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**Terrorism and the Making of the 'New Middle East':  
New Media Strategies of Hizbollah and al Qaeda**

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# Terrorism and the Making of the ‘New Middle East’:

## New Media Strategies of Hizbollah and al Qaeda

Maura Conway

### Introduction

When US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was asked about soft power in 2003, he replied “I don’t know what it means.”<sup>1</sup> In February 2006, in a speech at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, however, Rumsfeld was forced to concede:

Our enemies have skillfully adapted to fighting wars in today’s media age, but for the most part we, our country, our government, has not adapted. Consider that the violent extremists have established media relations committees—these are terrorists and they have media relations committees that meet and talk about strategy, not with bullets but with words. They’ve proven to be highly successful at manipulating the opinion elites of the world. They plan and design their headline-grabbing attacks using every means of communication to intimidate and break the collective will of free people... They know that communications transcend borders and that a single news story handled skillfully can be as damaging to our cause and helpful to theirs as any other method of military attack. And they’re doing it. They’re able to act quickly. They have relatively few people. They have modest resources compared to the vast and expensive bureaucracies of Western governments. Our federal government is really only beginning to adapt our operations to the 21st

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<sup>1</sup> As quoted in Joseph Nye, “Think Again: Soft Power,” *Foreign Policy*, vol. 26, February 2006.

century. For the most part, the U.S. government still functions as a five and dime store in an eBay world.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter explores the use of new media technologies, satellite television and the Internet, by two groups, Hizbollah<sup>3</sup> and al Qaeda (and affiliated groups and individuals) respectively. The argument put forward here is twofold: firstly, while both groups are savvy users of new media technologies, which they employ in conjunction with their hard power resources to amplify their soft power, the style and substance of their new media strategies, and thence their larger goals, differ quite dramatically; second, however is the assertion that, despite these differences, both of these groups are potentially substantial contributors to the making of a ‘new’ Middle East, albeit one very different from that envisaged by the US administration when they employ this terminology.

### Old Media, New Media: The Evolution of the Terrorism-Media Relationship

Nobel’s invention of dynamite in 1867 was the technological breakthrough that ushered in the era of modern terrorism. The economy of means afforded by the use of dynamite ensured that terrorist bombings proliferated. High levels of illiteracy in nineteenth century Europe imposed serious limitations on conventional text-based propaganda. Conversely, ‘propaganda by deed’ could show, as the French anarchist Paul Brousse explained lucidly at the time, “the weary and inert masses...that which they were unable to read, teach them socialism in practice, make it visible, tangible,

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<sup>2</sup> From a transcript of remarks made by Rumsfeld at the Council on Foreign Relations, New York, 17 February 2006, and available online at <http://www.cfr.org/publication/9900/>.

<sup>3</sup> It’s worth pointing out that Hizbollah are a legitimate political party with a wide base of support in Lebanon; however, they are considered a terrorist organisation by a large number of governments including the United States and the member states of the European Union.

concrete.”<sup>4</sup> When the anarchist Albert Parsons was arraigned for his alleged involvement in the Haymarket bombing in Chicago in 1886, he insisted in court that dynamite “made all men equal and therefore free.”<sup>5</sup> However, while modern terrorists may still seek to convey a message through their performance violence, they must also employ written and spoken language in an effort to legitimise, rationalise and, ultimately, advertise their actions. With the advent of new media technologies, however, they are no longer reliant on intermediaries to interpret their deeds; instead they may employ the former as soft power tools in order to amplify their hard power resources, thus adopting, in Nye’s terms, a ‘smart’ approach to conflict.<sup>6</sup>

Since the advent of the printing press using industrial age technologies in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, terrorists and extremist movements have employed every available mass communications technology. This is evidenced in everything from Carlos Marighela’s advice to his comrades to use photocopying machines to produce large numbers of pamphlets and manifestos to Hizbollah’s establishment of its al Manar television station in the early 1990s. The year that witnessed the birth of modern international terrorism, 1968, was the same year in which the United States launched the first television satellite, heralding the second great revolution in mass communications that directly impacted terrorism.<sup>7</sup>

Much of the explanation of the power of terrorism is said to hinge on how the news media operate: “Journalists are attracted to drama and few political spectacles

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<sup>4</sup> Charles Townshend, *Terrorism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2002), 55.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>6</sup> Nye, “Think Again.”

<sup>7</sup> Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (London: Indigo, 1998), 136-137; see also Susan L. Carruthers, *The Media at War* (Hampshire, UK: Palgrave, 2000), 168; Gerard Chaliand, *Terrorism: From Popular Struggle to Media Spectacle* (New Jersey: Saqi Books, 1985), 13-14; Alex P. Schmid & Janny De Graaf, *Violence as Communication: Insurgent Terrorism and the Western News Media* (London: Sage, 1982), 16.

offer greater dramatic appeal than violence.”<sup>8</sup> Terrorists are cognisant of this and use it to their advantage. In his seminal 1975 paper, Brian Michael Jenkins argued that “terrorist attacks are often carefully choreographed to attract the attention of the electronic media and the international press.”<sup>9</sup> The news media have proved unable to ignore events “fashioned specifically for their needs.”<sup>10</sup>

Terrorist ‘spectaculars’ can hijack media attention: witness the attack on the Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics, the hijacking of TWA flight 847, the events of 9/11 and their aftermath. This is not to suggest, however, that the terrorists themselves actually control the news agenda, or can determine the ways in which their behaviour is framed. Even where terrorists gain ‘disruptive access’ to the media, in their repackaging of events the media still largely rely on official sources and dominant understandings of where legitimacy lies.<sup>11</sup> In the British case, for example, the tabloid press often exceeded the language of the state in stigmatizing the IRA as ‘scum,’ ‘cowardly murderers,’ and ‘bastards.’<sup>12</sup> In the past, those characterized as ‘terrorists’ were rarely accepted by the mass media as legitimate or authoritative sources of news in their own right. Neither were they accepted as reliable commentators upon the political situation that had given rise to the violence: “Certainly, on the few occasions when the BBC or ITV interviewed Republican paramilitaries in the 1970s and 1980s, they were emphatically not, as a matter of policy, treated as individuals whose opinions could be accorded the same respect and

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<sup>8</sup> Steven Livingston, *The Terrorism Spectacle* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 2.

<sup>9</sup> Brian M. Jenkins, “International Terrorism: A New Mode of Conflict,” in David Carlton & Carlo Schaerf (Eds.), *International Terrorism and World Security* (London: Croom Helm, 1975), 16.

<sup>10</sup> J. Bowyer Bell, “Terrorist Scripts and Live-Action Spectaculars,” *Columbia Journalism Review*, Vol. 17, No.1, 1978: 50.

<sup>11</sup> Bethami A. Dobkin, *Tales of Terror: Television News and The Construction of the Terrorist Threat* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1992); David L. Paletz & Alex P. Schmid, *Terrorism and The Media: How Researchers, Terrorists, Governments, Press, Public, Victims View and Use the Media* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1992), 19.

<sup>12</sup> Carruthers, 191.

due consideration as others.”<sup>13</sup> By concentrating almost exclusively on the violent dimension of terrorism, making no attempt to contextualise its causes, media reports often leave readers, viewers, or listeners mystified as to the motivation of violent acts.<sup>14</sup> The upshot of this is that many in the media audience take these acts to be simply the senseless, inexplicable behaviour of psychotic fundamentalists or extremist lunatics.<sup>15</sup>

For this reason, terrorists generally accompany their violent acts with a flurry of threats, communiqués, and manifestos, leading one commentator to assert “the violence of terrorism is positively verbose.”<sup>16</sup> Previous to the widespread use of the Internet and other new media technologies, the mainstream media were held by many to be complicit in the attainment of the terrorists’ objectives. This was because media attention to terrorist violence was held to be considerably more significant than the terrorists’ own propaganda: “[the terrorists’] own self-generated posters, manifestos, leaflets, and broadcasts are unlikely, after all, to reach a wide audience and even less likely to convince any other than the already converted.”<sup>17</sup> This may have been true when cultures and politics could be contained within national borders. Historically, leaders and elites were generally the only ones who knew the world first hand. Thus they were relied upon to interpret the motives and behaviours of other leaders and elites, and to formulate responses. Today, that reliance has all but vanished. The Internet and satellite television present those with access and the requisite interest with the opportunity to know and interpret the world for themselves, and therefore

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Gus Martin, *Understanding Terrorism: Challenges, Perspectives, and Issues* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003), 280.

<sup>15</sup> George Gerbner, “Violence and Terrorism in and By the Media,” in Mark Raboy & Bernard Dagenais (Eds.), *Media, Crisis and Democracy: Mass Communication and the Disruption of Social Order* (London: Sage, 1992), 96.

<sup>16</sup> Stephen Segaller, *Invisible Armies: Terrorism Into the 1990s* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987), 62.

<sup>17</sup> Carruthers, 170.

decreases the historical control by the media and political elites over individual worldviews.<sup>18</sup>

“In the modern era, the truism that ‘information is power’ is very clearly understood by the media and governments; it is also understood by terrorists, their audiences, and their adversaries.”<sup>19</sup> If victory, in the information age, is ultimately about “whose story wins,”<sup>20</sup> the crucial questions become what messages are sent and received by whom under which circumstances, and how that affects the ability of actors to obtain the outcomes they want.<sup>21</sup> Terrorists now have the ability to tell their own stories via their websites and television stations. The level of editorial control afforded terrorists by their access to new media technologies has added a significant new tool to terrorists’ soft power arsenal. This chapter is composed of two case studies: the first of these details the use by Hizbollah of their satellite television station, al Manar, in their information warfare strategy, while the second case describes and analyses the adoption of a heavily Net-centric posture by al Qaeda and affiliated groups and individuals. Both of these groups are heavy users of new media and their tech-savvy already having made an impact in the Middle East, they are both potentially significant contributors to the future remaking of the region in terms of both their political violence initiatives and the undoubtedly central role new media technologies will play in the groups’ amplification of the latter. Relevant also is the way in which efforts by Western governments to muzzle these groups has rebounded

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<sup>18</sup> Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions in Globalization* (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

<sup>19</sup> Martin, 279.

<sup>20</sup> John Arquilla & David Ronfeldt, *The Emergence of Noopolitik: Toward an American Information Strategy* (California: Rand, 1999), 53. The entire text of the latter is available online at <http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR1033/>. See also David Bollier, *The Rise of Netpolitik: How the Internet is Changing International Politics and Diplomacy* (Washington DC: The Aspen Institute, 2003), 32-36, full text available online at <http://www.aspeninstitute.org/AspenInstitute/files/CCLIBRARYFILES/FILENAME/0000000077/netpolitik.pdf>.

<sup>21</sup> Joseph Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 44.

on the former and led to widespread derision in the Middle East region (and, indeed, farther afield).

### New Media Strategy 1: Hizbollah's Al-Manar TV<sup>22</sup>

The major focus of this section is the way in which Hizbollah has wielded its television station, al Manar—the ‘Beacon’ or ‘Lighthouse,’ in Arabic—as a weapon in their information war. The argument put forward here is that Hizbollah has met with high levels of success in this regard—to the extent that they may recently be seen to have become the victims of their own success, with the institution of multiple bans on transmission of al Manar globally and the repeated targeting of the station by Israeli forces during the summer 2006 crisis. On the other hand, these difficulties may also be viewed by the organization as blessings in disguise, as they have forced the station to streamline its processes which may, in the long term, not only ensure its continued existence, but even allow it to access a larger audience.

Although Hizbollah's political goals are narrower than al Qaeda's, “[s]ymbolism and the projection of messages to internal and external audiences have occupied a central place for Hizbollah throughout its evolution.”<sup>23</sup> Donald Rumsfeld would clearly be surprised to learn that during the crisis precipitated by the hijacking of TWA flight 847 in 1985, Hizbollah deftly manipulated the U.S. television networks: “There were graduates in media studies from American colleges at meetings at Nabih Berri's house in West Beirut while [‘spin doctoring’] tactics were being worked

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<sup>22</sup> For a detailed analysis of al-Manar's establishment and evolution, see Maura Conway, “Terror TV? Hizbollah's Al Manar Television,” in James Forest (Ed.), *Countering Terrorism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (3 vols.) (Connecticut: Praeger Security International, 2007).

<sup>23</sup> Magnus Ranstorp, “The Strategy and Tactics of Hizbollah's Current “Lebanonization Process,” *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 3, 1998: 109.



out.”<sup>24</sup> Later, during the 1990s, Hizbollah utilized its media apparatus to wage successful campaigns against both the IDF and South Lebanese Army (SLA) when they adopted a two-pronged military strategy, combining guerrilla and psychological warfare. According to Schliefer, “Hizbollah’s unique contribution to PSYOP lay in the way it combined conventional and psychological warfare, creating a whole new PSYOP idiom.”<sup>25</sup> Al Manar was at the center of this campaign from its inception.

Al Manar has, since its foundation, been a television station devoted to the goals of Hizbollah, and although these have been subject to change over time, the overarching theme of resistance has persisted throughout. From its establishment in 1991 to the Israeli withdrawal from the south in 2000, the bulk of the station’s programming was aimed at sustaining and, if possible, strengthening the Lebanese public’s support for Hizbollah’s campaign of resistance against the IDF in south Lebanon, while at the same time pressuring Israeli viewers to push their government for a unilateral withdrawal.

The eventual withdrawal was celebrated live on air for days, but this “triumph” came tinged with distress: what was to be the station’s purpose without the “hook” the resistance provided? The answer presented itself in the form of the outbreak of the so-called al-Aqsa Intifada. Al Manar became “the secret weapon of the Palestinian intifada against Israeli occupation, the loyal supporter of armed resistance, devoting at least half its 24-hour-a-day satellite broadcasting to the battle between Palestinians and Israelis in the West Bank and Gaza.”<sup>26</sup> The nature of some of this programming eventually resulted in the widespread banning of the station, however.

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<sup>24</sup> Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (London: Indigo, 1998), 134.

<sup>25</sup> Ron Schliefer, “Psychological Operations: A New Variation on an Age Old Art: Hezbollah Versus Israel,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol.29, No.1, January-February 2006: 5.

<sup>26</sup> Robert Fisk, “Television News is Secret Weapon of the Intifada,” *The Independent* (London), 2 December 2000, available online at [http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_qn4158/is\\_20001202/ai\\_n14356264](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qn4158/is_20001202/ai_n14356264).

### *Banning Al Manar's Satellite Transmissions*

The campaign to have al Manar banned from transmitting via satellite began with an opinion piece that appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* in October 2002. The article, penned by Avi Jorisch,<sup>27</sup> accused American companies who advertised on the station of promoting terrorism. PepsiCo, Proctor and Gamble, Western Union, and a number of other major U.S. and European companies were named as advertisers on al Manar's local broadcasts (the satellite broadcast was, at that time, commercial-free).<sup>28</sup> Jorisch followed up with a letter to the U.S. Congress asking its members to put pressure on these companies. The majority of U.S. advertisers duly pulled out, and pressure to ban the transmission of the station itself increased. The Coalition Against Terrorist Media (CATM), an offshoot of the U.S.-based neo-Conservative organization Foundation for Defence of Democracy (FDD), was also founded at this time in order to generate further momentum for a ban. Representatives of FDD and CATM—including Jorisch, who came on board as the latter's Executive Director—have issued numerous statements claiming “al Manar runs graphic videos encouraging viewers, even children, to become suicide bombers and calls for acts of terrorism against civilians . . . Al Manar is an operational weapon in the hands of one of the world's most dangerous terrorist organizations.”<sup>29</sup>

Al Manar was, at the same time, coming under pressure in Europe. While claims about incitement to suicide bombing are contested, this is not to deny that some measure of al Manar's programming is objectionable by Western standards. The

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<sup>27</sup> Jorisch is the author of *Beacon of Hatred: Inside Hizballah's Al-Manar Television* (Washington DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2004).

<sup>28</sup> The full text of the letter is available online at <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/pdf.php?template=C06&CID=453>.

<sup>29</sup> See press releases at <http://www.stopterroristmedia.org/News/DocumentQuery.aspx?DocumentTypeID=357>.

French move against al Manar began after the station caused an uproar in October 2002 by broadcasting a Syrian-produced drama series entitled *al Shattat* (“The Diaspora”), which is based on the controversial text known as the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a 19th-century publication that depicts a Zionist conspiracy to take over the world.<sup>30</sup> Scenes from the multipart miniseries include a dramatization of a rabbi slaying a young boy in order to use his blood to make Passover *matzoh*.<sup>31</sup> Another episode includes a scene depicting a secret Jewish government allegedly plotting to drop an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan.

The transmission of this series caused uproar in France, where incitement to racial hatred and anti-Semitism are criminal offences, and led France’s higher audiovisual authority to instruct al Manar to change the tone of its programming or face a ban. However, when in December 2004 a guest on a live show said that Zionists were deliberately trying to spread diseases, including AIDS, to Arabs, the authority decided to take the station to court. On 6 January 2005, France’s highest administrative court, the *Conseil d’État* (Council of State)—which had jurisdiction over the channel because it broadcast via a satellite based in France—decided that the programs al Manar broadcast “were in a militant context, with anti-Semitic connotations” and banned transmission of the station, warning the satellite provider Eutelsat that if it failed to stop broadcasting al Manar on its satellite within 48 hours of the decision it would be subject to a large fine.<sup>32</sup> For its part, the station said it was unfair to ban a channel on the basis of one live caller, and it denies it is anti-Semitic.<sup>33</sup> In the event,

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<sup>30</sup> In 2002, the US State Department objected, but failed, to prevent the broadcast by Egyptian television of the Ramadan mini-series *Horseman Without a Horse* which was also based upon *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. The *Protocols*, which the US State Department calls ‘racist’ and ‘untrue,’ is a work of fiction masquerading as fact, which claims to describe a Jewish plot for world domination and was used in Nazi Germany as a pretext to persecute Jews.

<sup>31</sup> ‘Matzoh’ is Yiddish for a brittle, flat piece of unleavened bread.

<sup>32</sup> BBC Monitoring, “IFJ Criticizes French Ban on Al-Manar TV,” *International Federation of Journalists*, 16 December 2004.

<sup>33</sup> Kim Ghattas, “Al-Manar Network Feels World’s Heat,” *The Boston Globe* 21 December 2004: A24.

al Manar voluntarily stopped broadcasting several days before the ban was to take effect, a move that prevented other stations on the same satellite network from being removed from the airwaves as well.<sup>34</sup>

As regards the U.S. ban, it followed shortly thereafter. In December 2004, al Manar was placed on an “exclusion list” by the U.S. State Department. This was followed up in March 2006 with al Manar’s designation as a terrorist organization by the U.S. Department of the Treasury.<sup>35</sup> As a result, no one associated with the broadcaster is allowed entry to the U.S. and any U.S. company found to be doing business with al Manar will be subject to sanctions and possible prosecution. The result is al Manar is effectively prohibited from transmitting in the United States. Although they result in the same outcomes, it’s worth noting that the French and U.S. bans rest on different legal foundations, with the French ban focusing on constitutional issues of expression, and the U.S. ban based on laws prohibiting the material support of terrorist organizations, which, according to Yadav, means that “At least in theory, then, the U.S. is suggesting that their own struggle against al Manar is not based on the substance of what it says, but rather on what it does.”<sup>36</sup> In addition to being unavailable in North America, and with access being restricted in Europe, al Manar is also no longer available for satellite viewing in South America, nor in Australia or much of Africa; however, it is still broadcast throughout the Middle East, parts of Europe, and North Africa by Nilesat, whose major shareholder is the government of Egypt, and Arabsat, which is owned in part by the government of

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<sup>34</sup> Anna Marie Baylouny, “Al-Manar and Alhurra: Competing Satellite Stations and Ideologies,” *CSRC Discussion Paper* 05/49 (2005): 12. Full text available online at [http://www.da.mod.uk/CSRC/documents/Special/csrc\\_mpf.2005-10-17.5799702381/05\(49\).pdf](http://www.da.mod.uk/CSRC/documents/Special/csrc_mpf.2005-10-17.5799702381/05(49).pdf).

<sup>35</sup> This was carried out pursuant to Executive Order 13224, which was signed into law by US President George W. Bush on September 23, 2001 as a response to the 9/11 attacks. It describes powers designed to disrupt the financial activities of named terrorist organizations.

<sup>36</sup> Stacey Philbrick Yadav, “Of Bans, Boycotts, and Sacrificial Lambs: Al-Manar in the Crossfire,” *TBS: Transnational Broadcasting Studies* 14 (2005). The full text of the latter is available online at <http://www.tbsjournal.com/Archives/Spring05/yadav.html>.

Saudi Arabia. In any event, the station has all but entirely circumvented the satellite bans by providing free continuous live streaming online.

The above notwithstanding, al Manar officials were some of the most vociferous critics of the bans imposed on the broadcast of their satellite signals. The station responded in a statement that the U.S. action amounted to “intellectual terrorism” and an attack on press freedom.<sup>37</sup> The Lebanese Minister of Information declared the ban proof of censorship of any opposition to Israel, and students demonstrated in support of al Manar. In response to the French ban, the Lebanese Foreign Minister Mahmud Hammud commented “we consider this to be against the freedom of expression that the entire world, including the EU demands. We believe this attitude is not in harmony with the call for freedom of expression these countries advocate, and we believe there is a contradiction.”<sup>38</sup> The banning was also criticized by organizations ranging from Hamas<sup>39</sup> and Palestinian Islamic Jihad<sup>40</sup> to Reporters Without Borders, with the latter warning against confusing anti-Israeli positions with anti-Semitism.<sup>41</sup>

#### *Al Manar’s Role in the Summer 2006 Crisis*

In the summer of 2006, events in Lebanon put Hizbollah and al Manar back in the spotlight. During the crisis precipitated by a cross-border raid made by Hizbollah, al Manar reverted to its original role as mouthpiece of the Lebanese ‘resistance.’

Although this time around the Israelis, cognizant of the role played by al Manar in the

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<sup>37</sup> Ghattas, A24.

<sup>38</sup> BBC Monitoring, “Lebanese Syrian Ministers Criticise European Ban on Al-Manar TV,” *Lebanese National News Agency* [translated from Arabic], 21 March 2005.

<sup>39</sup> BBC Monitoring, “Hammas Expresses Solidarity with Al-Manar TV After French, US ‘Harassment’,” *Palestinian Information Centre* (online), 19 December 2004.

<sup>40</sup> BBC Monitoring, “Islamic Jihad Condemns US Campaign Against Lebanese Al-Manar TV,” *Information Bureau of the Islamic Jihad Movement* (online) [translated from Arabic], 20 December 2004.

<sup>41</sup> Federal News Service, “Interview With Robert Menard, Secretary-General of the French Group *Reporters Sans Frontieres*, Discussing the French Ban on Lebanese Al-Manar TV Broadcasts in France,” *Monday Morning Magazine* (Beirut), 18 January 2005.

previous conflict between the two sides, quickly sought to neutralize the station, they had little success.

Following Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000, and believing itself relatively safe from the threat of Israeli aerial bombardment, al Manar invested in high-specification antennas, which allowed it to extend its broadcasts farther into Israel. As a result, residents of Haifa, Israel's third largest city—which is located some 30 miles from the Lebanese border—are now in range of al Manar's transmissions. Al Manar's headquarters in Haret Hreik and the above-mentioned antennas—one of which was located near Baalbek, northeast of Beirut, and another in Maroun al-Ras in southern Lebanon<sup>42</sup>—were some of the first targets of IDF air attacks when hostilities erupted between Israel and Hizbollah in early July 2006. Al Manar's Beirut headquarters was first struck by the Israeli Air Force on Thursday, July 13, the second day of the crisis. The complex was bombed again on July 16, resulting in a fire in the station and surrounding buildings. Although the station's broadcasts continued uninterrupted during the first attack—which severely damaged the upper stories of the building—the second attack caused the station's signal to be briefly unavailable on several occasions before returning to full strength.<sup>43</sup> Also, on the second day of the crisis, the first-ever Hizbollah rocket attacks on Haifa commenced.

Indeed the IDF—in addition to conventional attacks on media targets in Lebanon—is also said to have broadened its psyop activities over the course of the crisis. The first reports of intercepts of al Manar's satellite transmissions were carried

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<sup>42</sup> These transmission stations were also used by Future TV and the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation (LBC). According to the BBC, attacks on these transmitters on 22 July resulted in the death of an LBC technician. See Peter Feuilherade, "Israel Steps Up 'Psy-Ops' in Lebanon," *BBC Monitoring*, 26 July 2006. Available online at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/5217484.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/5217484.stm).

<sup>43</sup> Committee to Protect Journalists, "Lebanon: Israeli Forces Strike Al-Manar TV Facilities," 13 July 2006. Full text available online at <http://www.cpj.org/news/2006/mideast/lebanon13july06na.html>. The Beirut HQ of Hizbollah's al-Nour radio was also attacked on 16 July.

by Egypt's Middle East News Agency, which said that on Sunday, July 23, Israel managed "to intercept the satellite transmissions of Hizbollah's al Manar TV channel for the third successive day, replacing them with Israeli transmissions that reportedly showed Hizbollah command sites and rocket launching pads which Israel claimed it has raided."<sup>44</sup> A little over a week later, al Jazeera reported that a series of still photos with captions appeared on the screens of al Manar viewers for several minutes during the evening news. Al Jazeera attributed the interruption to "Israeli-backed hackers." One of the images showed the corpse of a khaki-clad man lying face-down with accompanying Arabic text reading: "This is the photograph of a body of a member of Hizbollah's special forces. Nasrallah lies: it is not we who are hiding our losses." The al Jazeera report is also accompanied by what appears to be a screen shot that shows a photograph of Nasrallah accompanied by the text "member of Hizbollah: watch out," which al Jazeera said also appeared on TV screens.<sup>45</sup>

The Israeli bombing of Hizbollah's media outlets received harsh criticism from journalistic and human rights organizations. The Committee to Protect Journalists, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), Human Rights Watch, and others agreed that the attacks were a violation of international law, as the station's broadcasts were not serving any direct military function (e.g., sending military communiqués).<sup>46</sup> Aidan White, the IFJ's General Secretary, said: "The bombing of al Manar is a clear demonstration that Israel has a policy of using violence to silence media it does not agree with. This action means media can become routine targets in every conflict. It is a strategy that spells catastrophe for press freedom and should never be endorsed by a

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<sup>44</sup> Feuilherade, "Israel Steps Up 'Psy-Ops' in Lebanon." Feuilherade's article also details the hacking, presumably also by the Israelis, of local FM radio stations and Lebanese mobile phones.

<sup>45</sup> Agence France Press, "Israeli 'Hackers' Target Hezbollah TV," *Aljazeera.net*, 2 August 2006. Online at <http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/1DCBA43C-C892-4F02-8964-83BDA9081FC8.htm>.

<sup>46</sup> See Human Rights Watch, "Can Israel Attack Hezbollah Radio and Television Stations?," 31 July 2006, which is available online at <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/07/17/leban013748.htm#11>.

government that calls itself democratic.”<sup>47</sup> Human Rights Watch agreed, insisting “that Lebanese civilian opinion might influence how the Lebanese government responds to Hizbollah is not a sufficiently direct contribution to military action to render the media used to influence that opinion a legitimate military target. Rather, broadcasts should be met with competing broadcasts, propaganda with propaganda.”<sup>48</sup>

### New Media Strategy 2: Islamists and the Internet

Islamic texts and discussion venues have been accessible online for about twenty-five years. Anderson discerns three phases in the growth of an Islamic presence on the Internet characterised by the predominance of three different groups:

1. “Technological adepts”: People who uploaded scanned texts and added a generally laic discourse
2. “Activists and official voices”: Individuals at two ends of the ideological spectrum, competing for adherents
3. “Spokespersons and audiences”: People representing the “online advent of moderate Islam.”<sup>49</sup>

The assertion here is that a fourth phase developed post-9/11 spearheaded by radical Islamic fundamentalists, particularly those supportive of Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda. Throughout the maturation process identified by Anderson, the principal

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<sup>47</sup> International Federation of Journalists, “IFJ Accuses Israel Over Pattern of Targeting After Strike on Beirut Broadcaster,” 14 July 2006. The full text of this press release is available online at <http://www.ifj.org/default.asp?Index=4064&Language=EN>. The Israeli Association of Journalists withdrew from the IFJ due to this criticism, claiming that al-Manar employees “are not journalists, they are terrorists.” See Gil Hoffman, “Israeli Journalists Pull Out of IFJ,” *Jerusalem Post*, 20 July 2006. The full text of the latter is available online at <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=JPost/JPArticle/ShowFull&cid=1153291961355>.

<sup>48</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Can Israel Attack Hezbollah Radio and Television Stations?” For an alternative perspective, see CATM’s press release entitled “Hezbollah’s Al-Manar Television Station Legitimate Target of Israeli Response,” which is available online at <http://www.stopterroristmedia.org/News/DocumentSingle.aspx?DocumentID=16668>.

<sup>49</sup> Jon Anderson, “Muslim Networks, Muslim Selves in Cyberspace: Islam in the Post-Modern Public Square,” paper presented at the Japan Islamic Area Studies Project conference on *The Dynamism of Muslim Societies*, Tokyo, 5-8 October 2001. The full text of the paper is available online at <http://nmit.georgetown.edu/papers/jwanderson2.htm>.



actors in each phase employed and, in many cases even furthered the development of, the best publicly available technology.<sup>50</sup> The representatives of phase four were no different.

In his discussion of Islam and the Internet, Anderson champions the role of the Net in the emergence of an “activist but distinctly moderate Islam, for which the Internet seems peculiarly congenial.”<sup>51</sup> This is in keeping with much early work on the positive effects of new ICTs for global civil—read ‘positive’—society actors. The spread of information does not necessarily encourage increased civility or, indeed, stability, however. On the contrary, “Johannes Guttenberg’s invention of movable type in the mid-fifteenth century led not only to the Reformation but to the wars of religion that followed it, as the sudden proliferation of texts spurred doctrinal controversies and awakened long dormant grievances.”<sup>52</sup> Such impacts are not restricted to Christianity; historically, the salience of technology in precipitating change within Islam has been vast. According to Mandaville, it was the experience of European colonialism and the concomitant perceived decline in Islamic civilisation that paved the way for the embrace of print technology within the Muslim world in the nineteenth century. “The book, pamphlet, and newsletter were taken up with urgency in order to counter the threat which Europe was posing to the Muslim umma.”<sup>53</sup> In theory at least, this resulted in Islam’s sacred texts being made available for the first time to anyone who could read them, to “be consulted by any Ahmad, Mahmud, or Muhammad, who could make what he [would] of them.”<sup>54</sup> In a similar fashion, just as “the move to print technology meant not only a new method for

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Robert Kaplan as quoted in Michael Scheuer, *Imperial Hubris: Why the West is Losing the War on Terror* (Washington DC: Brassey’s, 2004), xx.

<sup>53</sup> Peter Mandaville, *Transnational Muslim Politics: Reimagining the Umma* (London: Routledge, 2001), 155.

<sup>54</sup> Francis Robinson as quoted in Mandaville, 155.

transmitting texts, but also a new idiom of selecting, writing and presenting works to cater for a new kind of reader,”<sup>55</sup> the advent of the Internet has resulted in not only a new method for transmitting text, audio, and video, but also a new idiom of selecting, producing, and arranging data to cater for a new kind of audience.

In a videotaped statement that was released in December 2001 in which he comments upon the 9/11 attackers, Osama bin Laden stated:

“[T]hose youths who conducted the operations did not accept any *fiqh* in the popular terms, but they accepted the *fiqh*<sup>56</sup> that the Prophet Muhammad brought. Those young men...said in deeds, in New York and Washington, speeches that overshadowed all other speeches made everywhere in the world. The speeches are understood by both Arabs and non-Arabs—even by the Chinese.”<sup>57</sup>

Bin Laden thus describes the events of 9/11 not as primarily hostile or vengeful actions, which they undoubtedly were, but underlines instead their essentially communicative aspect(s).<sup>58</sup> The centrality of communication(s) and communication technologies, especially the Internet, to al Qaeda and its affiliates was not immediately clear to researchers, analysts, or policy makers, however. Michael Scheuer admits in the introduction to *Imperial Hubris* (2004) that a major problem with his previous book, *Through Our Enemies Eyes* (2003), was that in it he seriously underestimated the role of the Internet in al Qaeda’s activities.<sup>59</sup> Of course, one reason for this may be the rapidly evolving nature of al Qaeda’s Internet use and thus also its impact.

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<sup>55</sup> Mandaville, 156.

<sup>56</sup> *Fiqh* is a generic term used to describe a School of Islamic law.

<sup>57</sup> As quoted in Faisal Devji, *Landscapes of the Jihad: Militancy, Morality, Modernity* (New Delhi: Foundation Books, 2005), 13.

<sup>58</sup> Devji, 14.

<sup>59</sup> Scheuer, xx.

Clearly interesting things can happen when a “complex world discourse” such as Islam comes into contact with a force that can claim an equally wide geographic spread: the socially and politically transformative effects of the Internet. Islam and political Islam in particular has exhibited a wide range of responses to this relatively new information and communication technology with certain features being eagerly appropriated and others vociferously rejected.<sup>60</sup> Bin Laden himself has observed that “In the past there was imperfection, but it was partial. Today, however, the imperfection touches the entire public because of the communications revolution and because the media enter every home.”<sup>61</sup> However, citing the Western media’s “vicious campaign” against Islam, Bin Laden, in a 2002 Internet posting, called on Muslim publishers and broadcasters to take “[their] rightful position and play [their] required role in confronting...[the West’s] visual, audio, and written organs.”<sup>62</sup>

#### *Al Qaeda’s Internet Use*

Al Qaeda’s Internet presence increased from January 2002 when the group began to employ two sites, in particular, to spread their message. Al Qaeda never claimed ownership of the sites, *Al-Neda* and *Al-Ansar*, but senior al Qaeda commander Abu-al-Layth al-Libi provided the following recommendation as regards the *al-Neda* site—also known as the ‘Center for Islamic Studies and Research’—to visitors to *Islamic Jihad Online*:

It is a website run by reliable brothers ...and financed by brothers that you know. It is a good website and we hope that God will accept its

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<sup>60</sup> Mandaville, 153.

<sup>61</sup> As quoted in Scheuer, 152.

<sup>62</sup> As quoted in Scheuer, 132.

actions...[W]e will not spare any effort or withhold anything we can offer to this website.”<sup>63</sup>

*Al-Neda* and *Al-Ansar* published, amongst other things:

- Audio and video clips of Osama bin Laden, al Qaeda spokesman Sualaiman Abu Ghaith, and others.
- Bi-weekly electronic journals containing analyses of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- Islamic scholars’ and clerics’ evaluations and explanations of al Qaeda’s past attacks, future plans, and admonishments to others to act. These included a series of articles claiming that suicide bombings aimed at Americans are justifiable under Islamic law
- Essays describing al Qaeda’s war aims and assessments of how achieving these goals would benefit the Muslim *umma*.<sup>64</sup>

There was also media speculation that the al-Neda site was being used to direct al Qaeda operational cells. According to one report the site has carried low-level operational information: for example, in February 2002 it was said to have published the names and home phone numbers of al Qaeda fighters captured by Pakistan following their escape from fighting in Afghanistan with the aim that sympathisers would contact their families and let them know they were alive.<sup>65</sup> Click on Alneda.com today and the following appears: Hacked, Tracked, and NOW Owned by the USA. The site is described as “a mostly unmoderated discussion board relating to

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<sup>63</sup> As quoted in Scheuer, 79.

<sup>64</sup> Anwar Iqbal, “Site Claims bin Laden’s Message,” *United Press International*, 20 February 2002, online at <http://www.upi.com/view.cfm?StoryID=20022002-075528-9498r>; Jack Kelley, “Agents Pursue Terrorists Online,” *USA Today*, 20 June 2002, full text online at <http://www.usatoday.com/life/cyber/tech/2002/06/21/terrorweb.htm>; Scheuer, 79.

<sup>65</sup> Paul Eedle, “Terrorism.com: Al Qaeda on the Net,” *The Guardian* (UK) 17 July 2002.

current world affairs surrounding Islamic Jihad [sic] and the US led war on terrorism (plus other conflicts around the globe).”

Michael Scheuer has argued that since 9/11 bin Laden has maintained a deliberately low profile for two reasons: firstly, to avoid the US and her allies fixing his position and, secondly, because he knows his continued silence induces fear amongst Western publics. The latter notwithstanding, however, Internet sites maintained by al Qaeda and its supporters provide not just bin Laden’s followers, but also those he is seeking to incite to holy war, with a regular, easily accessible flow of information and comment carrying al Qaeda’s imprimatur.”<sup>66</sup> Discussing the impact of these websites, Paul Eedle goes further asserting: “As a result of the al Qaeda viewpoint, it now takes great courage to speak out against the jihadi view....[and] public debate in the Muslim world is now very radical.”<sup>67</sup>

*Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and al Qaeda in Iraq’s Cyber Strategy*

The whole al Qaeda movement has used the Internet since 9/11 to pursue its goal of destroying American power in the world, but Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was perhaps the most melodramatic and successful player. The world first heard of Zarqawi on 5 February, 2003, the day that then US Secretary of State, Colin Powell, appeared at the UN making the case for the invasion of Iraq. In his statement Powell told the Security Council that “Iraq today harbours a deadly terrorist network, headed by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, an associate and collaborator of Osama bin Laden and his al Qaeda lieutenants.”<sup>68</sup> Throughout the remainder of 2003, Zarqawi’s name only arose again as a result of leaks from American and Jordanian intelligence to media outlets. However, in a little over four weeks in April and May 2004, “he rocketed to

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<sup>66</sup> Scheuer, 79.

<sup>67</sup> As quoted in Scheuer, 79.

<sup>68</sup> Loretta Napoleoni, “Profile of a Killer,” *Foreign Policy*, November/December 2005: 37.

worldwide fame, or infamy, by a deliberate combination of extreme violence and Internet publicity.”<sup>69</sup>

In early April 2004, Zarqawi posted online a thirty minute audio recording which explained who he was, why he was fighting, and details of the attacks for which he and his group were responsible. Paul Eedle has described the latter as “a comprehensive branding statement”:

The Internet gave Zarqawi the means to build a brand very quickly. Suddenly the mystery man had a voice, if not a face, and a clear ideology which explained his violence... But what is the point of an insurgent group building a brand, establishing a public profile in this way? The answer is to magnify the impact of its violence.<sup>70</sup>

Another of the functions of this original audio statement was to alert audiences that Zarqawi viewed the world rather differently than Osama bin Laden. Within the context of the Iraq conflict, Zarqawi was anxious to stress that the enemy was not just American troops, but also the Kurds and the Shi’ite Muslims. According to Zarqawi, the former are in league with the Israelis and the latter are not true Muslims.<sup>71</sup>

Amongst the claims of responsibility were the attack on the UN’s Baghdad headquarters, the shrine in Najaf, the Red Cross headquarters, and an assortment of attacks against Iraqi police stations (carried out in 2003). It was difficult to conclusively link these and other attacks prior to Zarqawi’s admission of responsibility, nor was it entirely clear what precise message should be taken from the

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<sup>69</sup> Paul Eedle, “Al Qaeda’s Super-Weapon: The Internet,” paper presented at conference entitled *Al-Qaeda 2.0*, New America Foundation, Washington DC, 1-2 December 2004. The full text of the paper is available online at

<http://www.outtherenews.com/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=89&topic=7>

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

attacks, which were open to differing interpretations. It is also worth noting that prior to the initiation of his Internet-based PR campaign, each of Zarqawi's attacks had to kill large numbers of people in order to get noticed in the chaos and mounting daily death toll in Iraq. By going online, however, Zarqawi was able to both control the interpretation of his violent message and achieve greater impact with smaller operations. By the end of April 2004, his group were issuing communiqués via the *al-Ansar* website. The first claimed responsibility for a suicide speedboat attack on Iraq's offshore oil export terminal in the Gulf, which, although the operation failed, still shook oil markets because of Zarqawi's efforts at publicizing the attack through the Internet.

In May 2004 Zarqawi took things a step farther when he used the Internet's force multiplying effect to the maximum effect for the first time when

...he personally cut off the head of an American hostage live on video, and had the footage posted on the Internet....The entire purpose of the beheading was to video it, to create images that would grip the imaginations of friends and enemies alike. It worked. Zarqawi risked almost nothing in this operation; but he started a withdrawal of foreign contractors which has paralysed reconstruction in Iraq and done as much if not more to undermine US plans as a bomb that killed 100 people in Najaf. And he made himself a hero to jihadis across the world.<sup>72</sup>

No other figure has yet emerged from within the ranks of al-Qaeda-affiliated groups to fill the cyber-gap left by Zarqawi's death in June 2006. But the emergence of such a figure is not crucial to the continued buoyancy of al-Qaeda's online presence.

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

## *Other Voices*

Official and semi-official websites are not the only important jihadi cyber spaces. An increasing number of Islamist groups and individuals (re-)post articles and analyses, exchange information, voice opinions, and debate ideas on websites and forums that they themselves have established. Writing in *The National Interest*, David Martin Jones observed: “The ummah is no longer a geographical concept; the ‘virtual’ world of the potential cybercaliphate knows no conventional boundaries.”<sup>73</sup> Today’s Internet “allows militant Muslims from every country to meet, talk, and get to know each other electronically, a familiarisation and bonding process that in the 1980s and early 1990s required a trip to Sudan, Yemen, Afghanistan, or Pakistan.”<sup>74</sup> A majority of the postings to these websites are explicitly pro-bin Laden, praising him as a hero and applauding al Qaeda’s attacks. The proliferation of these sites acts as free publicity for al Qaeda’s cause, but the more important impact of this development may be the number of Muslim groups and individuals who become aware of jihad-related activities and the religious justifications for them via these sites. For example, mainstream Muslim religious leaders such as Sheikh Yusuf Qaradawi, whose website is one of the top three visited Arabic language websites in the world, support attacks even on some Western civilians in Iraq on the grounds that they are all part of an illegal occupation of an Islamic-majority country.<sup>75</sup>

New web sites appear—and also disappear—frequently, popular chat rooms are said to have lists of applicants awaiting admission, and most sites evidence technical savvy on the part of their producers, almost all including audio, video, and the like. Together these contributions add up to a tremendous input into what bin Laden has repeatedly said is his and al Qaeda’s top priority: the instigation to violent jihad of as

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<sup>73</sup> David Martin Jones, “Out of Bali: Cybercaliphate Rising,” *The National Interest*, Spring 2003: 83.

<sup>74</sup> Scheuer, 81.

<sup>75</sup> Eedle, “Al Qaeda’s Super-Weapon.”



many Muslims in as many locales worldwide as possible. Al Qaeda does not provide financing, have any management role, or provide dedicated content for most of these sites; nonetheless they act as an invaluable force-multiplier for its cyber-based incitement strategy.

Recognising this benefit, al Qaeda has assured its “Internet brothers” that “the media war with the oppressive crusader enemy takes a common effort and can use a lot of ideas. We are prepared to help out with these ideas.”<sup>76</sup> Interestingly also while most Islamic extremist sites are in Arabic, Urdu, and Indonesian languages, there are an increasing number available in English, French, German, and Dutch. This signifies both the rise of Islamism in the West and growing efforts by extremist Islamic voices to reach Western Muslim populations online.<sup>77</sup>

As regards US government attacks on al Qaeda websites: these may make security sense, but also serve to validate Bin Laden’s and al-Zawahiri’s claims of hypocrisy by showing that freedom of speech is only to be extended to America’s friends and allies. For example, a statement appearing on the al-Neda site in 2002 read:

Every time you [the United States] close a site, you only further expose yourself to the world and the truth about the democracy you brag about. It is a democracy that is tailored to your measurements only. And when people oppose you, your democracy turns into the ugliest forms of domination, tyranny, and despotism on earth.<sup>78</sup>

In addition, Scheuer suggests that the United States and its allies have increased the appeal and presumed importance of the al Qaeda sites by subjecting them to repeated cyber attacks, which have taken them offline and forced their owners to hunt for new

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<sup>76</sup> As quoted in Scheuer, 81.

<sup>77</sup> Madeline Gruen, “Terrorism Indoctrination and Radicalization on the Internet,” in Russell D. Howard & Reid L. Sawyer (Eds.), *Terrorism & Counterterrorism: Understanding the New Security Environment* (Second Ed.) (Iowa: McGraw Hill, 2006), 363-364.

<sup>78</sup> As quoted in Scheuer, 79-80.

host servers. The UK-based Arabic daily *Al-Hayat* reported that *Al-Neda* was the target of some twenty U.S. attacks. While such targeting undoubtedly made the sites more difficult for interested readers to locate, they are doubtless interpreted by Islamists on the other hand as evidence of American fear of al Qaeda's 'voice' and validation for bin Laden's claim that freedom of speech is not to be extended to Muslims, while also potentially resulting in a readership boost.<sup>79</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Almost from the outset bin Laden and his associates "thought big" by integrating local causes and conflicts into a global campaign shaped "to resonate with Muslims of all stripes and cultures." Bin Laden has made globalization work for him; he has a capacity for what business executives term 'strategic control,' that is tailoring himself, his 'workforce,' and his 'product(s)' to the changing 'marketplace,' while at the same time making the most of the best available technologies.<sup>80</sup> The seriousness of the implications of such a strategy was remarked upon by a number of commentators prior to being taken up by Rumsfeld. In an article that appeared in *Foreign Policy* in 2004, Jason Burke offered the following admonition:

Bin Laden is a propagandist, directing his efforts at attracting those Muslims who have hitherto shunned his extremist message. He knows that only through mass participation in his project will he have any chance of success. His worldview is receiving immeasurably more support around the globe than it was two years ago, let alone 15 years ago when he began serious campaigning. The objective of Western countries is to eliminate the threat of terror, or at least to manage it in a

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<sup>79</sup> Scheuer, 79.

<sup>80</sup> Larry Seaquist as quoted in Scheuer 2004, 117.

way that does not seriously impinge on the daily lives of its citizens. Bin Laden's aim is to radicalize and mobilize. He is closer to achieving his goals than the West is to deterring him.<sup>81</sup>

One of the most significant aspects of al Qaeda's post-9/11 reshaping has been the significant increase in its reliance on the Internet as a soft power tool.<sup>82</sup> Bin Laden's cadres had employed the Internet for communication and propaganda purposes prior to the US attacks,<sup>83</sup> but their use of the Internet increased exponentially thereafter. Michael Scheuer has put this down to the loss of al Qaeda's Afghan base and the consequent dispersal of fighters, along with rapid development of the medium itself and the computers and other gadgets with which it can increasingly be accessed, and the proliferation of Internet cafes globally.<sup>84</sup> Indeed al Qaeda's increased virtuality after 9/11 inspired one analyst to coin the descriptor "al Qaeda 2.0"<sup>85</sup> and another to liken al Qaeda's deployment of cyber-based tools to their own "stealth 'revolution in military affairs'."<sup>86</sup>

On the other hand, while Hizbollah was an early adopter of Internet technology,<sup>87</sup> up until quite recently this was secondary in terms of the group's new media strategy to its satellite television-based information campaign with some estimates putting al Manar's local and satellite audience in 2003-2004 at a combined 10 million viewers

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<sup>81</sup> Jason Burke, "Think Again: Al Qaeda," *Foreign Policy*, May/June 2004: 26.

<sup>82</sup> Eedle, "Al Qaeda's Super-Weapon."

<sup>83</sup> See Maura Conway, "Reality Bytes: Cyberterrorism and Terrorist "Use" of the Internet," *First Monday*, Vol.7, No.11, November 2002. Available online at [http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue7\\_11/conway/index.html](http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue7_11/conway/index.html).

<sup>84</sup> Scheuer, 78.

<sup>85</sup> Peter Bergen, "Al Qaeda's New Tactics," *New York Times*, 15 November 2002.

<sup>86</sup> Magnus Ranstorp, "Al-Qaida in Cyberspace: Future Challenges of Terrorism in an Information Age," in Lars Nicander & Magnus Ranstorp (Ed.s), *Terrorism in the Information Age: New Frontiers?* (Stockholm: National Defence College, 2004), 61.

<sup>87</sup> See Maura Conway, "Cybercortical Warfare: Hizbollah's Internet Strategy," in Sarah Oates, Diana Owen and Rachel Gibson (Eds), *The Internet and Politics: Citizens, Voters and Activists* (London: Routledge, 2005).

worldwide.<sup>88</sup> This all changed with the widespread banning of the station's satellite transmissions in 2006. On a practical level, if the goal of the French, US, and other bans on al Manar's satellite transmission was to make the station unavailable to large numbers of people worldwide, it translated into an own-goal when, almost immediately on the announcement of these, the station commenced live online streaming. Eventually, this may mean that the station will draw more viewers via its freely available Internet service than via more costly satellite connections. The U.S. ban was likely doubly ill-advised because by blocking al Manar's transmission, Washington not only increased the station's notoriety and thus popularity, but also ignored political logic that upholds interests. Unfortunately for the U.S. and its interest in reaching out to the "Arab street," the chairman of Hizbollah's executive committee, Hashim Safiy-al-Din, summed up the feelings of presumably a great many people in the Middle East when he said about the ban:

[T]his impudent attack against our rights, with all their media, political, cultural and economic dimensions, is not a sign of strength but a sign of the U.S. weakness and powerlessness. By doing this it has proved its tyranny and oppression, which we have been talking about...[T]he U.S.A. is talking about democracy and freedom of speech, but at the same time it cannot tolerate a sound or an image despite all the media it has available throughout the world.<sup>89</sup>

If, as Burke suggests, bin Laden is closer to achieving his goals than the West is to deterring him, the same is almost certainly true for Hizbollah. Recent events, much of them played out live on al Manar, have ensured that Hizbollah and its leader

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<sup>88</sup> Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2004* (Washington DC: United States Department of State, 2005), p.100. The full text of the latter is available online at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/45313.pdf>.

<sup>89</sup> BBC Monitoring, "Hezbollah Official Criticizes Decisions Against Al-Manar TV," *Al-Manar* (Beirut) [translated from Arabic], 20 December 2004.

Nasrollah have gained considerably in stature right across the Middle East. It is no surprise then when, in the context of the Lebanese crisis, George Bush and Condoleezza Rice called for the birth of a ‘new Middle East,’ that many in the Arab world felt that just such a birthing was already in the offing but, as one opinion writer put it, “it will not be exactly the baby [the U.S.] has longed for. For one thing, it will be neither secular nor friendly to the United States. For another, it is going to be a rough birth.”<sup>90</sup> There are myriad complex reasons for this, but at least one relates to the increased availability of new media technologies and their powerful effects, and the first-hand knowledge available to at least two powerful actors in the Middle East drama that in the information age “the ability to take command and control of the global info-sphere is every bit as important as any other weapon on the military, intelligence, financial or any other fronts.”<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Saad Eddin Ibrahim, “The ‘New Middle East’ Bush is Resisting,” *The Washington Post*, 23 August 2006, A15. Available online at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/08/22/AR2006082200978.html>.

<sup>91</sup> Philip Taylor, “Desert Storm Blowback: Psychological Operations in Operation Iraqi Freedom, 2003,” in Lars Nicander & Magnus Ranstorp (Ed.s), *Terrorism in the Information Age: New Frontiers?* (Stockholm: National Defence College, 2004), 108.