

The Methodology of Terrorism, Money Laundering and Financial Support of Terrorism

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Terrorist organizations have been committing atrocities against innocent civilians throughout the world for hundreds of years. Terrorism has evolved in many different forms and from various motivations such as religious protest movements, political revolts, and social uprisings. Regardless of the motives for terror, the problem is the financing of terrorism and terrorist organizations themselves. Recent global terrorist attacks using high technology and extensive networks have shown that money is essential to provide the means behind all terrorist activities. Individual terrorists plan terrorist operations and require resources to live, prepare, and implement their plans. The use of money laundering and financial support schemes are the root of the cause. If money laundering were curtailed or even eliminated, and financial supporters of terrorism were identified terrorism would decrease dramatically. To achieve these goals would take monumental efforts. The United States, United Nations and all sovereign nations would need to take cooperative action that has never been accomplished. Terrorism, its' history, concepts, reasoning, methods, and financial roots are object of this research.

The term itself “terrorism” means many different things to different people, cultures, and races. As a result, trying to define or classify terrorism with one universal definition is nearly impossible. The definition of terrorism used in this research is a reflection of much of the Western and American way of defining it. The definition of terrorism is,

“An anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by secret clandestine individuals, groups, or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal, or political reasons, whereby-in contrast to assassination-the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. The immediate human victims of violence are generally chosen randomly or selectively from a target population, and serve as message generators. Threat and violence based communication processes between terrorist organizations, victims, and main targets, turning it into a target of terror, a target of demands, or a target of attention, depending on whether intimidation, coercion, or propaganda is primarily sought.”<sup>1</sup>

First, terrorism has a history that dates back over 2000 years, although “the terms “terrorism” and “terrorist” are of relatively recent date; the meaning of terrorism was given in the 1798 supplement of the Dictionnaire of the Academie Francaise as *systeme, regime de la terreur*.”<sup>2</sup> Historically, terrorism has been broken down into two categories: pre-industrial era (pre 1870) and post industrial era (post 1900). It is often grouped this way because terrorism dramatically changed when the world began to industrialize. The industrialization of modernized cultures produced innovative technology such as: automatic weapons, global communication techniques, explosives and numerous other newly developed weapons that proved to be both beneficial and destructive. Terrorism, as it is defined and interpreted today, has been practiced throughout history and throughout every part of the world. According to Walter Laqueur, “One of the earliest known examples of a terrorist movement is the *Sicarii*, a highly organized religious sect

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<sup>1</sup> Kushner, Harvey W. Terrorism in America. Illinois: Charles C. Thomas Publisher, 1998. p.3.

<sup>2</sup> Laqueur, Walter. A History of Terrorism. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2001. p.6.

of men of lower orders active in the Zealot struggle in Palestine (A.D. 66-73).”<sup>3</sup> The first terrorists used small daggers to carry out their killings causing fear and intimidating others. Terrorism continued to exist throughout Eastern Europe, the Middle-East and Asia in similar forms as practiced by the *Zealots*, and then in the 11th century a sect based in Persia called the Assassins was formed. The *Hashshashin* or *Assassins* spread to the country of Syria where they killed prefects, governors, caliphs, and Conrad Montferrat, a leader of the Third Crusade and a one time king of Jerusalem. Their leader, Hassan Sibai, seemed to have realized early on that his group was too small to confront the enemy in open battle but that a planned, systematic, long-term campaign of terror carried out by a small, disciplined force could be a most effective political weapon. The Assassins always operated in secrecy and were disguised as strangers or even Christians. It is believed that the Assassins are the first group to transform the act of murder into a tool for gaining and accomplishing political goals. The manner in which these terrorists carried out their objectives is an important stage in history because some of the features of the Assassins movement remind one of today’s terrorist movements. The means and methods of terrorist organizations continued to follow the examples of groups like the Zealots and Assassins up until guns, explosives, and other machine tools became available, making them the weapon of choice in the late 19th century.

The next wave of terrorism began during the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the modernized world was beginning to industrialize. With a new age of technology evolving a new age of terrorism was also evolving. The terrorism of the late 19th century began with mainly assassination attempts against political and religious leaders but the 20th century gave way to a new terrorism where innocent individuals were being targeted in addition to economic, military and political leaders and their militaries. Many of these acts were sparked by revolutionary thoughts with an attempt to over throw a government, gain independence, or in defense of a perceived threat. This new wave of terrorism using new technology and sophisticated weapons transformed terrorism from a small scale act of murder using merely daggers to a large scale, highly developed and merciless negligence for life. The industrialized modern nations who were apart of the new wave of terrorism using advanced tactics were the early seeds of a growing terrorist threat. At this point in history WWI shocked the world with its violence, which was then dwarfed by the destruction and terror of WWII. The appalling number of casualties that were attributed to WWI and WWII along with the desperate struggles of millions of people to simply survive the wars greatly enhanced terrorism tactics and capabilities. The fact that there were so many different racial and cultural groups being suppressed or even killed in Europe during these periods in culmination with sovereign states with able armed forces that actually authorized declarations of war it is hard to specifically identify what, who, or where terrorism was taking place. Groups such as the French, Czechoslovakian and Polish resistance movements who had Nazi occupations in their home land needed to resort to so called “terrorist tactics” in order to repel and disrupt the German tyranny. These resistances carried out objectives such as derailing trains, disrupting communications, and

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<sup>3</sup> Laqueur, Walter. *A History of Terrorism*. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2001. p.7.

assassinating Nazi military officers like Reinhard Heydrich, the deputy chief of the Gestapo who was also involved in the Nazi campaign to exterminate the Jews. Heydrich was killed when a Czechoslovakian resistance member threw an explosive close to Heydrich's vehicle as he was traveling through Nazi occupied Czechoslovakia. The assassination was a secret mission carried out by highly trained clandestine militants. At this time in history such resistance movements were not uniformly interpreted as terrorism by the global community. In many instances the assassination was justified since it was the only means by which the Czechoslovakian people could defend themselves and their country. Regardless of the manner in which the Heydrich assassination was interpreted it obviously influenced future terrorist operations where the same techniques were utilized.

Following WWII terrorism grew as international political alliances were formed, ie. NATO, The United Nations, and opposition to such alliances mounted. With the ability to fly around the globe or communicate with someone on the other side of the world, terrorists began to broaden their capabilities and now had the ability to be anywhere in the world at almost any time, infiltrate target areas and commit acts of terror. The 1960's were the period when political-terrorism, terrorist acts that are committed in an attempt to advance a political agenda rather than a part of a military or resistance effort, began to evolve. Political terrorism is defined as:

“the use, or threat of use, of violence by an individual or a group, whether acting for or in opposition to established authority, when such action is designed to create extreme anxiety and fear inducing effects in a target group larger than the immediate victims with the purpose of coercing that group into acceding to the political demands of the perpetrators.”<sup>4</sup>

The manner in which political terrorism differs from traditional terrorism is somewhat vague. The creation of state-sponsored militant groups and religiously motivated populations were among the main catalysts in the hyphenated form of terrorism, political-terrorism, since the origins of these groups were made in attempt to gain political recognition and representation, or the right to govern themselves.

During the 1960's there was a rapid growth of terrorism caused by rising global tensions and the growing numbers of people throughout the world who felt suppressed by large governing or policy-making entities, often the United States was among this group. According to Cronin, three factors contributed to this growth: “the increased availability and growing lethality of arms, the spread of mass communication, and manipulation techniques terrorists used on societies.”<sup>5</sup> The growth of terrorism and its widespread application from the 1960's and on gave way to international terrorism. Similar to political-terrorism, with the goal being to accomplish specific political agendas, but international terrorism is a global epidemic. The idea was that terrorists could or would conduct their operations by committing acts of terror against their opponents' economic and corporate interests abroad, as was the case on 9/11. Terrorists were no longer committing acts of violence domestically; they now had the ability to establish terrorist

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<sup>4</sup> Kushner, Harvey W. Terrorism in America. Illinois: Charles C. Thomas Publisher, 1998. pg. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Cronin, Isaac. Confronting Fear: A History of Terrorism. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2002, p45.

cells throughout the world with the capability and intent to strike targets around the world. Throughout the 1960's, 1970's and 1980's terrorist groups like the Palestinians Liberation Organization (PLO), Hizbullah Lebanese terrorists, and revolutionary movements throughout Europe sparked by religious and political dissent began committing astonishing acts of terror. (These are some of the terrorist organizations but by no means is it all of them.) These acts include: hijacking airplanes; planting explosives in markets, buses, churches, and offices; kidnapping; hostage taking; and suicide attacks. In many instances terrorists would become basically murder squads, abusing and killing harmless civilians and non-military personnel. Throughout this turbulent era, terrorists assassinated opposition leaders of all ranks and had even assassinated their own national leaders. Violent attacks against innocent citizens became a reality for all nations who opposed a terrorist groups demands and violence as a coercive tool because terrorist groups were now carrying out international terrorist attacks with political goals in mind. The terrorist movements of the 1960's, 1970's, and 1980's led to what we know as terrorism today. The September 11th, 2001 attack on the United States is an example of international terrorism. The terrorists used modern communication techniques, learned how to fly commercial airplanes, and coordinate their attack over many years. All participants in the attack on the U.S. were foreign born immigrants, all of which were from the Middle East, mainly Saudi Arabia. They brought hate and terror to the U.S., financially supported by a single or many terrorist organizations. The growth of terrorism is still a threat. The availability and lethality of weapons are greater than ever today. Following the fall of the Soviet Union in 1990 and the emergence of rogue nations who have nuclear weapons and the capability of selling such weapons the ability to buy such items is now possible. The purchase of these destructive weapons requires enormous amounts of money that must be financed through illegal or untraceable means. The world is now faced with the greatest terrorism problems that have ever existed. The only means of countering such movements would require unrelenting terrorist prevention, detection, and prosecution by every nation in the world. Weapons storage facilities, production mechanisms, and the spread of the knowledge about how to manufacture weapons needs to be regulated, protected, and accounted for at a very high and collective manner.

Next, historically we see terrorists groups as radical political organizations since they usually oppose the government or authority that is presently in place. The acts of violence they commit seem to be astonishing to most; there seems to be no rationale for the terrorism. But terrorists believe what they are doing is rationale. According to Crenshaw, "terrorism is assumed to display a collective rationality...the group possesses collective preferences or values and selects terrorism as a course of action from a range of perceived alternatives."<sup>6</sup> It is obvious that some acts of terror are spontaneous but for the most part they are well-planned pre-meditated strategies. According to Whittaker, "The terrorist will draw up a list of objectives...weighing up the possibilities, calculating the risks, choosing options, thinking about when and where it is best to act."<sup>7</sup> "Motives

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<sup>6</sup> Crenshaw, Martha and Walter Reich. Origins of Terrorism. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. pg. 8.

<sup>7</sup> Whittaker, David J. Terrorism: Understanding the Global Threat. Great Britain: Pearson, 2002. pg. 73.

start out by being political or ideological or religious: they are soon translated into intentions and behaviour."<sup>8</sup> This objective strategy is consistent with most terrorists and terrorist organizations. The effectiveness of a terrorist act is compared to other methods of accomplishing political goals. A power change is usually the major objective of terrorists. However, operations of terrorist organizations often do not involve political power struggles. Many acts of terrorism are attributed to state-supported or state-sponsored terrorism. It is important to define state-supported and state-sponsored terrorism because they are determinant factors that reveal concepts, and useful reasoning as to why terrorism exists. According to Murphy:

State-sponsored terrorism includes: "the use of state intelligence operatives to carry out terrorist acts in foreign countries; direct support-interactions between government agents and terrorists during which terrorist missions are planned and developed; intelligence support; specialized terrorist training; diplomatic assets; access to high technology; transportation; use of territory; financial support; and rhetorical support."<sup>9</sup>

In contrast state-supported terrorism includes: "the use of state intelligence operatives to carry out terrorist acts in foreign countries and direct support-interactions between government agents and terrorists during which terrorist missions are planned and developed."<sup>10</sup> Within the last 30 years terrorism has been highly used by under-developed countries as a part of their military. Countries that have failed at conventional warfare turn to terrorism to continue their military campaigns. For example, in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict of the 1960's, terrorism followed the failure of Arab efforts at conventional warfare. Therefore, the two nation-states were still technically at war with each other but the techniques utilized to fight resembled no traditional means of military operations. According to Murphy, "Even when states fund or guide terrorism, it remains a different type of conflict from war. Unlike conventional warfare and guerrilla insurgencies, terrorism is primarily an urban phenomenon carried out by small cells of individuals who rarely battle government troops."<sup>11</sup> In most instances terrorists go to great lengths to blend in with a local population and avoid government or opposition militaries at all costs.

The acts of terror that are carried out by the terrorist groups or individuals are carried out to advance a particular agenda or goal that these groups or individuals hope to accomplish. According to Crenshaw, "Terrorists seek a radical change in the status quo, which would confer a new advantage, or the defense of privileges they perceive to be threatened."<sup>12</sup> Also, terrorism can be carried out by a lone person in protest to a specific government policy. Consequently, every act of terror can not be seen as an act of war, or countries like the United States would be at war at every incident. With these factors in mind one can easily see how a terrorist could plan a terrorist attack knowing there won't be any retaliation. A small-scale effective attack could cause a nation to want to threaten

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<sup>8</sup> Whittaker, David J. Terrorism: Understanding the Global Threat. Great Britain: Pearson, 2002. pg. 74.

<sup>9</sup> Murphy, John F. State Support of International Terrorism. San Francisco: Westview Press, 1989. pg. 10.

<sup>10</sup> Murphy, John F. State Support of International Terrorism. San Francisco: Westview Press, 1989. pg. 11.

<sup>11</sup> Murphy, John F. State Support of International Terrorism. San Francisco: Westview Press, 1989. pg. 37.

<sup>12</sup> Crenshaw, Martha and Walter Reich. Origins of Terrorism. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. p.10.

the use of military intervention but the use of a large military campaign to quell a small terrorist movement would not be rational.

One advantage terrorists possess is the ability to avoid detection and stay anonymous. Identifying who committed a given terrorist incident is often difficult, as is locating the terrorists' base of operations. Terrorists are able to move quickly from one location to another, which in turn quickly outdates intelligence on their whereabouts. They are also able to easily blend into urban areas; as a result any retaliatory or pre-emptive attack will result in the death of innocent civilians and destruction of infrastructure. Any retaliatory attack from those who were targeted could possibly gain support for the terrorists. *The terrorist groups often possess the support of local populations either through force, respect or manipulative techniques.* As a result the retaliatory effect would further legitimize the terrorist mission in the minds of the terrorists.

In response to global terrorist activity the United States mandates their foreign policy objectives according to the scope, threat and perceived capability of a known or possible threat. The U.S. State Department specifies four key elements of U.S. counter terrorism policy:

“First, make no concessions to terrorists and strike no deals; second, bring terrorists to justice for their crimes; third, isolate and apply pressure to states that sponsor terrorism to force them to change their behavior; and fourth, bolster the counter terrorism capabilities of those countries that work with the U.S. and require assistance.”<sup>13</sup>

Finally, terrorism and the terrorists who carry out attacks have existed for hundreds of years. Attacks over the years have been as diverse as the people who carry them out. Whether it is fanatics, revolutionists, or special agents, methods of accomplishing goals through terrorist violence have included: assassination attempts with knives, guns, explosives; attacks against innocent civilians in public areas; the hijacking of commercial aircraft; kid-knapping and hostage-taking; suicide bombings; and the destruction of national infrastructure. From the crudest of terrorist methods to the rapidly developing tactics of our present terrorist crises there has always been: one variable that has stayed constant-money. The one catalyst that plays the most important role in terrorism's existence is money. No terrorist or terrorist organization would be able to organize, recruit, plan, develop weapons, arm themselves, communicate or acquire intelligence, and carry out terrorist missions without funding. Since it is not possible for terrorists or terrorist organization to exist without money, they need a constant source. These sources are often acquired through criminal activities, so there needs to be a way so the terrorists' organizations could legitimize their financial assets. The terrorists and terrorist organizations and all of those who desire to carry out a terrorist attack began laundering money through and receiving external financial support from states that support terrorism.

Money laundering, as defined by the *United Nations*:

“The conversion or transfer of property, knowing that such property is derived

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<sup>13</sup> Townshend, Charles. Terrorism: A Very Short Introduction. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. pg. 130.

from any drug trafficking offense or offenses or from an act of participation in such offense or offenses, for the purpose of concealing or disguising the illicit origin of the property or of assisting any person who is involved in the commission of such an offense or offenses to evade the legal consequences of his actions; the concealment or disguise of the true nature, source, location, disposition, movement, rights with respect to, or ownership of property, knowing that such property is derived from an offense or offenses or from an act of participation in such an offense or offences.”<sup>14</sup>

According to the *World Bank*, “initial concerns over money laundering began with its early connections to illegal drug trafficking in narcotic drugs and illicit and illegal contraband. The objective of drug traffickers and dealers or illegal contraband was to convert typically small denominations of currency into legal bank accounts, financial institutions, and other assets. From there the illicitly acquired gains are moved to different financial institutions, further separating it from its criminal source. After the transfer of funds they could be used to purchase other securities or they could be integrated into legitimate currency by purchasing assets such as real estate.”<sup>15</sup>

Today, illicit gains are produced by a vast range of criminal activities that include: political corruption, illegal sales of weapons, the sale of narcotics and the illicit trafficking and exploitation of human beings. Terrorist financing, is defined by the United Nations as:

Any person who commits an offense within the meaning of this Convention if that person by any means, directly or indirectly, unlawfully and willingly, provides or collects funds with the intention that they should be used or in the knowledge that they are to be used, in full or in part, in order to carry out: an act intended to cause death or serious bodily injury to a civilian, or to any other person not taking any active part in the hostilities in a situation of armed conflict, when the purpose of such act, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population, or to compel a government or an institution or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing an act.<sup>16</sup>

Terrorist organizations rely on money laundering schemes or external financial support to facilitate every aspect of their terrorist networks and capabilities. According to the *World Bank*, “For most countries, money laundering and terrorist financing raise significant issues with regard to prevention, detection, and prosecution.”<sup>17</sup> New and innovative techniques to launder money in order to finance terrorism have also added to the difficulty of these concerns. The *World Bank*, a leading authority concerning the financing of terrorism describes why and how money laundering is so difficult to prevent,

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<sup>14</sup> United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. 1988. Vienna Convention. [www.un.org](http://www.un.org).

<sup>15</sup> Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing: Definitions and Explanations. Available [on-line] [http://www1.worldbank.org/finance/html/amlcft/docs/Ref\\_Guide\\_EN/v2/01-Ch01\\_EN\\_v2.pdf](http://www1.worldbank.org/finance/html/amlcft/docs/Ref_Guide_EN/v2/01-Ch01_EN_v2.pdf). p.7.

<sup>16</sup> United Nations International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism. 1999.

<sup>17</sup> Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing: Definitions and Explanations. Available [on-line] [http://www1.worldbank.org/finance/html/amlcft/docs/Ref\\_Guide\\_EN/v2/01-Ch01\\_EN\\_v2.pdf](http://www1.worldbank.org/finance/html/amlcft/docs/Ref_Guide_EN/v2/01-Ch01_EN_v2.pdf). p.1.



“such sophisticated techniques may involve different types of financial institutions; multiple financial transactions; the use of intermediaries, such as financial advisers, accountants, shell corporations and other service providers: transfers to through and from different countries; and the use of different financial instruments and other kinds of value-storing assets.”<sup>18</sup> Through this process an individual terrorist or organization could conceal or disguise the origins of their assets. With the sources of their funds concealed terrorists could get and transfer money to those involved in the planning and implementation of terrorist operations, which is the ultimate goal.

Terrorist financing and money laundering schemes both share similar features that allow for a correlation between the two activities. According to the *World Bank*, “Money launderers send illicit funds through legal channels in order to conceal their criminal origin, while those who finance terrorism transfer funds that may be legal or illicit in origin in such a way as to conceal their source and ultimately use.”<sup>19</sup> Whether terrorist organizations use money laundering schemes or have external financial support the results are the same, legitimate financial assets which are readily able to be distributed to terrorist related individuals. According to the World Bank, “Similarly, those who finance terrorism are rewarded by providing the support to carry out terrorist strategies and attacks.”<sup>20</sup> Ultimately, disguising the source of the terrorist financing, regardless of whether the source is of legitimate or illegal origin is the objective. If the source of terrorist funding is concealed, it will remain available for future terrorist financing activities. Also, it is essential for terrorists to conceal the use of funds so that the financier remains undetected.

The objectives behind money laundering and terrorist financing are illicit in their nature. Secrecy is crucial, as is the case with most criminal activities, if terrorist organizations intend on using the same techniques. According to the World Bank, “Launderers use various countries to conceal their ill-gotten proceeds, taking advantage of differences among countries with regard to Anti-Money Laundering regimes, enforcement efforts, and international cooperation.”<sup>21</sup> Since these activities take place on a global basis in a very complex fashion, reliable estimates on the size of the money laundering and terrorist financing problems are as difficult to produce as it is to prevent, detect, and prosecute those who carry out these operations.

According to the *World Bank*, “With reference to money laundering only, the International Monetary Fund has estimated that the aggregate amount of funds laundered in the world could range between two and five percent of the world's gross domestic product.”<sup>22</sup> According to Lilly, “global money laundering each year is at \$1.5 trillion.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing: Definitions and Explanations. Available [on-line] [http://www1.worldbank.org/finance/html/amlcft/docs/Ref\\_Guide\\_EN/v2/01-Ch01\\_EN\\_v2.pdf](http://www1.worldbank.org/finance/html/amlcft/docs/Ref_Guide_EN/v2/01-Ch01_EN_v2.pdf). p.1.

<sup>19</sup> <sup>19</sup> Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing: Definitions and Explanations. Available [on-line] [http://www1.worldbank.org/finance/html/amlcft/docs/Ref\\_Guide\\_EN/v2/01-Ch01\\_EN\\_v2.pdf](http://www1.worldbank.org/finance/html/amlcft/docs/Ref_Guide_EN/v2/01-Ch01_EN_v2.pdf). p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid p.2.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid p.6.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid p.6.

<sup>23</sup> Lilly, Peter. *Dirty Dealing: The Untold Truth About Global Money Laundering*. London: Kogan Page Limited, 2000. pg. 29.

To put this in real and comparative terms \$1,500,000,000,000 is one-fifth of the Gross Domestic Product of the United States in 1998, which is an amount that is only dwarfed by three individual countries' economies. With an extensive amount of international money laundering the only real way to begin to eliminate it would require the attention of every country.

To conclude, terrorism is a very real threat to the world. Not because of the property that it destroys or steals but the human life that is disregarded every time a terrorist begins to plot. The tragic loss of human life that the media portrays is only a fraction of the suffering that takes place in order for a terrorist attack to occur. The terrorist at some point had to acquire some form of legitimized or laundered money or asset to fund an operation. The question is what did the terrorist do to accomplish this? It could have been drugs, weapons, human lives, anything that the terrorists could exchange for money, no matter how many lives were affected. After acquiring money terrorists rely on an overabundant amount of money laundering and financial concealment schemes. Without money laundering significant sums of legitimate money would be very hard to produce in the short spans of time between terrorist attacks and reorganization. The possibility of defeating such enormous amounts of illegal money laundering and illegal terrorist financing schemes would require a global effort. Every nation would have to establish anti-money laundering and terrorist financing legislation, along with support from the United Nations and groups such as the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) on money laundering. Is this even a possibility? Could every nation in the world put their political, racial, religious...differences behind them in order to prevent the financing of terrorism?

The objective of my research is to present clear data about terrorism's history, the financial support of terrorism and money laundering's link to terrorism:

Information regarding global levels of money laundering and terrorist financing proved to be difficult to uncover, however I would like to note that the World Bank's reference guides concerning *Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing: Definitions and Explanations* proved to be an invaluable source for this research, of which much of what the global community knows about these issues are due to their work and the access they provide to such information.