

University Doctoral (PhD) Dissertation Propositions

**September 11, 2001 and the International Interconnections
of Al-Qaeda Terrorism**

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1. The Objectives of the Dissertation, Outline of the Theme

The basic idea for the dissertation came up when I spoke at the 13th International Meeting of Roman Catholic Chaplains in Rome. The conference dealt with the subject of *Dialogue of Airport Chaplaincies: towards a Response to Terrorism*.

It is a well-known phenomenon in the history of humanity that individuals, groups, organizations, and states frequently resort to the methods of terrorism to attain their ends. This method, technique, and tactic of achieving objectives have in use as long as human beings have existed. Changes in the nature of violent acts, methods, as well as ideological direction, appear as milestones marking the various phases of the history of terrorism. September 11, 2001 signals the beginning of a new period—that of Al-Qaeda terrorism. Al-Qaeda, taking advantage of the vulnerability of the critical infrastructure, drew the parameters of this new-type terrorism with this sophisticated assault against the United States. This terrorism is guided by complex inner and outer motivational factors, and is characterized by ideological, ethnic, historical, cultural, and religious particularities.

The dissertation focuses on modern and Al-Qaeda terrorism. I analyze the modifications in the orientation, motivation, methods and mechanisms of terror by defining the characteristics and varieties of the attacks against aviation. Violent acts against civil aviation form a separate chapter in the encyclopedia of terrorist actions. Soon after humanity conquered the skies, this sphere, an element of critical infrastructure, has become a terrorist target. Each act adds another chapter to the handbook of terrorism, which today seems to be endless. Beyond surveying the attacks on the security of air travel, I put great emphasis on research into the vulnerability of critically sensitive systems.

On September 11, 2001, terror showed another face. By accomplishing its primary objective—the mass destruction of innocent victims and devastation of the material environment, it unmasked the United States of America, with its immeasurable military might. The act of terror was an open declaration of war on the North American and Western life style, value system, and world view. An unknown, never-before-experienced aggression struck the superpower for which it was totally unprepared, even though there were serious and perceptible signs foretelling the changes in security. After the end of the Cold War, the country's leaders fell into a post-bipolar state of comfort, and the illusion of invulnerability dominated security and defense policy.

The new-type of terrorism is driven by complex motivational factors, which bring to the surface deep imaginary and real grievances. These roots marinated in decades, nay centuries, of poison reach back so deeply in history and in the past of peoples and nations that their eradication seems to be unrealistic. Dealing with the causes that play into the hands of terrorism and eliminating them can produce results.

My research focuses for the most part on the psychology that led to this new type of terrorism and suicide acts. I strive to gain an insight into the psychology of the suicide terrorists, by mapping the elements of their conscious and unconscious motivations, by drawing a character portrait of the *shaid* and *shaida*, the male and female

“martyrs”. I do not intend to deal with suicide as a social phenomenon discussed by the rich specialized literature of the social sciences. I approached the religious motivations of the terrorists by trying to understand them, even though naturally I definitely do not agree with them. There can be no principle or motive that explains adequately or justifies these murderous actions that cause the death of so many innocent people.

The fight against terrorism demands systematic action that is directed at mobilizing the processes that could change attitudes within Muslim society that hold up suicide terrorism as an example. We must try to weaken Al-Qaeda’s human-resource base. If sympathizers turn away from the organization, if their support in society disappears, its cells and groups will lose strength.

The subject of the dissertation, among others, is to examine the political, economic, religious, and social components of international terrorism, as well as analyze their interaction. Eliminating political, economic, and social disorder can contribute greatly to reducing the phenomenon and risks of terrorism, as can the willingness of the great powers to refrain from pushing their own foreign- and economic policy interests forward at the expense of certain nations.

We can see diverse attempts at eliminating terrorism: military, political, diplomatic, economic, sociological, etc. The approach built on non-military elements has gained respect; its value has grown in the security and defense policy of the future, since security is not simply a matter of military methods and means. Peace-making is not solely a matter of military capability! Faced with the stubbornness of terrorists ready to make any sacrifice, however, the deployment of armed forces is not negligible.

On September 11, 2001, this new-type of terrorism has replaced the enemy of the bipolar world; consequently, the world’s mightiest military power, with its allies by its side, uses regular capabilities against irregular forces. I study the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq launched by President George W. Bush, as well as the manifestations of asymmetrical warfare. I present Afghanistan, which has been known as the graveyard of empires, as the buffer zone of the sphere of interest of the great powers. I study the reasons for its impregnability, stressing the corruption and drug cultivation that permeate ordinary life.

I write about the period marked with hesitation that emerged in Washington, D.C. following the request of *Stanley A. McChrystal* to increase troops. Since Afghanistan cannot be conquered militarily, my basic attitude has been defined by non-military solutions. The military approach has not brought the desired result.

I counterbalance the specialist opinions that often exaggerate the existence and importance of Al-Qaeda, setting my points of view in an objective focus. Today the “successful” execution of large-scale actions against targets on U.S. territory is not likely. Based on the experiences and trends of the past, however, it is possible to foresee that there will be attacks on American establishments, buildings, and interests throughout the world. The demand for a scenario full of “spectacular” acts seems to be constant. The choice of targets by the terrorists, as well as their methods can continue to cause surprise, as September 11, 2001 shocked the

peaceful part of the world. The choice of weapons, that is the use of airplanes as flying bombs, had been attempted before, but never “successfully” carried out.

After the attacks on New York and Washington, Al-Qaeda signaled by the bombings in Madrid and London that the new-type of terrorism had ushered in a new era in Europe too. The international terrorist organization knows no ethnic, social, or moral boundaries.

In our day Europe is also threatened by Al-Qaeda terrorism. After the Second World War, the European Community strived to create the guarantees of peace, and to prevent a third world war on the continent. My research delves into the basic agreements of the European Union and the significant efforts, with which they achieved security within the framework of the common foreign and security policy, and helped to achieve cooperation in interior and justice policy at the various summits.

Al-Qaeda has become an ideological movement. It is an organization that arouses new ambitions, possesses *know-how*, serves as a “model,” which does not necessarily inspire only Al-Qaeda-type groups. The future will make clear how much individual perpetrators will take from the Base and create their own ideology to justify their actions. Militant intentions usually find their legitimacy.

I analyze and interpret the stereotypes of security policy from a new aspect. By examining, interpreting, and rejecting or accepting theories and suppositions, I form my opinion and formulate my point of view. I interpret and define expressions that are often misunderstood: fundamentalism, extremism, terrorism, and jihad. I do not touch on the legal clarification, qualification, and definition of the concept of terrorism. To this day there is no consensus in the UN that could harmonize the divergent positions of various states, since *a terrorist for one, is a national hero for the other*. I consider the common denominator of terrorist actions is that they be violent and unlawful.

I set forth the different development of the Islamic world and the West, which is based on a Judeo-Christian foundation, as well as the differences in the structure of their civilization, culture, and society. I reveal Western identity and its incompatibility with the extremist Islamic outlook that is sharply opposed to it. I present the susceptibility to extremism of the Muslim minorities of three West European countries, Great Britain, Germany, and the Netherlands, from the standpoint of deep demographic changes. I chose the former colonialist great power, Great Britain as a subject, owing to my experiences during my post-graduate studies in Birmingham and Cambridge. I also chose the Netherlands because of the change in attitude of the society toward Muslims. The metamorphosis after the death of *Theo van Gogh* happened with incomparable speed in the western part of Europe. My choice fell on Germany due to its largest minority (Turkish). Turkey’s possible accession to the EU gave one of the main directions of my research.

I placed the events in Europe and the world—from the secular and religious point of view—within a global context. I tried to look into the future concerning the overall processes and trends with attention to the world political interconnections and great powers’ intentions. I tried to peer into the future with respect to the correlation of past and present events, the methods and instruments of actions. Banned weapons, as

well as new techniques and technologies may very well be deployed in the near future. We must count on a scenario in which NBC (Nuclear-Biological-Chemical) weapons will be used.

I examine the problematics of the deficit in European ideology, and European consciousness and the possible consequences. I analyze the components of the “serum” against terrorism. I touch on the concept of the European dimension and the chances of its integration in education. The remedy for the insoluble difficulties of the present and the neuralgic points of the future can be sought in the school bench. After all, the European representatives of radical Islam belong to the second- and third-generation Muslim minority.

The anti-globalization terrorist network is fighting against the post-postmodern world’s transnational ideology, current of ideas, norms, and models, while they use its achievements and most up-to-date instruments in training, mobilization, and recruitment. Youth raised on digital culture are particularly in danger.

I deal with the consequences of using religion for political ends in connection with the events of our day and the suicide bombers, and the secular and religious foundation of these misguided ideals. I focus on the extremist phenomena that lead its victims astray and entrap them with religious claims and motivations. Particular emphasis is placed on the duty and responsibility of the Christian church to engage moderate Muslims in a dialogue, above all in the interests of the youth who can be misled by radical Islamist and the terrorist ideal, as it conceals its secular intentions with religious ideology and rhetoric.

I study the role the churches can play in our changed micro- and macro-environment to create a more peaceful world. The churches, as the committed defenders of human rights and values, have an unavoidable part to play in the dialogue carried on with Islam. I place the possibilities of dialogue in the context of European identity.

2. The Outline of the Research Methods Used and the Sources of the Dissertation

My research in Washington, D.C. (*Library of Congress*) contributes to the exposition from several points of view of my selected subject in uncovering the causal relationship of the mechanism of the new-type of terrorism, the interaction and interplay of components, and constellations that reinforce each other. Unfortunately, the specialized literature on this subject is deficient in Hungary. My other motive in writing this dissertation is to counterbalance this fact.

At the moment, our country does not appear as a target on the map of transnational terrorism. Nonetheless, our world that has suddenly been changed by September 11, 2001 needs prevention and preparation. One of the main pillars of security and defense policy is increasing the security and defense awareness of the population.

Conversations with military- and security-policy professionals helped me in the explanation of my chosen topic. Personal interviews included, *Bruce Hoffman*,

professor at Georgetown University, *József Kelemen*, retired general, former deputy under-secretary, *Sándor Simon*, former director-general of the National Security Office, *Lajos Szászvári*, the chief counsellor of the minister overseeing the secret services, *József Vágó*, director of Aviation Authority. Further sources include the international media (*CNN*, *BBC*) and close attention to the press reports.

The sensitivity of my subject does not permit research in archives. The further background of my dissertation is provided by the North American and Western European military- and security-policy conferences, forming a significant material and information base. I place great importance in my research on analysis, an analytical approach toward the events and trends and their interpretation. In this way, I examine, for example, the attitude of Washington, which they demonstrated by their neglect of information gathering before September 11, 2001. That the tragedy could take place can be attributed to the lack of the local, regional, and international cooperation, even though there was a great need for cooperation in many areas. In the changed security environment, the listing of the causes of the series of attacks and the milestones marking the road to the tragedy is particularly relevant.

In the more than a decade of service that I spent as an airport chaplain in civil aviation, I was able to experience the diversity and many colors of various civilizations and cultures. Coming into contact with those who came from the most distant parts of the world, I came face to face with reflections, opinions, intentions, and points of view formulated in the conscious ego or that came to the surface of the collective unconscious that spans generations, and the historical wounds of peoples and nations.

My dissertation reflects my knowledge gained from contacts with Muslims made in the special intercultural environment of the airport. I strive to cast light on and explain Islam, which is far from a homogenous spirituality, presenting the spiritual features and manifestations of the tenets and models of Islam. Knowledge of ancient languages and civilizations aided me greatly in developing my interpretation.

The basic tone of my dissertation is an outlook, interpretation, and searching for a way from the European standpoint. The case studies serve to understand better what leads and guides young people to extremism. The statistical approach helped me in data analysis, revealing interconnections and consequences. My conclusions and recommendations are based on complex points of view (security, defense, foreign policy, economic, sociological, religious, etc.)

As the president of the International Association of Civil Aviation Chaplains—(IACAC), I had the opportunity of gaining an insight into the life of various airports. On these visits I could pay particular attention to defense and security awareness standpoints. Whatever was happening in the world of aviation—be it secular or ecclesiastical—I had to respond to it officially. The regular communication, experience, and professional exchanges of opinion with the 179 airport chaplaincies provided a large information base. The relevant documents of this period allow an insight into the world of international relations.

3. The List of Conclusions as Propositions

As an element of the critical infrastructure protection at the center of interest of terrorists, I presented through the attacks that affected the world of aviation my experiences and observations gained in my work in civil aviation. These are based on the perspectives of security and defense. Using the basic motif of action-reaction, I considered the actions that followed various attacks (attack—counter-attack—responsive attack).

In disclosing the objectives and particularities of Al-Qaeda I concentrated in my research on the diverse methods used by the new-type of terrorism. I studied the “efficient” use of human resources, from the aspect of both the Muslim world and second-and third-generation European youth. I examined the props of the high, medium, and low technology requirements of terrorism—beginning with the weapons of mass destruction to the home-made explosive devices, and the likelihood of their use. I touch on the dangers concealed in the internet, as well as the media-orientation of terrorism, that is, the features of manipulation of the public.

I formulated recommendations concerning the responsible activities of the media and the press. Additionally, I placed special stress on conveying the polemical ideas of the Muslim leaders, which can divide the members and sympathizers of Al-Qaeda and Al-Qaeda-type organizations.

I brought to light and demonstrated the interrelationships of cause-and-effect leading to terrorism, and defined and listed those factors and phenomena that inspired and aroused hostile impulses in the Muslim world that led to the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. I discussed the characteristics of a new type of terrorism and suicide attacks through the investigation of various ideologies, norms, and social conditioning. I strived to set forth methods of replacing the negative tendencies (the problematics of coding and decoding). I outlined alternative, non-military solutions to undermining the social support of suicide attacks, by identifying target groups and strategies.

Drawing conclusions from history, as well as studying a chronological series of recent international events, I outlined possible sources of and motivations for future conflicts, demonstrating the precariousness of religious and ethnic peace, as well as the vulnerability of the economic and social spheres. By examining the consequences of military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, I demonstrated that the search for strictly military-political solutions can lead the way to new wars. The age of great wars is far from being over!

I demonstrated the truth of Huntington’s thesis, the clash of civilizations between the Muslim world and the West. I support my point of view by examining ideologies, theories, opinions, and assumptions, and formulate my attitude based on European and North American values.

I pointed out the possible path Europe could take to fight against militant Islamism. I proposed a strategy for Europeanizing Islam, by promoting the European dimension of education to help integrate impressionable youth, who are susceptible to terrorism. European education policy plays a large part in cultivating a culture of respect as an

alternative to hate. The “serum” for radicalism, fanaticism and intolerance can be found in education, in strengthening the European identity of young people.

The factors leading to international terrorism are complex, as are the efforts to reach a solution. I proposed short-, medium-, and long-term plans to channel these negative processes in a positive direction, including raising the standard of living and helping to promote better education.

I recommended ways in which the mainstream churches could advance peace-making processes. Dialogue with moderate Muslims is an indispensable element of Christian-Islamic relations, in which airport chaplaincies can play a significant role. That is why it is useful to reinforce service capacities of airport missions. My independent observations, personal experiences, and the results of the various research topics appear in the case studies.

The Author's Publications on the Subject

1. *Dialogue in Airport Chaplaincies: towards a Response to Terrorism*. Conseil Pontifical pour la Pastorale des Migrants et des Personnes en Déplacement. Rome, 2007, pp. 53-59.
2. *Dialogue in Airport Chaplaincies: towards a Response to Terrorism*. AARMS, Academic and Applied Research in Military Science, Miklós Zrínyi National Defence University, Budapest, 2007/3, pp. 523-530.
3. *Turkey's Accession to the European Union*. Confessio, János Kálvin Publisher, Budapest, 2006/2, pp. 91-92.
4. *Old Aspects of New-Type Terrorism*. Rendészeti Szemle [Police Review], Scientific Review of the Ministry of Justice and Police, Budapest, 2009/6, pp. 91-107.
5. *Muslim Newcomers to the Old Continent*. AARMS, Academic and Applied Research in Military Science, Miklós Zrínyi National Defence University, Budapest, 2009/3, pp. 437-454.
6. *The Invisible Enemy*. Confessio, János Kálvin Kiadó [John Calvin Publisher], Budapest, 2010/1, pp. 96-104.
7. *Graveyard of Empires*. Military Science. Review of the Hungarian Military Science Society, Budapest, 2010. <http://mhtt.eu>, no. of characters: 38,782.
8. *Graveyard of Empires*. Rendészeti Szemle [Police Review], Scientific Review of the Ministry of Justice and Police, Budapest, 2010/7-8, pp. 210-225.
9. *Terror Threats in Aviation*. Debreceni Szemle [Debrecen Review], University of Debrecen, Debrecen, 2010/7-8, pp. 43-53.