taliban movement's basic, *religious set of beliefs*. In an unfinished article about the Taliban, Richard Eaton, an American specialist on Islam, has presented a theory, which states that the movement was inspired by so-called *messianic fantasies*.

Common for the messianic groupings is the fact that they believe in a *coming revolution in the world order*, which in their view is the introduction to a period of just rule or a perfect state of affairs on earth. The leader of the group is often portrayed as "God's messenger," who has the task of initiating this revolution. Within the Taliban movement, Mullah Omar assumed the role as the "New Messiah." Eaton attaches weight to certain aspects of the Taliban regime that show how this theory may serve to explain their set of beliefs and their actions. As is often the case in such movements, the Taliban represented a purist moral and lived in a world that was "black or white." They fought the "dark forces" and their violence against people of different beliefs was a natural component in the fight against internal or external (real or imagined) enemies. But what most of all makes the Taliban regime a messianic movement is their theory of the so-called caliphate.

The caliphate may be regarded as the ideal Islamic rule. It arose in year 632, after the death of Mohammed. After a short period of political uncertainty, Abu Bakr was elected as caliph, which means that he took on the responsibility of being Mohammed's successor or "representative on earth". To the majority of Muslims today, including in Afghanistan, the time and rule of Mohammed and the four first caliphs represents the perfect model of how the Islamic state should be governed, both politically and spiritually.

Even though later and much more powerful Islamic states with centre in

Damascus and Baghdad also continued to pursue the idea of the caliphate, it is the earliest period that constitutes the natural historic reference for later attempts to reform Islam as a world religion. This was also the case for the Taliban and Mullah Omar.

The Mongolian invasion put a stop to the first caliphates in 1258, but many elements from the Islamic state ideology survived in the grandiose and magnificent sultanates, especially from the 16-century. The most important feature was the Ottoman Empire, the capital of which was Istanbul, The Persian Empire with its capital in Esfahan, and the Mogul Empire in India with its capital in Delhi. When the Ottoman Empire finally broke down after the First World War, the last great *Islamic state formation* disappeared. Many Islamists now wish to recreate this previous, ideal state of affairs based on a strong state formation for all Muslims.

From about 1850, most of Asia belonged to European colonial powers. However, according to the Taliban, the spirit of the caliphate was continued in the Deoband Islamic centre of learning in India. Deoband was the centre of a religious reform movement, which arose as a result of the contact between the Muslims of India and the British colonial power. When Pakistan was established in 1948, the spirit of the caliphate was transferred from Deoband to the most important religious school, the *madrassa* in Karachi (in today's Pakistan). The great vision of the Taliban when they assumed power in Afghanistan in the mid-90s was that the spirit of the caliphate should be transferred from Karachi to Kandahar in Afghanistan. Here, the new caliph should be re-united with the prophet's cloak (a holy relic kept in Kandahar), and thus, the caliphate should re-emerge. The new caliph was Mullah Omar.

The spring of 1996 was a crucial time for the Taliban in their pursuit of power in Afghanistan. This was when Mullah Omar gathered about 1200 Afghan religious leaders in Kandahar. It was the largest gathering of Mullahs in the whole of Afghan history and, typically enough, political and military leaders were not invited to the meeting on which the future of Afghanistan were to be planned. On 4 April 1996, Mullah Omar was standing on the rooftop of a building in Kandahar, clad in the Prophet's Cloak. He was cheered by the Mullahs, not only as the leader of the Taliban and Afghanistan, but also as the leader of the Muslim society as a whole. He was the Mullah who should unite Islam. If we try to put this in a Western context, it

would, according to dr. philos Torkel Brekke, be as if president Bush (or prime minister Blair) should wear the famous Shroud of Turin and emerge as the new Jesus for the whole of the Christian World. This tells us a lot about how far the Taliban movement are from the present Western religious and political realities. This means that the arguments put forth by some intellectuals that the US and the Taliban had more or less identical views on their religious role in the conflict in Afghanistan are untenable. Another important feature is the fact that the Messianism of the Taliban was mixed with an extreme culture of violence, a combination that is also an old historical phenomenon.

In history of religion, messianic ideas occur in most great religions. Messianic thoughts often constitute a positive force in the lives of believers. The expectation that Jesus or Buddha will return to earth and create a just kingdom on earth gives strength and hope to many people in everyday life. At the same time, there are many historic examples of such ideas playing an important role in *legitimising war*, especially in Europe in the 16. and 17. Centuries. Messianic movements may relate to the world in one of two ways:

1. On one hand, they may chose to withdraw from a society that they expect to go down, and wait for Messiah in peace and calm.
2. On the other hand, expectations that there will be a total revolution may be a strong motivation for political action, including rebellion.

The believers may perceive themselves as actors in the political process leading up to the revolution. Their part is to advance the process by undermining or attacking the existing political system, and thus make the corrupt power structures give way to the new order.

The religious fight against satanic forces was a central element in the messianic visions of the Taliban regime. But the fight was also about recreating a political and religious system based on a mythical model. The fight therefore had to become political. The first step the Taliban had to take in order to provide Mullah Omar's caliphate with the necessary legitimacy, was to take control over the Islamic Holy Places; Mecca and Medina.

And this is of course where Osama bin Laden enters the picture. He was given the task to drive the American "Great Satan" out of the Holy Land (in this case Saudi Arabia). The next natural step would be to attack Saudi Arabia in order to establish a regime that in the eyes of bin Laden and Mullah Omar

would not be *religiously corrupt*. Osama bin Laden was a good friend of Mullah Omar and was given the responsibility to lead the very “battle for the caliphate”, including the battle against the corrupt Islamic states outside Afghanistan’s borders. The Norwegian Dr. Philos Torkel Brekke has presented some elements of the *system of beliefs* represented in bin Laden’s Fatwas against the US. These elements were presented in Norwegian mass media, and weight was given to the strategic and political aspects of the problem.¹⁷ But it is only from a messianic perspective that the terror acts against the US give the necessary meaning. Consequently, the war against the US was not “politics by other means” in the Clausewitz sense that we are used to employ when we theorise about war (based on the work of the Prussian military theorist Carl von Clausewitz: “On War”).

In this case, terror may be regarded as part of the “cosmic battle”, which is the prelude to a fundamental world revolution. The inner logic of terror may probably best be understood if we study how Islamic views on salvation and the Apocalypse is taught among radical Islamists. According to Brekke, it is within a messianic universe that many of the Taliban’s seemingly absurd political decisions make sense.

Why was the Taliban so preoccupied with destroying Afghan art and persecute Afghan intellectuals? Why did they crush the archaeological treasures in the Kabul Museum? Why did they destroy books and images, and why did they blow up the two magnificent giant Buddha’s in the city of Bamiyan? There is often a special relation between messianic movements and time. These movements tend to look into the future and foresee a state in which everything has changed and the existing state of things has been fundamentally altered. The movements await the destruction of the existing structures, from which a totally new world will arise. Consequently, the past should be destroyed to pave the way for the future. This destruction of the past may take place in a number of ways. For example, messianic movements in Europe have burnt books and objects of art, while elevating the ideas that the good lies in ignorance and lack of knowledge. The Communists in Cambodia (who shared the same fanatical features) murdered all the intellectuals and monks they could lay their hands on because these people were the carriers of the traditions of the past.

The Taliban movement also did its best to destroy Afghanistan’s past.

They wanted Muslims all over the world to unite behind Mullah Omar in the fight against the infidels. But this was naturally not the case. Mullah Omar obviously overestimated the support he received from Muslims around the world for his version of Islamic teaching on salvation. And on the other hand, Osama bin Laden underestimated the ability of the US to find efficient countermeasures.

It is still hard to predict the future of Afghanistan, but the extreme culture of violence that flourished there as a result of the messianic fantasies of the Taliban will have less fertile growth conditions in the future. This is in all probability the case even though the many warlords will have their own agendas and priorities in the years to come.

3 “WAR AGAINST TERRORISM” – WHAT MAY BE ACHIEVED?

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This analysis was sparked off by the events in New York and Washington on September 11 2001. These third Chapter is to be looked upon as an early case study, as there so far is no clear victory for the US/Western side in the conflict. Some progress in the fighting against the now destroyed Taliban regime can be registered, but the terrorist network is not yet destroyed. There are clear indications that it is time to assess the most relevant dangers both in a short-term and a long-term perspective. In practice, this work has only just started.

Since September 11, the US has been at war with an enemy (an adversary with a more or less developed strategy), which, according to the American leadership, should be “stopped, eliminated and destroyed”.

The Saudi Osama bin Laden was designated as the main enemy shortly after the attacks took place. The Taliban regime in Afghanistan is regarded as an ally of the terrorists. The US enjoys broad support in the UN Security Council, in most Arab governments and in NATO (for the time being – author’s assessment).

There is still a number of good reasons why the use of sheer

military force should be the least distinctive feature of the strategy that is being formed to fight the terrorists. In this war, the military component should be used extremely effectively and precisely. It should be based on good intelligence, and restraint should be a main principle. Military force should be used in combination with other and perhaps, in the long term, more important means.¹⁸

The support for the American efforts subsequent to the terrorist attacks on September 11 has been enormous. The exceptions to this general rule are left-wing sceptics in Europe, groupings in the Muslim world, and in various peace movements.

The US president's speech in Congress in September 2001 gave reason to believe that the complexity of the problem had been understood. In his speech, president George W. Bush emphasised that the war must be waged on several fronts at the same time, not only the military. Diplomatic, political, economic and legal means should also be used. In contrast to the immediate missile attacks that ensued right after the bombing of the embassy in Africa in 1998, the American reaction this time was far more patient. Time was spent on building alliances and collecting intelligence. The actions taken by the Clinton administration after the attacks in Africa, actions that may be characterised as punitive, had little effect and demonstrated how *weak* the Americans were when exposed to well-prepared terrorist actions abroad. They simply did not have the necessary information and a clear intelligence picture, and they almost automatically followed the same reaction pattern as the Israelis did in response to Palestinian terrorist actions. The effect was also the same: the actions had almost no effect on the adversary.¹⁹

Of course, the expression "war against terrorism" is imprecise. Terrorism is by definition something that an adversary who is "angry and full of hate" turns to against those he regards as his mortal enemies. Also, terrorists (or leaders of rebel movements) lack the popular support or the conventional resources needed to inflict damage on the enemy. Therefore, terrorism should be regarded as an *asymmetric strategy*, and preferably as the asymmetric strategy of an actor who lacks resources in his fight against a stronger enemy. Such strategies aim at inflicting pain and fear, but they do not promise any rapid end to the fighting, and certainly no rapid end to the conflict. The rational

objectives of inflicting pain are to attract attention, to force the adversary to make concessions, to persuade, to create disorder or chaos, or to provoke further repression and reprisals. We have reason to believe that terrorists wish the adversary to overreact to the terrorist acts, which in turn would prove the enemy's (read US) "evil disposition". Obviously, the terrorists hoped that US reprisals would lead to increased recruitment to their own organisations.

In the more "ordinary war" that started on 7th November 2001, it has been difficult to achieve all the desired objectives. The enemy forces that tried to keep ground against the Northern Alliance supported by US air power and US and British Special Forces were easily beaten. But small remains of the Taliban army and most of the terrorist forces are still intact, fighting in an unconventional manner; partly hidden from civil society and do not follow the traditional military operational patterns. In so called asymmetric conflicts, military efforts may not provide any decisive battle. Some of the challenges are summed up below:

The United States enters the fourth quarter having declared war on terrorism. More specifically, it has declared war on the various groups operating in loose affiliation under the banner of al-Qa'ida and on the countries that aid and abet them as well as on countries that refuse to assist the United States in this campaign.

Tactically, this war is an asymmetric nightmare. Groups and individuals involved in al-Qa'ida are present in some 60 countries, but active combatants number perhaps only in the tens of thousands. The militants' wide dispersal and minimal physical infrastructure limits available targets for U.S. attacks and minimises the amount of overall degradation to the organisation the United States can inflict. Available targets are rarely appropriate for the U.S. military's preferred weapons and tactics, and each strike requires the deployment of massive amounts of political and military resources.

In turn, al-Qa'ida's tactics, deployment and nature make further attacks inevitable but extremely difficult to predict or defend against. al-Qa'ida is a collection of autonomous groups, which in turn operate in autonomous cells, which are already deployed in

target countries spanning the globe. It is an organisation capable of mustering 19 suicide attackers for a single co-ordinated operation and simultaneously bombing targets in multiple countries. Al-Qa'ida has demonstrated its capability for tremendous operational secrecy, and it has carried out effective disinformation and psychological warfare campaigns. Its unconventional, small-unit actions can cause disproportionate damage while exposing only a small portion of the group to retaliation.

Al-Qa'ida appears to be developing a new strategy that transcends terrorism. Terrorism is a simple tactic that aims to frighten a population into forcing its government to abandon or alter a policy. It is a psychological technique, and it is difficult to find a case in which that technique has worked. The World Trade Center and Pentagon are symbolic targets, good for terrorist tactics, but they had tangible value as well.

Intentionally or inadvertently, however, the attacks on Washington and New York caused substantial damage to the U.S. financial and transportation infrastructures. They shut down air transport for days and disrupted it for weeks. They closed and then battered the U.S. stock market. The economic effects of the attacks will last well into next year.

Al-Qa'ida may have taken to heart the conventional warfare experience of its affiliated groups on the battlefields of Afghanistan and Chechnya. This could have spilled over into the group's strategic planning. But if the attackers did not plan this outcome, they are now well aware of such potential. Infrastructure attacks will feature prominently in the future.²⁰

3.2 THE TERRORIST DILEMMA

The disagreement between the European allies and the Bush administration after Bush's speech in the Union address on January 29, serves as an example of cracks forming in the so-called "coalition against terror." Differences exist between Europe and the US in regards to the best way and scope of fighting terrorism – differences that could lead to fissures in the trans-Atlantic relationship.

Europe has interpreted the terrorist attacks on September 11 not only as an assault on the United States, but as an assault on the Western values of the free and democratic world. The European governments, because of this interpretation, declared their unrestricted support for US action against international terror. Consequently the European governments contributed with political and some military means, either through international organisations as NATO or UN Security Council, or through bilateral assistance to the US forces in Afghanistan. (Britain is now commanding the so-called *International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)* in Afghanistan, and took an active part in the war in Afghanistan.) Despite these common reactions to the events of Sept. 11, differences between US and Europe regarding how to best to fight global terrorism have begun to emerge. This dilemma can be summed up in the following manner:

- The term “terrorism” resists a common *international accepted* definition. The term is very often a *political label* used by regimes/governments to stigmatise (de-legitimise) opposition and violent political movements.
- For a state/government combating international terrorism, it will be difficult to differentiate between regular military forces defending their country and international terrorists who not only operate from within a country, but also (as al-Qa’ida) fight more like mercenaries along the official Taliban governments troops as in Afghanistan.
- Despite the rhetoric about “the war on terrorism” now used in US politics and media; this is *not* a war in a proper sense. International terrorists do not belong to the formal/regular state structure, but form a multinational network. Not even locally recruited terrorists are part of a regular state structure. Even if international terrorists have headquarters and/or training camps in a given country, it will be difficult to decide whether the actual state is responsible for supporting such groups. Based on historical evident from so-called “failed states”, it is very often local tribes or warlords who supports the terrorists. (This dilemma has become apparent as NATO after the terrorist attack activated Article 5. At the same time, however, the US refuses to give captured al-Qa’ida fighters combatant status, upsetting European states allied to the US.)

3.2.1 Use of Force – and How?

By use of military force several results may be achieved:

- The terrorist groupings' infrastructure – like training camps and supply bases – can be destroyed as in Afghanistan. Their activities may be hampered by taking control over their territory, or by killing or arresting leaders like Osama bin Laden.²¹
- One may directly punish regimes/states that support or give refuge to terrorist networks, or possibly seek to bring about a *change of government* in these countries.²²
- Many people maintain that swift and effective campaigns can prevent future terrorist acts. In plain English this means that they wish to “remove the head from the body of terrorism” and thereby weaken the established terrorist structure.
- It is, however, often difficult to establish whom the planners or ideological leaders are, or who merely obey the given orders. Only a good informer – an *insider* – may provide the definite answer to this.

The “war on terrorism” after September 11th started with a military campaign directed against the Taliban regime and the terrorist network in Afghanistan. The relatively fast collapse of the Taliban regime is in itself a clear indication that the public (political) support for the regime was limited – in spite of their religious rhetoric.

But other kinds of actions were also taken against “allied” terrorist organisations in other areas. An example of this is the freezing of accounts belonging to individuals and organisations suspected of giving financial support to terrorist groupings.

There was never any need for a conventional invasion of Afghanistan in the autumn of 2001.

The so-called Northern Alliance was strong enough to be used by the Americans on the ground. Support of “the enemy’s enemy” is a means much used in the history of warfare, often with good results. This was the case so far also in this conflict. What the Americans and their British allies needed to conduct was only a *limited military action*. Air force played the main role and was supported by various Special Forces and naval infantry on the ground.

Thus, the basis for an interim government based in Kabul, and later

(democratic?) elections were laid. But at least one problem remained unsolved. What to do with the leaders of the Taliban and the al-Qa'eda network?²³ How do we deal with terrorist leaders in asymmetric conflicts in general? The solution may vary from conflict to conflict, for example according to the cultural variations that exist between peoples and groupings within peoples. A successful action in one area may be a totally ineffective measure in another.

In the case of the war in Afghanistan, we still do not know in March 2002 whether the most influential leaders of the Taliban and al-Qa'eda are captured, are dead, are hiding in the mountains, or have sought refuge in another country. There are many supporters in Pakistan and probably also Iran that are willing to help al-Qa'eda members. What further happens with the leadership will have a massive effect not only on the further existence or restructuring of the al-Qa'eda network, but also on the leaders' symbolic value as war heroes or martyrs. Should they re-emerge, they may continue their fight against Western "infidel" oppression. Their power base may very well be the 6-700 000 *talibs* in the *madras* Koran schools in Pakistan, and/or religious extremists in other countries all over the world.

An anti-terrorist alliance has several options available when dealing with terrorist leaders. The terrorist leaders may escape, but if they escape, they must be found. Otherwise, the war against the grouping/network has only been a half victory. If they are dead in combat, no matter the cause, their death may be announced in a way that minimises their symbolic effect and does not turn the alliance into a vindictive, inhuman enemy. In the case of Afghanistan, for example, the alliance could launch a psy-ops campaign, telling the media that an impersonal (possibly stray) bomb killed the terrorists. This would reduce the individual and personal responsibility of killing them and there may be less heroism in it for the terrorist leaders. This may be the backdrop of the US request for a DNA sample from bins Laden's family to be able to identify the possible remnants of bin Laden.²⁴

There have been numerous speculations that the US already has DNA samples from one of bin Laden's half-brothers, and if this is the case, the request for DNA could be an announcement made to test subsequent reactions. If reactions are favourable or only mildly negative, the scene could be set for an announcement of bin Laden's "impersonal" death. This seems to be

a probable outcome if a terrorist leader is detected and killed. If terrorist leaders are captured, however, they will obviously be interrogated first. Then they may be brought to justice for the crimes they have committed, but this could entail great risks, since a prolonged case in court could easily amplify the leaders' status as martyrs. Instead of being brought to justice they may just "disappear" (after being eliminated). The information of them being killed in combat or otherwise may also be kept from the public eye. Their disappearance will obviously increase their mythic status, but may be a relevant line of development if the Western forces wish to attack other countries at a later stage (i.e. the US threat to the states in the "Axis of Evil"). The search for missing terrorists could be (presented as) a good reason to expand the war against terrorism. Whatever line the Western forces led by US wish to follow, this line should be subject to thorough analysis on beforehand. This kind of warfare may easily backfire on the Western cause if not handled properly.²⁵

One obvious reason for this may be that the US wishes the "war on terrorism" to continue. In his State of the Union address on 29 January 2002, President Bush announced that "...our war on terror is only beginning." To search for "missing" terrorist leaders is a good argument to continue the war and secure a public support that could decrease if the fates of the terrorist leaders were known.

The main point here is that in any conflict, the effects of killing terrorist leaders, of prosecuting them or announcing their fates at all must be evaluated. Not only from the viewpoint of international law, but also in terms of possible future recruitment of supporters for the remnants of the terrorist network in question.

3.2.2 Challenges for the Islamic Regimes?

In the Islamic area, the regimes are faced with a different kind of threat. How are they to deal with the public support of the extreme powers that exist in many Arab countries? The text below sheds some light on the teoretical challenge, even though Muslim objections against US policies have been less pronounced than expected before the war in Afghanistan started in October 2001:

*The heartlands of Islam are in uproar. However much
President Bush and Tony Blair insist otherwise, millions of Muslims*

around the world see the airstrikes on Afghanistan as an assault on Islam. Demonstrators have taken to the streets of Islamic capitals. "Death to America" and "Bush is a terrorist" chanted thousands of angry protesters in Pakistan. In Indonesia, 200 people gathered outside the US Embassy, while radical groups demanded that the Government cut diplomatic relations with America and threatened holy war against Westerners.

...Many Muslim governments, caught between horror at the escalation of Islamic extremism and the support of millions for bin Laden's call to arms, kept silent. Embarrassment, anger and frustration have made them unable to give public support to a country so widely demonised as Israel's principal backer; but faced with America's stark "friend or foe" choice, they have been forced to put their strategic interests ahead of the popular mood.

Most rulers know that no country, least of all the US, will tolerate an attack on its people as horrific as those of September 11. They expected an earlier, sharper and less discriminating response. That, at least, would have avoided any dilemma: while secretly applauding a strike at the kind of religious extremism that threatens all their regimes, they could still strike crowd-pleasing postures, denouncing "revenge" attacks and the inevitable loss of life. Washington's hardball diplomacy has forced them into an agonising public choice. Nowhere has this been more destabilising than in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. General Musharraf's decision to open his airspace and provide logistical support has led to open confrontation with Islamic political and religious leaders and millions of tribesmen who claim close kinship with the Pashtun Afghans. But the greater, if less, visible, threat is to the House of Saud.

Saudi Arabia is uniquely vulnerable. Osama bin Laden and many of his senior associates are Saudis, and command loyalty from family, tribe and friends. They share the same puritanical attitude to religion — Wahhabism — as the Taleban. It is Saudi money that has financed many of the Islamic foundations that have underpinned the radical political movements now lending support to bin Laden. And the main focus of bin Laden's demands strikes a deep

chord among Saudis: the removal of all Americans from Saudi soil. Saudi Arabia's rulers are caught in a trap of their own making. They have, at every turn, underscored their piety and their leadership of the Muslim world. They recognised the Taleban and turned a blind eye to their more extremist views. But they have been faced with revolt on the Right from hard-line clerics who accuse the rulers of corruption and want no concessions to Western secularism. The Saudi Government has tried cracking down on these opponents, but has been unable to change the attitudes that welcome any attack on the "decadent" West. Saudi Arabia, like Pakistan, has therefore had to opt publicly for the anti-terrorist coalition while attempting to limit its intended actions. It is a dilemma sharpened by the start of bombing.

Most Arab governments will be able to ride out public protest for a few days. But all are committed to the notion of Islamic unity and the idea, similar to the Nato charter, that an attack on one is an attack on all. Bahrain has backed action but is keen that Muslims should not bear the consequences. Jordan, whose King has acted as a mouthpiece for moderate Arab sentiment, underlined the need to avoid harming innocent people.

In Egypt the strikes have exposed a gulf between President Mubarak's Government and the popular mood. The Government is committed to hunting down all Islamic extremists within Egypt, especially Islamic Jihad, which is now linked to al-Qa'eda. But sentiment within Egypt is increasingly anti-American. Despite official support for American action, there were widespread anti-American demonstrations.

Iraq sees the opportunity to regain the initiative on the Arab street, and is playing the Muslim card for all it is worth.

*If bombing continues for ten days or more, Muslim **governments** will come under enormous domestic pressure to renounce all support for the anti-terrorist coalition. . . .* ²⁶

Numerous riots were registered after the US and Great Britain launched the offensive against Afghanistan. But until now we have not seen the collapse of

the Muslim regimes, which some experts expected. However, if developments show that it is impossible to take out most of the terrorist leaders, then there is a risk for long-term developments, which may threaten several of the regimes that are friendly towards the West today. (This is probably what terrorists hope for in most cases.)

One distinctive feature of bin Laden's organisation that makes it special even today, is the fact that it has shown great will to harm not only the US but also Western values in general. We have no reason to believe that this terrorist grouping will voluntarily stop fighting the US and the West. This is one major reason why we may expect it to conduct a series of new operations against the US and the West in the future if it is not effectively destroyed. Neither will the terrorist grouping cease to fight the more moderate Arab regimes that they regard as "Western lackeys."²⁷

3.2.3 What are the Possible Success Criteria in the "War against Terrorism"?

Use of military force should not be measured by the actions themselves, but rather by their strategic effect. Also, use of military force has both intended and unintended effects. The element of uncertainty in every war is to predict the political effect of the use of military force.²⁸

To hunt for a particular terrorist is not in itself an answer to the basic problem a terrorist network represents. A too one-sided focus on the person bin Laden could have a negative effect, especially if the attempts to capture him prove unsuccessful. Especially the mass media are prone to shift side in such conflicts, and this may well happen if the "main enemy" at first manages to escape.

In a long-term perspective it is necessary to remove the underlying causes of terror. If this is not the strategic goal it may prove difficult to "win the war against terror", as the slogan now reads. In other words, a possible elimination of the single individuals is not enough in itself to crush international terrorism. In a short-term perspective, it may even increase the opposition against the West. Neither may we rule out the possibility that in the long term, this may have a unifying effect on the various anti-Western forces.

But in practice, this depends largely on the concrete developments in the area in question. These are complex political and military operations and some hard (but uncertain) choices have to be made when it is time to follow up the chosen strategy. The point is that to succeed, the US has to develop a strategy that has a long-term perspective, and this is probably also what they attempted to do in the aftermath of September 11.

In a long-term perspective, a main objective in this kind of conflicts is to deprive the enemy of his ability to recruit new devotees. Only up to a certain level is it rational to kill or capture as many terrorists as possible. One should therefore behave in a manner that over time deprives the enemy of his political power base. This would deprive the terrorist organisation of its political force, and it would become what it originally was – an extreme exception. The adversary – i.e. the terrorists – should be deprived of the possibility to operate in civil society in the countries where such actions are planned and prepared. The US-dominated military operation in Afghanistan may – if it is long-lasting and extended to include other countries in the region – be perceived by many as a confirmation of the so-called US “hegemonic ambitions” and “arrogance” towards the rest of the world.

The established alliance against terrorism includes somewhat different forces, to put it mildly. Much indicates that both China and Russia have *their own* special agendas in Afghanistan. The Russians wish to control their previous vassals in the Southeast, which they already do to a certain extent both politically and economically. Thus, the Russians have more to gain from a long-lasting conflict in the area than the US, but for their own reasons:

There are no wars to end all wars. Conflict and warfare are a permanent part of the human condition. It is far more useful to think of war as a single, inseparable thread running throughout the fabric of human history rather than as separate, disconnected episodes. The thread that led to Sept. 11 ultimately can be traced to the 1980s and long before.

What defines the future is the alliances we form, the aid we demand, the promises we will make and, most important, the actual price we have to pay for the things we must have. All sides in every conflict must confront the fact that there is always a price.

Such a price always strengthens someone who has the potential

to become your future enemy, or it drives away someone who had been your friend. The war that began on Sept. 11, like every war, will change the world in profound and not wholly unpredictable ways.

The biggest winner in this war, it appears today, will not be the United States but Russia. The geography of Afghanistan makes Russia indispensable to the United States. Unless America gets lucky and manages to locate and capture or kill Osama bin Laden very quickly — an event that would trigger the collapse of the Taliban government — Washington will have to fight an extended war in Afghanistan.

There are only two bases from which to operate. One is Pakistan, highly unstable and capable of turning on the United States should certain factions gain control. The other base comprises the three independent republics lining Afghanistan's northern border: Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. It would be very difficult to mount an effective military campaign without this Central Asian base, even with only Special Forces, light infantry and airborne troops.²⁹

The Taliban and bin Laden have themselves shown a certain insight in how to wage a propaganda war against Arab and Western media, but this did not prove to be a decisive factor in their fight.

Prior to the (unexpected sudden) defeat of the Taliban forces in Kabul in mid-November, there was an increasing resistance in the West against the way the West used its superior air capacity. Parts of the public opinion reacted sharply against the bombing during the first weeks of the war. However, the criticism soon ceased as the opinion understood that the days of the Taliban regime were numbered. Even the political left, which tends to take a critical attitude towards the US, became more positive as the war developed and it became clear that it would not lead to massive civilian casualties and destruction. It remains to be seen whether these attitudes change because of the US policy – especially if the war is expanded to Iraq or other so called “Axis of Evil” countries. Much indicates that the conflict will be long lasting.

3.2.4 Will improved Standard of Living Prevent Future Terror?

In several countries, among them Sweden, there have been discussions in the newspapers about the reasons why terrorism occurs. Participants have been known social democrats like former Prime Minister I. Carlsson, and Minister of Education, C. Thams. It is often maintained that economic factors are the primary reason why people are recruited into fundamentalist movements. We may claim that Marxism is dead and buried, but certain basic Marxist views still carry influence, especially on the political left wing. The following quotation may be regarded as representative for the two authors' way of thinking (original in Swedish):

It is of course not the world's poverty that directly creates terrorism. It is the destitution, the hopelessness and the enormous income gaps, both within and between nations that creates fertile soil for political and religious suffering that may be exploited by ruthless leaders – just like it was before in Europe.

He, who does not understand the connection between economic misery, class distinctions and violence, has understood nothing of the history of the 20th century. It was the economic disasters in the 1920s and 30s that paved the way for Nazism and Communism.

It was this very knowledge that led post-war politicians (even beyond the ranks of the social democracy) to prioritise a welfare policy that should eliminate the fear, the insecurity and the class hatred. This is an insight that is more important today than ever before.

It is important to have several different thoughts in one's head simultaneously. Poverty or the present or previous American lines of policy can never excuse or justify the terrorist acts against the US or other inhuman actions. But we must also realise that the friction and distinctions that exist in the world are not only immoral, but also dangerous for our common security. To realise this is not to accept terrorism.

The US now demands the support of the whole world in the war on terrorism. But this means that the US must meet certain demands from the rest of the world. The American government

cannot expect the world to support any kind of response to terrorism. Until now, the Bush administration has demonstrated its will to conduct a unilateral American power policy, where the US cooperates with others only when it suits their own interests. Otherwise they go their own ways. Such a line of policy is incompatible with a broad coalition against terrorism. A fruitful alliance demands a change of course. ³⁰

According to this line of thinking, the explanation why the terrorists attacked the US on September 11 is found in the gap between the rich and poor nations. The explanation is obviously based on the argument that social injustice between the rich and the poor world is enough to make people conduct operations of the kind we witnessed in New York and Washington. This line of thinking disregards the fanaticism of the attack and the religious overtones we see in the clearly formulated political statements of the terrorists, in which they attempt to explain their motives. In stead, some of the critics present an extremely simplified economic explanation. They say it is the economic gap that is the driving force behind the actions. But this explanation actually supports the Marxist fallacy that “religion is the opium of the people” in the sense that religion is only a veil that covers the real material driving forces. If this had been a correct analysis, the consequence would be that when the supporters of bin Laden call for God, they are in reality calling for food, cars and TV sets. They are just not aware of this themselves. According to this materialistic model it was only empty words when one of the terrorists who crashed into the World Trade Center, Mohammed Atta, wrote in his letter of farewell about “Judgement Day” and that he was on his way to Paradise.

According to the materialistic view, God becomes something else than God, the holy has become secular and the religious needs have been reduced to a plain desire for economic prosperity. This interpretation turns the whole phenomenon into a kind of survival instinct.

Similarly, we may take a closer look at what the leader of the Taliban, Mohammed Omar said in September 2000, in an interview on Arab television. When Omar stressed that the “Almighty God...is helping the believers and the Muslims” and that the Taliban is confident that the “Almighty will

help”, the materialistic theory transforms this into *rhetoric*. This crude simplification of a complicated picture is an obvious condescension to “the poor seduced fanatics” who do not know better. It is possible that the people who tend to simplify the societies they know little about actually believe that religious fanatics only want the same as people in the West, namely to be rich and have the same political views as their religious spokesmen on the political left. The real problem is, however, that the “modern heathens” of the West (as most of us are) simply do not understand what goes on in the minds of a fanatic religious individual. We have to return to the burning of witches and the Thirty Years’ War in the 17 century to find anything in Europe that is similar to this extreme interpretation of the Koran. We simply do not understand the magnitude of the Taliban or similar movement’s *goal-oriented blindness*, and instead we try to explain it as a result of poverty.³¹

The Taliban movement was not the repressed party in Afghanistan. On the contrary, the Taliban regime itself fervently repressed subjects of all other beliefs. What we in the secular world regard as religious madness are what clearly separates these people from Western rebels. And this makes them much more dangerous *in their own area* than the stone-throwing youth in Gothenburg or Genoa can ever be.

Neither was it the local repression in a country like Afghanistan that made the US start a war against them. The explanation is rather that they realised that if religious terrorists are not stopped, we run the risk of being faced with numerous new attacks on Western interests. This could in the long run undermine parts of the very fundament of Western rule.

In this connection it is important to understand that the forces that are being released in the Islamic parts of the world are more than the result of a poverty problem. The idea that economy is the key to understand world developments is obviously too simple – it is one of our Western myths. It is also impossible to explain the increasing fanaticism with cold-blooded economic analyses, like the Communist commissars did in the Soviet era. Maybe it is our own religious immunity that makes it so difficult to understand the fanatics’ intense hatred against the West and Western values? Maybe the time has come to gain a new kind of understanding of reality, an understanding that accepts the significance of ideas in the lives and behaviour of people? For as the author Rüdiger Safranski presumably said, there is no need to “trouble the devil to understand the evil.”

3.3 AN ASSESSMENT OF DEVELOPMENTS

It was often maintained that the war in Afghanistan would be radically different from conventional wars. However, what emerged was a relatively conventional Western use of air force, although on a smaller scale than in the Gulf War in 1991. The Americans, among others, maintained that new means would be employed in the conduct of the war, but it seems unclear whether the people in charge knew how to meet the challenges of terror. In the fight against terror, most traditional dividing lines between military and civil activity will be wiped out³². An example of this is the information collection and intelligence activity that forms the basis of military action. The traditional dividing lines between civil police surveillance, investigation and military intelligence will to a large extent be washed away. We may also question whether the war against terrorism should be regarded as pertaining to military or civil law, and consequently, the Police may become a more important instrument in the future fight against terrorism than the direct use of military force.

Even though NATO used article 5 for the first time subsequent to the attacks on 11. September, NATO as an organisation never played a crucial role in the war. The question is what kind of role NATO should play in this kind of war. It will hardly be evident on this occasion, the conflict was handled by the US and Great Britain themselves. Several NATO countries and some NATO allies operate as peacekeeping forces. But nevertheless, American (and not European) efforts seem to be the most vital force in similar scenarios, at least outside Europe. Europe's role will obviously be to participate in peacekeeping forces (under British leadership), forces that may have long-term missions in Afghanistan, and possibly in other countries the US may attack in the future. These are areas, in which it will take considerable time to create long-lasting peace for the population.³⁴

N. Ekdal, who works for the newspaper Dagens Nyheter (Daily News), in Stockholm, writes the text below. So far, this is one of the better Swedish analyses of the challenges that face us. A central feature is that it is important to gain insight into the mentality of the enemy. We cannot just talk about the sadness of killing "outsiders", which has become more and more common in the newspapers' coverage of the conflict. This only serves to blur the *totality* of the conflict, as it is obviously perceived by the terrorists (original text in Swedish):

After a week's attack on targets in Afghanistan (written on 14 Oct. 2001), it has become evident that such nuances may determine the outcome of this conflict. To bomb Osama bin Laden is of little help if the end result is that the alliance against terrorism is broken. In the long term, the West has to live up to its own ideals to keep the alliance together, also in the field of foreign policy. The understanding of Islam is one of the necessary input values.

A humble tip for George W is to study one of the greatest historians of Islam, Ibn Khaldun. He was born in Tunis on Ramadan 1 year 732 A.H. (May 27 year 1332 C.E.). During his lifetime, he wandered all over the Muslim world of that age, from Granada to Damascus. Through his analyses on the rise and fall of civilisations he is often considered a precursor not only of Machiavelli and Montesquieu, but also of Marx and Darwin.

*According to Ibn Khaldun, the highest human goal is culture and luxury. But when society reaches this stage, it has already begun to rot from the inside and will inevitably be overthrown and replaced by a new civilisation. The driving force of this process is **asabiya**, a concept which is difficult to capture. It bears much the same meanings as “group unity”, “solidarity” or “mutual fighting spirit”. There is obviously nothing wrong with the American **asabiya** even if Osama bin Laden fantasises (as did Hitler) about the US being an entity so decadent that will collapse all by itself. The problem of this war is that the al-Qa'ida is even more primitive and is therefore – according to Ibn Khaldun – a cohesion more capable of resistance.*

*There is not much room for a third point of view in the **basic conflict**. But it is obvious that the **asabiya** of the anti-terrorist alliance must be woven around a moral core, and that this net at best will ensnare some of the members of the alliance. The fight against terrorism can never find a satisfactory solution as long as the Russians continue their post-imperialistic terror war in Chechnya, as long as states like Pakistan, Egypt and Algeria continue to fight the popular religiousness with batons, as long as the US continues to base the Middle East policy on a literally unholy alliance with the*

despotic Saudi Arabia, and as long as Israel continues to occupy Palestinian lands, which in turn creates fertile soil for terror against Israel. Therefore, the battle of George Bush Junior is even more important than the battle of George Bush Senior. The liberation of Kuwait was all about oil, weapons of mass destruction and international law. The punitive expeditions against the terrorists are about basic values. Destroyed Air defences and raids by special forces in Afghanistan will not be sufficient to bring victory to the democracies involved. They have to sweep before their own door and straighten out the morals of their foreign policies first. This would make it more difficult for murderers like Osama bin Laden to lead the opposition astray in major fundamentalist states.

Still, the greatest changes must come from within these states themselves, so that people can hope for a better life in this world and not only in Paradise. To avoid a "talibanisation" of Pakistan and Egypt, there is primarily a great need for economic growth. The tragedy on 11 September and its sad aftermath may become an alarm clock and catalyst for change. George Bush has already woken up with the insight that the Palestinians should have their own state. In times to come, several things are bound to happen, both in the US and in other countries of the alliance.³⁵

The point here is not whether Ekdal is completely right in his analyses or not. The problem is far more complicated than was assumed by the early protesters against the bombing campaign and the advocates of various "peace now" analyses, directed against the American efforts in Afghanistan. Their analyses are of limited value if the goal is to prevent further acts of terror, not only in the West, but mainly in the (moderate parts of the) Arabic world. Since the fanatics refuse to give up their fight against "the infidels" and Western values in general, they must be fought actively and with all possible means.

There are indications that the terrorists are experimenting with biological weapons. This fact has been well documented through documents found after the fall of the Taliban regime. Unfortunately, we have reason to believe that the day the terrorists find an effective way to use potentially "unguidable" weapons of mass destruction, they will do so without hesitation. The hatred

against the West is so intense within some of these groupings that they would probably use weapons of this kind if they believe them to cause chaos and fear. Below follows a rather pessimistic (translation of a Swedish) analysis of the developments:

This is not going to be an ordinary war, said the American leadership when it prepared the world for what was to come. But an ordinary war is what it has been until now, against an enemy that most likely cannot be defeated in an ordinary war and that wants an ordinary war most of all. I fear that that the war initiated by the US and their allies is just the kind of war that Osama bin Laden predicted and wanted. Nothing of what is going on at the moment will surprise him. His objective is to destabilise and demoralise the Western world by means of unpredictable, catastrophic violence. This is in order to create the right climate for the assumption of power by fundamentalists in the Islamic world in general, and specifically in pro-Western countries that are of key value to the West, like Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The more uncontrolled violence he can provoke, the more will the scenario resemble the “holy war” that has been advocated by him and the other members of the sect, and the more angry people in the Muslim world will be drawn to join the war. Escalation of violence is not only a means in the war Osama bin Laden wants to wage against the world; it is also a goal in itself.

Consequently, this is a war that the international community is bound to lose. The only kind of war the international community can hope to win is a war where use of a clearly limited amount of violence will achieve one clearly limited objective – to create justice. In this case, this would mean to capture (or in the worst case to kill) the person Osama bin Laden and discredit or destroy his terrorist network. Any war where this limited objective cannot be achieved is probably a lost war. Why does the US wage a war when there is high probability of losing and low probability of winning? The answer is possibly that this is the only kind of war they are able to conduct. The US monitors the Taliban mountain warriors with

satellites and aircraft because US resources have been allocated to satellites and aircraft. The US is bombing Afghan building and installations because they know how to bomb buildings and installations. Furthermore, the US does not know where Osama bin Laden is or what he is going to do next, simply because they do not have the ability to do so.

Some say that subsequent to 11 September, something has to be done and done fast. This is true; something has to be done fast. The grief and sense of justice called for action. The sense of self-respect called for action. And this was the dilemma. Something had to be done fast, but what could be done fast involved the risk of playing into the terrorists' hands.

War is "politics by other means", as Clausewitz once wrote. Thus, he bases his thesis on the assumption that all wars have a political goal. They do not. Until now, the war against the Taliban in Afghanistan has no political goal. To capture Osama bin Laden and people in his terrorist network is not a political objective; it is rather a police task. But since the US-led alliance has started a war and not a police action, and since all wars have political (and often far-reaching) consequences, there is great risk that this war will have a political aftermath. In the US, debaters on the right wing demand that Saddam Hussein should be overthrown and that the whole Arab world should be made secure from terrorism. Other debaters are stating new demands. They argue that Israel should follow a different line of policy in the Middle East and that a Palestinian state should be established. The problem is that if politics are thrown in after the war, politics will always be perceived as a result of the war, no matter what the politics are. Consequently, any line of policy will be regarded as a result of the terrorist acts that triggered off the war. American desperation? Palestinian state? All thanks to terrorism.

*This is the kind of war Osama bin Laden wants, and this is the kind of war we are giving him at the moment.*³⁶

As we can see from the citation above, several commentators feared that this

war against the Taliban regime would be another long-lasting war of attrition. Instead, the Taliban regime was short lived when faced with the American bombing and the active and aggressive Northern Alliance, which fought most battles on the ground. It was the very *combination* of the Special Forces, the bombing campaign and the relatively large ground force of the Northern Alliance that determined the outcome of the war about political power in Afghanistan. Without a large and relatively experienced opposition that could advance and take control on the ground when the Taliban and the terrorists had had enough bombing and started to withdraw, the conflict might have developed in a different direction.

John Keegan wrote (a much criticised) article in *The Telegraph* on 25 October 2001. In the article, he describes the core of the inner logic of the terrorist network, as he saw it. This logic contains determinism, which is difficult for Western minds to understand. He would like to draw special attention to the British Prime Minister Tony Blair's statements on what the international society should do to face the fanatics:

As long, therefore, as the Taliban continues to protect al-Qa'eda and remains undefeated by Western attack, the West must hold itself prepared for more terrorist attempts. Mr Blair emphasised how horrible those could be. He spoke of "certain knowledge that if they [the September 11 terrorists] could have killed 60,000 or 600,000, that is what they would have done".

The motivation of such terrorists is beyond comprehension. Most terrorists have some aim, which they believe will be advanced by violence. Their belief may be wrong and their methods self-defeating, but they at least belong within the same intellectual system as the rest of the world. Some balance on the furthest edge. The rich, spoilt ideologues of the Baader-Meinhof Gang, for example, seem to have hoped that the "capitalist system" could be brought down by random assassination and explosion. They were susceptible enough to capitalism's attractions, however, to spend most of the proceeds of their bank robberies in expensive shops, a failing that eventually betrayed them to the police. Al-Qa'eda, by contrast, has completely unrealisable aims and is unsusceptible to material

inducement. Osama bin Laden, in so far as he outlines a policy, speaks of “killing all Americans” and “destroying the United States”. Both aims are quite outside his capabilities and, indeed, those of any power on earth. Not even at the height of superpower confrontation could the old Soviet Union have exterminated America’s population and the survivors would have carried on the federal government. Nevertheless, Mr Blair recognises that al-Qa’eda will try. “The next step for fundamentalist groups”, he forecasts, “will be trying to acquire weapons of mass destruction.”

These were chilling words, though undoubtedly accurate. As the fundamentalists have a value system quite at variance with that of those they have decided are their enemies, what response can the West make? Material inducement is clearly ruled out; so is negotiation. In so far as al-Qa’eda has an identifiable aim, it is the elimination of Israel, to put it no worse, and the return of its territory to Palestinian Arabs, however defined. Though less unrealistic than “destroying America” and “killing all Americans”, such aims will never be conceded by Israel or Israel’s protectors.

The only recourse, therefore, is that indicated by the Prime Minister: to strike directly at the head of al-Qa’eda, Osama bin Laden. “We are entitled to take action against him,” Mr Blair said. “The Security Council resolution has authorised that...He is well protected and well armed and I have always thought it somewhat unlikely that he will be turning up in court one day.”

Mr Blair thus seemed to dispose of the idea, increasingly popular among the higher judiciary, academic lawyers and opponents of military action alike, that the pursuit of terrorist criminals should be put into the hands of an international court system. To any practical person, the proposal is wholly untenable. Even within a single jurisdiction, the prevarication and procrastination of the law are notorious. To transfer the opportunities for those delays and disagreements to a multinational body would be to ensure that no wrongdoer was ever convicted or, if convicted, ever punished. The prospect, seen against the need to preserve the basic necessities of everyday security and freedom from fear, is deeply

alarming. Mr Blair disposed of it summarily. “[The International Criminal Court] has its place and function but in the end it is important that democratically elected leaders are able to take the steps that are necessary.”...³⁷

It remains to be seen, however, what future developments will bring. Even though the Taliban regime is now history, little indicates that the war against the terrorist network will be brought to a conclusion in the near future.

3.3.1 Al-Qa’eda’s “operational doctrine”

At the very heart of al-Qa’eda’s so-called “operational doctrine” is to control its scarce resources. The same thing that gives it its greatest advantage - sparseness - also is its greatest disadvantage. Every major operation uses a *substantial fraction* of its resources; every failed operation uses those resources to no real benefit. Al-Qa’eda seems to conduct major strikes about once every two years, and has now lost its major base in Afghanistan. It has struck in unexpected ways, in unexpected locations, taking minimal risks for maximum advantage. Obviously, if its *political aims* required an increased tempo of operations, it would probably step up the pace of attacks - provided it had the resources to do so.

But the fact is that al-Qa’eda in the short run does not have to prove its survival. It has struck, it has survived, and - taking U.S. officials’ statements at *face value* - it is known to have survived the setbacks in Afghanistan. The group is now not under major pressure to act. Quite the contrary, al-Qa’eda is generating precisely the sort of response of which its leaders could only have dreamt of! The quick defeat of al-Qa’eda is at present the *single overriding consideration* of U.S. foreign policy. (Washington is now probably prepared to redefine its entire alliance system if those allies hinder the prosecution of the war?) According to an article written by W. Arkin in Los Angeles Times, the United States has gone so far not only as to very publicly change its nuclear strategy; but also to designate Libya, Syria, Iraq and Iran - all Islamic nations - as potential targets of nuclear attack.³⁸

This is maybe what al-Qa’eda has been hoping would happen? The group will have made its case if it can force the United States into both a strong focus on al-Qa’eda as well as into a general confrontation with the

Islamic world - especially a confrontation that might include nuclear weapons.

The greater the *perceived threat*, the more intensely the United States will respond. This is what al-Qa'eda's leaders want. The key is that the United States never can prove that al-Qa'eda has been destroyed. Operating from the principle of "preparing for the worst while hoping for the best," the United States must generate worst-case scenarios. Therefore, al-Qa'eda has a kind of "doctrine":

- The United States must assume al-Qa'eda has not been defeated because, by definition, Washington cannot be certain that al-Qa'eda has been finished.
- Al-Qa'eda will use misinformation more than action to control and shape U.S. military action.
- The presumed persistence of al-Qa'eda compels the United States to more and more extreme military measures.
- Al-Qa'eda will use direct action **only** as required to keep the perception of its existence alive in the United States and elsewhere.³⁹

But al-Qa'eda's "war-fighting doctrine" has one potential weakness: the core assumption is that U.S. intelligence cannot get a sufficiently clear picture of its operations, either to act decisively against al-Qa'eda or to know when the group has ceased to exist. This assumption is plausible, but it is far from a certainty. If U.S. (and other Western) intelligence could get a clear picture of al-Qa'eda's structure and strike against it, al-Qa'eda would lose. Moreover, if the United States were able to strike so decisively and overwhelmingly that it would not only defeat al-Qa'eda, but also *demoralise* follow-on organisations (and sympathisers) in the Muslim world, the setback could be decisive.⁴⁰ If the United States, driven by fear of the group's *nuclear* and other capabilities, manages to sketch a reliable "map" of al-Qa'eda's forces, it could be destroyed. The operation would not be sequential as the US probably would involve *simultaneous strikes* against al-Qa'eda's network in many countries, as well as strikes against manufacturing and storage facilities for weapons of mass destruction in countries that might be willing to share them with al-Qa'eda. The strikes could include attacks against the leaders of some of these countries; see "the Axis of Evil" speech.

3.4 THE WAY AHEAD...

Is it possible that the war will be expanded? Is it possible to win the war without widening the present focus that is on Afghanistan?

In a speech made six months after the Sept. 11 attacks, President Bush significantly expanded the commitment of the United States to a global campaign against terrorism, saying America would “actively prepare” other nations for the fight. Bush said at a commemorative ceremony of the White House March 11 2002: “I have set a clear policy in the second stage of the war on terror: America encourages and expects governments everywhere to help remove the terrorist parasites that threaten their own countries and peace of the world,” and:

“If governments need training or resources to meet this commitment, America will help.”...

“We face an enemy of ruthless ambition, unconstrained by law or morality,” he said. “The terrorists despise other religions and have defiled their own. And they are determined to expand the scale and scope of their murder.”

He added: “The terror that targeted New York and Washington could strike any center of civilization. Against such an enemy, there is no immunity, and there can be no neutrality.”⁴¹

Mr. Bush in his speech described *the second phase* of the “War against Terror,” which he defined as “a sustained campaign to deny sanctuary to terrorists who would threaten our citizens from anywhere in the world.” In Afghanistan, he said, “hundreds of trained killers are now dead” as a battle in the Shah-i-Kot Mountains continues. “And we’re winning,” Mr. Bush said, “Yet it will not be the last battle in Afghanistan, and there will be other battles beyond that nation.”

In the rhetoric the Bush-administration now clearly talks about widening the *war against terrorism*. (But so far, most efforts have been directed towards keeping the alliance against terrorism together.) But three new challenges, of universal and enduring character, were posed by 11 September:

- The first challenge was that of international co-operation; that is of putting politics and not only forces, at the centre of world affairs. We have a system of “international governance”, inadequate and fractious as it may be, but one that could serve to address the range of issues, from global inequality, to management of world trade and migration, that confront all societies. (Denouncing the existing system from the Right, in the name of “hard-headed” power politics, or from the Left, in terms of a “anti-globalisation” campaign, are both possible recipes for disaster.)
- The second was the challenge of reinforcing the security dimension of globalisation. Globalisation cannot be seen only in terms of trade, investment, travel and communications. It requires *security dimensions*, the responsibility above all of states, and one that is both effective and under legal, and democratic, control.
- The third challenge, in the face of both the drama of 11 September and the appeals issued by the terrorist network al-Qa’eda, is that of reason itself; e.g. communalism, talk of “clash of civilisations,” religious and ethnic bigotry underlie the crisis of 11 September. The terrorists promote a plausible, but retrograde and ineffective, answer to the problems of the contemporary world.

We may start with the good news first: 11 September 2001 *did not* bring about a “world war” between different civilisations. A considerable amount of good sense about shared universal values, and the perils of cultural antagonism, was in evidence. The democratic and legal systems of the target states, in Europe and North America, will – we all hope – continue to limit the worst abuses of power and retribution. And still: the world economy, already in recession before 11 September, has not been plunged into a deeper crisis.

The war in Afghanistan was able to remove the Taliban and, under UN auspices, install an interim administration. Hopefully the new government will be able to organise countrywide consultations and ultimately elections. If this process keeps its momentum, the threats posed by warlords and by the Taliban and al-Qa’eda remnants will be reduced. But the war is still not over!

In the Middle East and the wider Muslim world there has been no dramatic upsurge of support for al-Qa’eda. None of the regimes seen as threatened by the crisis, most notably Pakistan, has been overthrown. Above

all, there has not as yet, been a second major terrorist attack.

But the challenges posed by 11 September have, in large measure, not been met. There has been recognition that globalisation needs security. This includes the ability to reply to, and pre-empt terrorist attacks including a greater awareness of the risk of large-scale terrorist assault, and increased domestic surveillance.

A *distortion* of the new security concern is evident in Bush's "Axis of Evil" speech which sought to link the war against terrorism, in the sense of groups such as al-Qa'eda, with the campaign against states developing *weapons of mass destruction*. It also involved a practice familiar from the Cold War period: exaggerating threats and promoting confrontation where negotiation was possible. (Two examples regarding two of the "evil nations": North Korea does not have the technology to put credible weapons on its "ramshackle" missiles; Iran has committed itself to international inspection of its chemical, biological and nuclear facilities.)

As mentioned earlier, **the successful removal of the Taliban regime does not automatically mean that there will be peace in the area**. Neither does it mean that there will be peace in the Muslim world in general. Osama bin Laden has probably escaped and most of the al-Qa'eda network probably remains intact. Even though al-Qa'eda has been damaged, their radical Islamic ideas could in time to come regain their influence. The most positive development so far is that Afghanistan has been given a second chance, but this will also take time.

Bin Laden is obviously convinced that the West – and especially the US – is responsible for all the problems that exist in the Muslim world. Consequently, he wishes to literally "throw the Western world out of the Muslim world". In his and his followers' view, only then can the Muslim problems be solved.⁴²

The strength of bin Laden lies in the fact that his *wild visions* (as they are perceived by many Westerners) appeal to millions of Muslims, and not only to the poor and uneducated. Many well-educated people of the middle class are fascinated by bin Laden. Many Muslims regard the West with great scepticism, which is primarily the result of the long-lasting fight between Israel and the Arab states, and especially the last few years' fight between Israel and the Palestinians. The US has received much of the blame for this

conflict because of its support for Israel.

Another factor that we tend to forget in Europe is the fact that non-Muslims dominate several Muslim regions in the world. Examples of this are Chechnya in Russia, Kashmir in India and Uighurstan (Chinese: Xinjiang) in China. Even though the US has cannot be blamed for starting these conflicts, many Muslims still choose to put blame on the US for not helping the minorities in these areas. This situation could worsen as a result of the Indian, Russian and Chines (at least official) support for the war against terrorism.

Many Islamists (and also many moderate Muslims) are of the opinion that the US supports the corrupt and repressive governments of the Muslim world, in countries like Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states, Egypt, Jordan and Morocco. Since bin Laden and similar extremists now have a huge audience that may be manipulated, there is always a danger that even if the network of bin Laden should be crushed, new “bin Laden-figures” may emerge at any time. To prevent this from happening, the US should be prepared for a long-time commitment and face the challenges that exist in Muslim states today. The citation below may serve to illustrate a probable future problem for Saudi Arabia, but as mention earlier, a whole series of countries are threatened by the political progress of extremists:

Saudi Arabia's interior minister has warned members of the security forces against sympathising with Islamic radicals. The unusually public comments reveal mounting uncertainty within the royal family over the loyalty of security forces. The U.S.-led war against terrorism has revealed a rift within Saudi society, and dissent from inhabitants of the Southwest region may threaten the government in Riyadh. ⁴³

One way to deal with the problem is of course to urge Muslim allies to democratise their countries. Even though bin Laden does not want democracy, this may be a means to prevent extremists from assuming power in other countries in the region.

Probably the most important signal to send is that the US is not a defender of

corrupt and ineffective regimes. To achieve this, the US must promote reforms and not the opposite. The Arab-Israeli conflict is also of great symbolic value. It would be a powerful signal if this conflict were significantly de-escalated or ended.

Suddenly, the US now has three new conflict areas to worry about; the ongoing conflicts in China, India and Russia. None of these states look favourably on separatism and Islam. In the fight against bin Laden's terrorist network, the US has become entangled with allies that may prove difficult to deal with. These countries have their own political agendas and may be very difficult to "direct".

3.5 CONCLUSION

Regarding the ongoing "War on Terror", nobody knows how long the fight against terrorism will last. It depends largely on the terrorists will and capacity to "soldier on", based on the popular support of the different groupings in specially the Middle East.

European states seems willing to interfere in domestic affairs outside Europe only if the intervention can be legitimised by the UN charter or other sources of international law. (The Germans have pressed hard for this legalistic approach, followed by most of the leading European nations.) State sovereignty is seen as a value independent of US sympathy for a given regime. In the dominating European view, military intervention in the "Axis of Evil" state Iraq can hardly be legitimised by the events of September 11 in 2001. This is why the Germans are talking about alternative concepts to encourage Iraq into adopting a more co-operative attitude towards arms control and are pursuing a long-term goal of reconciliation with Iran, etc. This is maybe naive – but is a different thinking compared with the American side.

The European position on asymmetric warfare and fighting terrorism is, however, not "talking with one voice". The positions are of cause shaped by the different perspective on world politics, clearly demonstrated between Germany and UK. Europe today lack the capabilities and also the will to pour resources into the military as the Americans do. Europe is not a political unity like the US despite the EU, and is because of this forced to use a different strategy. The Europeans seeks to influence state actions *through a legalistic and normative-based and co-operative approach*, and sees military use

as only a last option. (Again the UK has a little different view, as they are a little more willing to use force to deter potential enemies *militarily* than the rest.)

The problem discussed in this article may be summed up in the following manner:

1. It is important that the US and the West in general continue to distinguish between *Islam as a religion* and the Islamic extremists. Without a clear distinction here, the extremists will probably gain increased support, also in the more moderate Muslim countries and regions.

2. The US and Europe should actively support democratic reforms and participate in solving conflicts in the area. Otherwise, the more moderate forces will find themselves in an increasingly difficult situation.

3. Technically, the US probably can win the war against the al-Qa'eda networks. But this is not a guarantee of a long-lasting victory (or peace). If the "war of ideas" is lost against al-Qa'eda and other extremist groupings in the Muslim world, the US and the West will probably be up against an almost infinite series of confrontations with the Muslim world. A worst-case scenario is of course that the Muslim states are taken over by extremists, and that these people use the state's resources to start a "holy war" against the West and everything that is Western. (Several of these states would have weapons of mass destruction, and Pakistan even has nuclear weapons).

Much indicates that even if the Taliban regime has been overthrown, the war on terrorism will be long lasting. The conflict will now probably last for years.

NOTES

¹ O'Brien, Kevin and Nusbaum, Joseph: "Intelligence Gathering Asymmetric Threats". Kevin O'Brien is Deputy Director of the International Centre for Security Analysis (ICSA). Joseph Nusbaum is a researcher at ICSA working on "Cyber Threats Presented by Sub-state Actors". (See article on the Internet: www.icsa.ac.uk).

² Quotation from article by John Keegan in the Daily Telegraph: "In This War of Civilisations, the West Will Prevail", 2001-10-07.

³ Sir M. Howard is the previous Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford University: "It's not so much war it's more like a hunt". The Times, UK. The article was printed on 2. October 2001.

⁴ Sir M. Howard, speaking to the Royal United Service Institute, UK, on Octo-

ber 30., 2001.

⁵ The use of Anthrax against institutions and individuals in the US is already a fact. It was obviously used to create fear. To transmit diseases via letters is a fairly “primitive” method, but from the terrorist’s point of view, the effect seems to have been achieved.

⁶ See O’Brien and Nusbaum, op cit.

⁷ See O’Brien and Nusbaum, op cit.

⁸ This is the US forces’ document that describes warfare on the so-called *joint operational level*. The document is available on the Internet (pages of the US Armed Forces - click for JP 0-1).

⁹ DARPA’s statement is based on quotations from the article referred to in O’Brien and Nusbaum, op cit.

¹⁰ Based on notes from a conference in the UK, 23 May 2000. The text is from an overhead used during the presentation.

¹¹ See O’Brien and Nusbaum, op cit. For information on the ongoing developments in the American defense structures, the Defense News homepage is hereby recommended: www.defensenews.com. The page provides a consecutive overview of press releases and official statements from the DoD and Pentagon. It also contains interviews with military experts.

¹² The QDR study was published by the US Defense Department on 30 September 2001 (the part made public is available on the Internet), www.defenselink.mil/pubs/qdr2001.pdf.

¹³ Published 2001-10-16: “text” from *Year 2000 China Defense White Paper Document*. Translated from Mandarin by the World News Connection; <http://wnc.fedworld.gov/subscription.html>. These are excellent sources that describe the Chinese main view in journals and official documents.

¹⁴ I.a. as documented in a study written for the Canadian authorities in 2000 (here used as a *secondary source*).

¹⁵ Another cheap alternative which may become a considerable problem over time is the so-called “electronic bomb”. This is electronics which may be used by terrorists or criminals. It has a theoretical potential to “boil” most known circuit boards. It has been claimed that this type of equipment could be produced illegally at the mere cost of US\$ 2000 for each unit. It remains to be seen whether this kind of equipment will be put to use or not. See also footnote 1.

¹⁶ This is based on views stated earlier in Norwegian newspapers by dr. Philos Torkel Brekke, Institute of Cultural Studies at the University of Oslo and the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters. Last time in *Aftenposten* on 8. January 2002.

¹⁷ In an article in the Norwegian leading newspaper *Aftenposten* on 21 September 2001.

¹⁸ In an article in the Norwegian newspaper *Aftenposten* on September 1 2001, major Henning A. Franzen maintains that military force should be the least distinctive feature in the strategies that are being developed in the fight against international terrorism. In the article, Franzen analyses the possibilities to win the conflict by other means. Several of the arguments in this text are based on his article, see various footnotes. (Original text is in Norwegian.)

¹⁹ Franzen 2001, op cit.

²⁰ From “Quarterly Forecast: Emerging From the Wreckage, 1730 GMT, 011001 STRATFOR. Their blurb says: “STRATFOR uses a net assessment methodology in building and maintaining forecasts. Through geopolitical analysis, we build a virtual model of the world: the net assessment. We then search daily for the anomalies that reinforce, modify or refute this model and the forecasts that emerge from it”.

²¹ Franzen 2001, op cit.

²² One factor that is often forgotten in the debate is that all the fundamentalist groupings wish that the “immoral” Arab regimes in countries that are relatively friendly towards the West should be overthrown and replaced with “moral” regimes that are guided by a relatively extreme interpretation of the Koran.

²³ Many different writings of the Arabic word al-Qa’eda (“the Base”) are used in the sources. I have here used both al-Qa’eda and al-Qa’ida – depending on the writing in the sources.

²⁴ The Guardian, February 28, 2002.

²⁵ In the special case of bin Laden, Mullah Omar and Ayman Al Zawahiri, the alliance may choose to keep them out of the limelight for as long as possible.

²⁶ “Attacks trigger fury across the Muslim world”, written by Michael Binyon. *The Times*, 2001-10-09. After bombing now have continued for 4 more month, it becomes obvious that the predictions failed. (In fact few commentators have “hit the head on the nail” in their comments. Few really had any “insiders view” of the developments in the country. Most regimes in the Muslim world chose to support the US and the UN resolutions – or have at least chosen not to oppose them. Neither have there been any major rebellions against the regimes in power.

²⁷ In this note I will give a short historic introduction to this kind of extremism. Terror/terrorism is not a new phenomenon in world history, cf. viewpoints below: “It is not the violence of Osama bin Laden and his al-Qa’ide organisation which marks them off from other movements in history. A long list of regimes - from the Mongols and Crusaders down to the Soviet secret police, the Nazis, the Khmer Rouge and Hutu militiamen in Rwanda - have killed more innocent people without compunction. What really distinguishes the attackers of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon is their willingness to kill themselves. This in itself is rare, and within Islam even more so, which considers suicide to be sinful... But there are precedents, perhaps the most infamous being the Ismaili sect known as the Assassins, led by Hassan Sabbah. There are remarkable parallels between this sect, which flourished in the 11th century in northwest Iran, and the messianic vision shared by al-Qa’ide’s adherents: in particular the idea of following a messianic leader and the concept of entry into paradise through a martyr’s death. There are other similarities in their methodology. According to scripts of the time, the Assassins described themselves not as murderers, but as executioners.... ‘We must act in public as an example,’ they wrote. ‘By killing one man we terrorise 100,000. However, it is not enough to die, for if, by killing, we discourage our enemies from undertaking any action against us, by dying in the most courageous fashion, we force the masses to admire us and from their midst men will come to join us. Dying is more important than killing. We kill to defend ourselves, but we die to convert and conquer.’ The words could have come from Osama himself, but the similarities do not end there: the Assassins also studied their victims in great

detail, learning how to use knives, memorise codes, adopt local dialects and infiltrate a foreign environment for weeks on end until the moment was right.

Whether by design or otherwise, the devotees of al-Qa'ide have learned all the lessons of their infamous predecessors.” (Published in Oktober in the Daily Telegraph and by: www.afisnews_sender@DTIC.MIL. (The text has been edited by the author of this article).

²⁸ See previously mentioned article by Franzen, op cit.

²⁹ Commentary written by the founder of STRATFORS, G. Friedman, 3 October, 2001 (from the Internet).

³⁰ From an article in “Dagens Nyheter”. Title (original in Swedish): “The US Rules With the Arrogance of Power”. The article was published only a few days after the attack on September 11. The introduction said (original in Swedish): “We cannot close our eyes to the fact that the terror attacks on the US are a result of the extremely unequal power structures in the world. It is the US that, more than any other nation, maintains the present state of affairs, both economical and political. This is sometimes demonstrated with a power arrogance that makes even friends and allies react (writes former Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson and former Minister of Education Carl Tham). He, who does not understand the connection between economic misery, class distinctions and violence, has understood nothing of the history of the 20th century, they believe. The present state of affairs is unreasonable”.

³¹ The Danish historian Mikael Jalving wrote an interesting piece about the rhetorics of the political left wing in Berlingske Tidende, 8. October, 2001. Title: “The Marxist Fallacy”. Original in Danish: “Den Marxistiske Fejlslutning”.

³² Pointed out by Franzen in previously mentioned article.

³³ This note is deleted from the text.

³⁴ Of course, both police and security services contribute significantly to expose and destroy as many cells as possible in Europe. This is a European responsibility, not an American one. The significance of co-operation between the various secret services should not be underestimated. It is of vital importance for the ability to “mop up” existing terrorist organisations or groupings that sympathise with and are supported by terrorists.

³⁵ Nils Ekdal (political editor): Från Ibn Khaldun to George W Bush, article published on 14 October 2001 in the newspaper “Dagens Nyheter”.

³⁶ Gøran Rosenberg is a journalist, author and independent columnist for Dagens Nyheter (see article on 18 November 2001).

³⁷ John Keegan: Why The New Terrorism Threatens All of Humanity. The Telegraph, 25 October 2001.

³⁸ The document, leaked to the Los Angeles Times and published on March 9, is the result of a “nuclear posture review” conducted with the knowledge of President Bush during the first year of his presidency. It was delivered to Congress, probably in Secret on January 8 2002. (But the possibility of a “controlled leaked” as part of an information operation to put pressure on Iraq, is also an option here...). The impressions was modified 12 March 2002 in Washington. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov conferred at the Pentagon and faced the press March 12-13. Ivanov also met with President Bush March 12. Rumsfeld and Ivanov discussed the U.S. Nuclear

Posture Review. Press reports have alleged as mentioned above that classified versions of the review have the United States targeting Russia and other countries with nuclear weapons. Rumsfeld said the congressionally mandated Nuclear Posture Review

is not an operational planning document. "It sets out prudent requirements for deterrence in the 21st century," he said at the official press conference. "Without getting into the details, I can say the report says nothing about targeting any country with nuclear weapons. The United States targets no country on a day-to-day basis." Rumsfeld also said officials in the Russian Federation were briefed on the review in January. Ivanov was briefed personally, he added. Rumsfeld: "President Bush and President (Vladimir) Putin have said many times the United States and Russia are no longer adversaries." And: "It is true. Both Minister Ivanov and I have reaffirmed that in meetings the past few days." Ivanov echoed many of Rumsfeld's statements.

³⁹ The so-called "doctrine" is discussed by STRATFOR in their published statement "The Al Qaeda Doctrine", The Al Qaeda Doctrine 11th March 2002.

⁴⁰ STRATFOR, op cit.

⁴¹ President Bush, from speech held on March 11 2002.

That is not to suggest that bin Laden is in tune with the beliefs of modern Islam. Having lived in Muslim countries for almost 20 years, I know that, by choosing to obey and enforce the harsh laws of Pashtun village elders, bin Laden and his Taliban comrades are divorcing themselves from the majority of Muslims. He finds company instead in a line of extremists dating back to the Kharijites, who emerged within decades of the Prophet Mohammed's death. For while the scale of bin Laden's violence may be unprecedented, his philosophy of violence is nothing new. Echoing the words of George Habbash, former leader of the terrorist group known as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, who warned several years ago that "in this war, no one is neutral, no one is innocent," bin Laden recently said that "in the name of retaliation there are no innocents."

It comes as no surprise then to see bin Laden readily abjure the religious mainstream, as did the extremists who came before him..."

⁴² It is worth noticing the following remarks of bin Laden and the Middle East expert Stanley Bedlington; written in the article "Not Who You Think", W P, 28 October 2001 (p. B 01.): "One of bin Laden's strategies has been to mix his real motivations with goals designed to appeal to wide swaths of disaffected Muslims. He has talked for several years about his desire to expel U.S. forces from Saudi Arabia, and has expressed real anger at the pollution of that country's holiest sites — Mecca and Medina — by the presence in the region during the Persian Gulf War of hundreds of thousands of non-Muslims. More recently, he has spoken out about the plight of Palestinians, but I believe he has done so out of expediency, seeing in the Palestinian cause a means of attracting new Muslim recruits. Together, these issues provide bin Laden with a potent rallying cry. Although these objectives spur on his actions, bin Laden's ambitions — both personal and social — are greater. Based on his own statements and those of his close associates, bin Laden wants to be portrayed in the Islamic world as a latter-day caliph, or supreme ruler, in the image of the Prophet Muhammad's successors — a figure who can unite all of Islam. (...) But perhaps just as important as his egotism is bin

Laden's ardent desire to halt the flood of American popular culture into the Islamic world. Echoing the inflammatory anti-Western writings of extremists such as Syed Qutb, an Egyptian who gained prominence in the early 1960s, and Maulana Abu Ala Maududi, a Pakistani who continued to be active into the '70s, bin Laden believes that the United States is the "Great Satan." He sees Islam under assault from a rising tide of secularized modernity led by America and by corrupt Arab governments and monarchies.

⁴³ Stratfor: 2200 GMT, 011023, *Southwest Saudi Arabia: Hotbed of Radical Islam*. <http://www.stratfor.com>.

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