

In some cases, terrorist groups may possess such significant military power—such as the Khmer Rouge, FMLN, Taliban, or Armed Islamic Group—that military forces are necessary to counter them. In sum, a policing strategy may be appropriate in many situations. But it may be less apropos in cases with a weak state, little political will to defeat terrorist organizations, or powerful insurgent groups.

Policing can be an effective strategy to penetrate terrorist organizations, capture or kill their members, and, ultimately, eradicate the group. Unlike the military, the police usually have a permanent presence in cities, towns, and villages; a better understanding of local groups and the threat environment in these areas; and better intelligence. The mission of the police and other security forces should be to eliminate the insurgent organization—the command structure, terrorists, logistics support, and financial and political support—from the midst of the population. As Bruce Hoffman argued, a critical step in countering terrorist groups is for law-enforcement officials to

develop strong confidence-building ties with the communities from which terrorists are most likely to come or hide in, and mount communications campaigns to eradicate support from these communities. The most effective and useful intelligence comes from places where terrorists conceal themselves and seek to establish and hide their infrastructure.⁴⁹

Police and intelligence services are best placed to implement these activities.

A police approach can include a range of steps. The first is intelligence collection and analysis. In *Small Wars*, British Colonel C. E. Callwell wrote that security forces often work somewhat “in the dark” against terrorist organizations and that “what is known technically as ‘intelligence’ is defective, and unavoidably so.”⁵⁰ Intelligence is the principal source of information on terrorists. The police and intelligence agencies have a variety of ways to identify terrorists, including signal

⁴⁹ Hoffman (2006, p. 169).

⁵⁰ C. E. Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practices*, 3rd ed., Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1996, p. 43.