

UNDERSTANDING TERRORISM

Terrorism became a hot topic in the 1980s, and as a result the number of publications devoted to the subject far outweighed the merit of their contents. If the topic were purely historical, with no applied dimension whatsoever, that shortcoming would be more tolerable, if no less unsettling for scholars. Unfortunately the problem of terrorism is too important to be ignored without significant consequences in the so-called "real world" that exists outside of the academic's study. In its campaigns against irregulars, the U.S. Army has frequently found its enemies resorting to terrorist acts. Sadly, some members of the army have responded in kind. Although not officially sanctioned, terror was used at times by soldiers in virtually all of the army's major campaigns against irregulars. In Vietnam, however, the destructiveness of modern weaponry worked to blur the line between terror and legitimate warfare beyond recognition. Even when employed in ways sanctioned by common usage, if not always in accordance with the strictest interpretations one might make of the laws of war, modern weaponry inflicted a devastating toll on the innocent.

My experience with the literature devoted to terrorism mirrored to some extent that with the scholarly literature on revolution. As far as I could see, analysts too frequently took not only an ahistorical view, but also a highly political one. As a result, the popular understanding of the phenomenon is frequently distorted. The first publication to break through the fog created by the self-serving literature that I remember encountering was an article by Frederic C. Hof, a U.S. Army officer writing in *Parameters* in 1985.^[1] Later I discovered the equally perceptive work of Professor Michael Stohl.^[2] Between those two events I prepared the lecture that is the basis for this chapter. As will soon be clear, my views on terrorism are much less developed than they are on revolution or the specific campaigns surveyed in other chapters. I am certain of one thing, however. We will never understand terrorism until we depoliticize our thinking about it. The material which follows has that objective in mind, and in its original form it made up one of the six lectures delivered in Tokyo in 1986. It is presently undergoing revision, but because of the relevance of the topic, I have included the original in the book on a temporary basis.

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In the 1980s perhaps no problem related to the use of violence concerned the developed world as much as that of terrorism. People who engaged in terrorist acts were viewed in a variety of ways, depending as much on the perspective of the person making the assessment as on the terrorists themselves. Thus, the same individuals could be described as valiant revolutionaries or champions of the weak by some people and insane murderers or criminals by others. As one American scholar observed, "one man's terror is another's patriotism."^[3] The kinds of activities in which terrorists have engaged are similarly varied, including bombings, assassinations, hijackings and other forms of hostage taking.

For the people who perceive themselves to be the victims of terror, reactions also vary. Many individuals take a rather fatalistic view, particularly when the terror confronting them is sanctioned by or implemented by their own government. Other people, however, can not overcome the frustration that accompanies the threat of terrorism. They are filled with anger and manifest a tremendous desire to fight back. Often, however, the target against which they can release their rage remains obscure.

The frustration has been clearly evident in the response of the United States to acts of terrorism. The American people do not want to remain unresisting victims. They want to fight back, but against whom? Sometimes they are not even able to identify the motivation for what they perceive to be terrorist acts (not knowing whether they are the victims of the criminal actions of individuals, the work of revolutionaries, or well hidden acts of warfare against the U.S. by some enemy nation).

Finding the agents responsible for acts of terrorism and punishing them has proven even more difficult.

The analysis presented here attempts to do at least three things. First, it seeks to develop a definition of terrorism that will improve understanding of the phenomenon. Much of the current frustration of many individuals comes from the failure to comprehend the nature of terrorism and its place in the contemporary world. People can only develop a meaningful response to terrorism if they understand it.

Second, this essay will try to place terrorism in the framework of the evolution of war and revolution presented in the previous chapter. Part of the failure to understand contemporary terrorism comes from a failure to understand the greater phenomena of which it is often a part. Unlike war or revolution, terrorism is not an entity in and of itself. Instead it is a tactic or a method that can and has been used by a variety of people in a variety of contexts. A final point to be made concerns the primary question often asked in Washington and at international conferences: "What is to be done about terrorism?" Should one's response be moderate, calculated to save lives even at the risk of letting terrorists go free, or should it be more forceful? Should one think of terrorism as a police problem or as a military one?

For many people in the United States, terrorism is defined by acts such as those occurring the mid-1980s. They think of such events as the hijacking in June 1985 of a TWA jet carrying 153 passengers. The two Lebanese Shiite Moslems who seized the plane killed one passenger and held the rest hostage, demanding the release of some 700 Moslems held prisoner by Israel.

The summer of 1985 seemed to be a period of particularly intense terrorist activity. In one day, for example, on June 19, a bomb exploded in the international airport in Frankfurt, West Germany, wounding 42 people and killing 3, while in El Salvador guerrillas gunned down 13 people including 4 U.S. Marines in a street cafe in the capital. Only a few days later, on June 23, an Air India jet travelling from Toronto to Bombay crashed into the sea, killing all 329 passengers on board, the suspected work of Sikh terrorists, and at almost the same time a piece of luggage from another flight from Canada exploded in Japan's Narita airport.

In October Palestinian terrorists seized an Italian cruise liner, the *Achille Lauro* and killed an elderly American before surrendering to Egyptian authorities. The U.S. later forced an Egyptian airliner to the ground to take the terrorists prisoner. During 1986 comparable acts of terrorism took place, including the bombing of a disco in Germany and an explosion on a TWA jet over the Mediterranean. All of these examples highlight the kind of actions that Americans and many other people in the world think of when one speaks of terrorism.

When many Americans and others think of terror, however, they frequently ignore another form of the phenomenon that is no less frightening and disturbing to the people who suffer its consequences: the use of terror by governments against their own citizens who oppose them. In the mid-1960s, for example, when the Uruguayan government found itself engaged in a struggle with the leftist revolutionary movement of the *Tupamaros*, torture was used as a police method for interrogation. When the Uruguayan military took control of the anti-revolutionary campaign in 1971, the use of torture increased, and by 1975, according to Amnesty International, torture had become "routine treatment for virtually any peaceful opponent of the Uruguayan Government who fell into the hands of military units." [4] In Guatemala, army counterinsurgency units terrorized the rural population to keep it from supporting leftist guerrillas, while in Guatemalan cities right-wing death squads assassinated suspected opponents of the government. Throughout the country agents of the police and military tortured people as a punishment or a warning to others. Similar government terror has been evident in other Latin American countries, including Argentina, Brazil, Chile and El Salvador.

Such terror, of course, is not limited to governments in Latin America. Amnesty International has noted that torture was used in Afghanistan "to obtain intelligence information about the guerrillas, to intimidate the population from supporting them, and to discourage strikes and demonstrations in the towns."^[5] In the Republic of Korea students demonstrating or distributing anti-government leaflets were tortured by police; in the Soviet Union political prisoners were administered pain-causing drugs during confinement in mental institutions. In the summer of 1986, TV viewers in the United States witnessed the beating of peaceful and unresisting student protesters by police in South Africa. From the victims' point of view, all of these actions are examples of terrorism comparable to the hijacking of a TWA jet or the explosion of bomb in an airport.

In defining terrorism, however, people frequently speak of the phenomenon in ways that limit understanding. As J. Bowyer Bell, a student of revolutionary warfare, observed, the term terrorism "has become a convenient means to identify evil threats rather than to define a special kind of revolutionary violence . . . the very word," wrote Bell, "has become a touchstone for postures and beliefs about the nature of man and society, and the relation of law, order, and a justice."^[6] Few people can speak of terrorism without a degree of emotional involvement, and there is a strong tendency on the part of potential victims to associate the technique only with enemies who might use it against them.

Much of the writing on terrorism in the United States, for example, would lead readers to conclude that acts of terrorism are only undertaken by people who oppose the United States and its domestic or foreign policies. Such a viewpoint was captured vividly in a 1986 editorial cartoon that appeared in many American newspapers. It was labeled "The Reagan Guide to World Affairs." In one frame a rough looking man in dark glasses appeared with a rifle. Under the picture was a definition: "Terrorist . . . One who subverts governments and kills innocent people for a cause we don't like. (ex.) A PLO member." A duplicate picture of the same rough looking man in dark glasses appeared in the cartoon's second frame. Under that picture, however, one found a different definition: "Rebel . . . One who subverts governments and kills innocent people for a cause we do like and deserves over \$90 million in Federal aid. (ex.) A contra."^[7] Surely in the eyes of the people being terrorized little significant difference exists between living in fear of leftist revolutionary guerrillas or right-wing counterrevolutionary death squads.

In the political rhetoric of the United States, however, violent actions of American allies or actions that further government policy are rarely identified as terrorist, even when those actions are calculated to influence the observers politically through the inducement of fear. During the Cold War, for example, American leaders portrayed Soviet support of "wars of liberation" and the actions of revolutionaries on the left very differently from the fundamentally similar actions of the United States in support of counterrevolutionary "freedom fighters." The absurdity of such an emotionally laden and politically charged approach to defining terrorism would seem to be obvious were it not for the large number of so-called experts and government officials who have adopted it.

One definition claimed that "terrorist violence" is meant to "create widespread disorder that will wear down a society's will to resist terrorists, and to focus attention on the terrorists themselves."^[8] In fact, however, such a statement is only true of some terrorists. The terrorists who constitute the death squads and torturing security forces of existing governments have a different goal. They seek to create order through fear, and they would prefer that the press not report their activities. Unlike many revolutionary terrorists, the repressive terrorists of counterrevolutionary and totalitarian states do not seek media publicity. In fact, they attempt to do their dirty work in secret. Where the state controls the media, a repressive government will try to convey to the world an image of a country that is not terrorizing its citizens. The agents of such repression are terrorists none the less, and nothing is achieved but self delusion if they are defined out of a discussion of terrorism.

Although some terrorists wish to destroy the status quo and resort to terrorism because of their weakness, others seek to protect existing systems and act from the strength they possess as agents

of government. Thus, the ranks of international terrorism have included more than the members of groups such as the PLO, Moslem fundamentalists, or the IRA. They have also included agents of established regimes such as the Pinochet government in Chile and the racist government in South Africa. All such groups are terrorists because all seek to gain their ends through engendering widespread fear by their violent and often indiscriminate actions.

Still, because the entire discussion of terrorism has been so emotional and political, no widely accepted definition of it exists. In December 1985, for example, at a meeting of the Ohio Arms Control Seminar that focused on terrorism, one speaker, Professor Abraham Miller of the University of Cincinnati, a political scientist, called terrorism a form of theater, a substitute for political impotency. He viewed it as a tactic of people who wanted to change the political balance without the power needed to accomplish that end.

Such a definition limits one's thinking about terrorism, however, because of the assumptions included in the definition. It assumes, for example, that terrorists must be people without power who, as theatrical producers or news makers, seek media coverage of their acts. The use of terror thus becomes a barometer of the strength of a political movement, an indicator of weakness.

An overly narrow conception of terrorism led the highly regarded historian Walter Laqueur to make statements that defy common sense. He claimed, for example, that "effective dictatorships are immune to terror"[\[9\]](#) and that terrorism is only successful "against democratic regimes and ineffective (meaning obsolete or half-hearted) dictatorships."[\[10\]](#) With a better definition of terrorism, Laqueur would have recognized that the very power of strong dictatorships and totalitarian regimes is based on their effective use of terror.

Agencies of the United States government have also adopted seriously flawed definitions of terrorism. The U.S. Defense Department, for example, defined it as "the unlawful use or threatened use of force or violence by a revolutionary organization against individuals or property, with the intention of coercing or intimidating governments or societies, often for political or ideological reasons."[\[11\]](#) As Lt. Col. Frederic Hof observed in a 1985 article in the U.S. Army War College Journal, however, "by limiting the applicability of the term to the activities of 'revolutionary organizations,' the directive [of the Defense Department] was overlooking the obvious: that states are fully capable of using terrorism; that they have used it and continue to use it both against their own citizens as well as against other states."[\[12\]](#) Unfortunately, the problems identified by Hof continue to exist in such fundamental statements of military doctrine as the joint U.S. Army and Air Force publication *Military Operations in Low Intensity Conflict*.[\[13\]](#)

Ironically, attempts to define terrorism have been so muddled that an event that provoked considerable discussion of terrorism in the United States in 1983 and after was not really an act of terrorism at all. The October 1983 bombing of the U.S. Marine headquarters in Beirut, which killed 241 Americans, took the Marines completely by surprise, but the use of a very unconventional method of attack did not make the highly successful bombing an act of terrorism. The attack was not carried out against innocent civilians or in a nation nominally at peace. A number of the warring factions in Beirut believed that the United States was taking sides in an ongoing conflict, and in their eyes that made the U.S. Marines a legitimate military target. Instead of terrorism, the bombing was an act of war, carried out in a war zone against uniformed troops perceived to be taking sides in the conflict. For similar reasons, the shooting of the four American Marines in El Salvador in 1985 was also not an act of terrorism, since at the time of the killings the United States was aiding the Salvadoran government in an ongoing war. The inability of the U.S. to take proper security precautions or to understand its own role in such situations does not make the attacks upon it in such circumstances terrorism, and people will never understand terrorism or learn how to respond to it if they do not adopt a clearer and less politicized definition.

Unfortunately, many claims about terrorism only make sense if one ignores the terror of governments against their own citizens or if one defines the term in some way that leaves out many

examples of the very activity to be understood. To comprehend terrorism, however, one must look at more than highly selective examples, particularly if the examples are selected for political rather than intellectual reasons, as has frequently been the case in the United States. If the Sandanistas in Nicaragua were terrorists, as President Reagan proclaimed, then so were the Contras he supported. If the rebels in El Salvador were terrorists, then so were the death squads and torturers of the government's security forces.

Only with a broad but clear definition of terrorism can one gain significant insight into it. Most useful would seem to be a definition such as that provided by Benjamin Netanyahu when he was Israel's Ambassador to the UN. Ambassador Netanyahu defined terrorism as "the deliberate and systematic murder, maiming and menacing of the innocent to inspire fear for political ends."^[14] When applied apolitically, Netanyahu's definition includes the terror used by governments and agents of states against their own citizens. It includes terror used both for revolutionary and counter-revolutionary purposes. It includes terror as an act of war, but by using the term "innocent" to describe the victims of terror, it wisely excludes clandestine operations against military forces such as the 1983 bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut.

Thomas Milburn, an Ohio State University professor of psychology at the Mershon Center in Columbus, Ohio, has observed that "terrorist acts are . . . intended to influence politically the observers and audiences to the violence, more than the victims who are its primary targets."^[15] His statement highlights an extremely important dimension of terrorism: terrorist attacks are intended to influence audiences by engendering fear. The victims of terrorism are what Prof. Jordan Paust of the University of Houston law school has called "instrumental" targets. They are attacked "in order to communicate to a primary target a threat of future violence." The objective is "to use intense fear or anxiety to coerce the primary target into certain behavior or to mold its attitudes in connection with a demanded power (political) outcome."^[16] As the French scholar Raymond Aron noted, "the lack of discrimination helps spread fear, for if no one in particular is a target, no one can be safe."^[17]

Considerable confusion will continue to exist regarding the nature of terrorism, however, as long as people refuse to recognize it for what it is: a violent method that can be used by any group (weak or strong, in or out of power, politically left or right of center). Unfortunately, in the United States terrorism has been perceived as a technique of revolutionaries so often that Americans frequently overlook the fact that anyone can use terror in an attempt to further widely varied, even opposing goals.

Of interest also is the question of why terrorism seems to have increased in the last third of the twentieth century. One explanation, of course, is that no rise in terrorism has taken place, only an increase in media reporting and popular awareness of terrorist incidents. In the past, travellers were often at risk, and for centuries both governments and revolutionaries used terror in their attempts to accomplish their respective ends. At the same time, one senses something is different about the current situation in the world, although a change is not easily documented.

The primary reason for the existence of widespread terror in the late twentieth century would appear to be the breakdown of other methods for solving various kinds of national and international political problems. Chapter Nine briefly described the way in which revolution became stalemated through the development of improved techniques of both revolution and counterrevolution. One result of that change has been the resort to terror by revolutionaries who see no other alternatives for action and counterrevolutionaries who are unable or unwilling to use reform and cooptation to preserve their wealth and power.

War between nations has undergone a similar evolution. The coexistence of antagonistic superpowers armed with extremely dangerous nuclear explosives helped make war too dangerous to contemplate, even in situations where it would certainly have been used as an instrument of state policy in the past. The United States and the Soviet Union, for example, were enemies that had to

avoid open warfare at all costs because of the risk of nuclear disaster that such a war would create. As enemies, however, they continued to vie with each other for advantage on the international stage. In that Cold War struggle acts of terror provided a means of conflict that avoided the risk of nuclear holocaust.

Nonnuclear states and revolutionary governments that aspired to be states often lack the conventional power to fight against each other or the nuclear giants in total war, or they do not want to run the risks of total failure inherent in such conflicts. They have also found terror to be a weapon of war that appears to have relatively low risk coupled with potentially high reward.

The world is filled with discontented states and groups, each seeking a redress of grievances from the governments that they believe are responsible. Communist and other revolutionaries, Islamic fundamentalists, ethnic or sectarian nationalists including such diverse groups as Basques, Kurds, and Palestinians have all used terror as a weapon, as have the forces fighting against them. As world problems of immense proportions have furthered world-wide discontent, the result has been global warfare in which the use of terror has played an important role.

World War II, the war in Vietnam, and other twentieth century conflicts have blurred distinctions between combatants and noncombatants until even within the existing laws of war the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate targets is no longer clear. By the end of World War II, it was difficult to find any act of violence that some people would not argue was legitimate in a total war for survival. By the 1990s the ethical limits of violent conflict had become exceedingly difficult to define, leaving people with no clear standards for behavior. As Benjamin Netanyahu observed, for the terrorist who has declared "total war on the society he attacks . . . everyone is a legitimate target. A baby is fair game; he may, after all, grow up to be a soldier. So is the baby's mother; she gave birth to this future soldier. No one is spared, ordinary citizens and leaders alike."[\[18\]](#) Because so many people appear to take the view Netanyahu described, terror has become an integral part of modern warfare.

The twentieth century has become an age of total war in which no weapon has been too horrible to be used if the user thought it would be effective and advantageous. In fact, in some circles terror has been incorporated into military doctrine. Roger Trinquier, a French military officer who authored an influential text in the 1960s, called terrorism "the principal weapon of modern warfare."[\[19\]](#) For him, the terrorist who placed a car bomb in the middle of a crowded city was no different from the pilot who dropped similar devices from a plane. To fight against such terror, Trinquier advocated the use of torture to force information from captured terrorists that could be used to destroy their organizations. In short, he proposed that the terror of the bomb be met with the terror of interrogation at the hands of professionals skilled in the art of torture. It was only a small step from Trinquier's theorizing to the repressive governments established throughout the world in the last third of the century.

In some situations the use of terror was certainly encouraged by the fact that it seemed to work. In Latin America in the 1970s, for example, governments using techniques such as those advocated by Trinquier managed to stop the wave of revolutionary activity evident in such countries as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay. Even earlier, terrorist acts had played an important role in the development of many successful revolutionary and independence movements in places as widely divided in time and space as Russia before the revolution of 1917, Ireland before its independence, Cuba before Castro's 1959 revolution, and Vietnam from the 1950s onward. Aspiring revolutionaries and counterrevolutionaries thus had little incentive to avoid using a technique that had proven effective in the hands of others.

A few scholars have argued that a certain degree of violence is a part of normal democratic politics. Clearly terror is a part of normal totalitarian and dictatorial politics, but it may also play a role in the evolving discussion of political problems within established, nonviolent channels. Providing it is kept under control and used in moderation, terror or threats of violence can result in reforms or

compromises that might otherwise have been unattainable, although one should not confuse success, even in a good cause, with moral or ethical affirmation.

Without doubt terrorism is an exceedingly complex phenomenon that can and has been used to accomplish a variety of ends. Governments and revolutionary organizations have used it to coerce mass acceptance, gain obedience, enforce discipline, display their power and undermine that of their opponents. The phenomenon's complexity may even help to explain why the many authors who have attempted to categorize terrorists and their motives have met with limited success.

People seeking generalizations, however, can think of terrorism being used in at least three distinct situations: first, by people not in power seeking to establish their movements and subvert the existing political, social, and/or economic order; second, by regimes and self-selected defenders of the status quo to quash opposition by their own citizens; and third, by national governments and other groups to fight against their enemies in a state of declared or, more likely, undeclared war. Unfortunately, in many instances more than one party is involved in the terrorist activity, leading to a blending of motives. Warring parties in Nicaragua and El Salvador, for example, used terror for the first two reasons, while their supporters in the United States, Cuba, and the Soviet Union were engaged in activities that fit better into the third category.

Writing in the U.S. Army's *Military Review*, Stephen Daskal identified a subgroup within terrorism that he labeled the "urban terrorist," people "motivated by a desire to rebel regardless of whether a clear or rational grievance warrants armed action. They are, virtually without exception, the products of middle-class or wealthy families and are often well-educated and intelligent. Yet, they reject their background and potential and assault the society that gave them these benefits." Their demands are often vague and sometimes "inconsistent." It is even possible that "their real motivation is the excitement and 'romance' of being a noble revolutionary." Daskal noted that "some psychological experts believe they are subconsciously trying to punish their parents or gain their attention."[\[20\]](#)

Daskal's "urban terrorist" is of particular importance because of the implications of the description, for many of these individuals seem to have turned to terrorism out of frustration in situations where no reform or compromise could satisfy them. Unable to achieve their goals, they lash out in rage. Their terrorist acts become goals instead of means, and they engage in terror for its own sake. Such terrorists may even recognize that their ends can not be accomplished, but they continue to engage in acts of terror to prevent their enemies from enjoying the benefits of peace and order.

After noting that urban terrorists were "more oriented toward anarchy than justice," Daskal concluded that "no amount of reform is likely to prevent urban terrorism or significantly curtail it." So defined, the urban terrorist is more accurately described as a sociopath rather than a revolutionary, and Daskal's conclusion that they "must be treated as violent criminals rather than political or military opponents" would appear to be a valid one.[\[21\]](#) From the viewpoint of the society in which they operate, sociopathic terrorists are little more than criminals or outcasts, to be hunted down and captured or killed.

Other forms of terrorism are clearly different. Rural guerrillas or government security forces using terror in the midst of a revolutionary war are engaged in a struggle in which issues are paramount. The problem presented is political in nature. From the point of view of government, the revolutionary terrorists who seek change through specific programs identify a set of issues that must be addressed by the forces of government if order is to be achieved without resorting to a policy of unenlightened repression, itself a form of terrorism. Military force may work to hold the revolutionary terrorists in check, but reform is needed if cooptation is to take place and a lasting peace is to be achieved. In the absence of reform, brutal repression would seem to be the only significant policy alternative.

In the late twentieth century organizing and carrying out terrorist acts became easier, complicating efforts to deal with the problem posed by terrorism. In an age of virtually instantaneous world-wide

communication, efficient global transportation, and relatively cheap but highly destructive weapons, terrorists have many advantages not available to them in the past. They can strike targets far from home using methods limited only by their imaginations in many cases. Miniaturization and other high-tech applications that revolutionized conventional warfare revolutionized terrorism as well. As terrorist threats increased, the means of carrying them out multiplied as well.

One result is that terrorist attacks increasingly kill and wound larger numbers of people than they did in the past. Where a few individuals might be taken hostage or assassinated in the past, now entire plane loads of people can be victimized by terrorism. Where only the most outspoken political dissidents might have been victims of government repression in the past, now entire nations can be terrorized by their own governments. Increasingly people worry that some group will escalate terrorism to the point where entire cities are subjected to chemical, biological, or nuclear threats or attack. Even where the daily level of terrorist violence appears to be relatively low, the costs can be high over time. In Northern Ireland, for example, approximately 2,500 people have died since 1968. If an equal percentage of the population in the United States had been lost in a conflict at that level of violence, the total having died would be close to 400,000.

The problem is compounded as various purveyors of terrorism have begun to cooperate, each for his or her own particular reasons. Nations, revolutionary groups, and even sociopathic urban terrorists have cooperated, supplying weapons, funds, and other support, even carrying out missions for one another. The fear engendered by such developments can be tremendous.

The frustration that has been created by the terrorist threat is itself a danger in a world where miscalculation in a response by a nuclear power could mean disaster. Nevertheless, in the United States the pressures to respond forcefully to acts of terrorism grew so great that by 1986 Secretary of State George Shultz had evidently become convinced that "if you raise the costs, you do something that should, eventually, act as a deterrent." [22] Commenting on the American air strikes against Libya following the disco bombing in Germany, President Reagan claimed the action "will not only diminish Colonel Gaddafi's capacity to export terror, it will provide him with incentives and reasons to alter his criminal behavior." [23] Defending the President's actions, Secretary Shultz said "if you let people get away with murder, you'll get murder." [24]

Unfortunately, even if one penalizes people for murder, one still sees murder, as states with capital punishment have discovered. If Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger was correct when he observed in 1986 that the wave of terrorism against the United States is "a method of waging war," [25] then President Reagan and Secretary Shultz should have concentrated on identifying the warring parties and the issues causing the war rather than on finding ways to retaliate. Seeking ways to end a war is clearly preferable to developing better techniques for fighting it.

Instead of assuming that forceful action will deter terrorists, one might more logically conclude that an escalation of force will take place on both sides, leading to an undeclared war of attrition. The commission of acts of terror as well as acts of retaliation is relatively cheap and easy, both within nations and outside of them. But a country such as the United States cannot stop every act of terror against its citizens without achieving both the total destruction of all anti-American terrorists and also the deterrence of all the regimes supporting them. Destroying the regime of a Colonel Gaddafi or a Saddam Hussein, for example, would not be sufficient.

Leaders attempting to deal with terrorism often find themselves pursuing more than one goal. First, they want to prevent acts of terror. One approach to achieving that end would aim at resolving the problems that have led terrorists to act in the first place: resolving differences between Israelis and Palestinians in the Middle East, for example. Obviously, given the extent of discontent in the world and the diversity of the issues that motivate the terrorist response, such an approach is more easily described than implemented.

Another policy aimed at preventing terrorism would emphasize the enhancement of security. Better intelligence, better police work, improved security at key targets and other, comparable activities would obviously help to prevent certain acts of terrorism. Unfortunately even the most astute methods, well applied are unlikely to prevent all terrorist action, although in the United States such preventative measures might well entail a significant diminution in civil liberties. At best, enhanced security is only a partial solution to the problem.

A third approach relies on deterrence. This particular approach is evident in the rhetoric of the United States and the actions of Israel; its essential element is the promise of swift retaliation. The problems with such a policy are many. First, one can not always identify the proper target for retaliation. Second, to the extent that the retaliation kills, maims, or terrorizes innocent people, it is itself an act of terrorism. Third, a number of terrorists are willing to give up their own lives for whatever cause they serve, and they are therefore not deterred by the thought of death through retaliation or any other means. Finally, in some cases terrorists hope to bring about retaliation, particularly if they believe that the victims of the retaliation will be perceived as innocent. As a result, the promise of swift retaliation may sometimes act as an incentive rather than a deterrent to terrorism.

When prevention fails, as it most surely will in at least a few cases, one must focus on a second general goal: the solution of whatever problem the acts of terrorists present. In the case of a hijacking or hostage taking, for example, one has the lives of the hostages to consider. In a bombing, one must deal with the casualties and disruption caused. In an environment of torture based repression, one must deal with the refugees that are invariably produced. Rarely, however, does the resolution of specific crises prove to be a satisfying response to terrorism, and it clearly does very little to solve the problem of terrorism itself.

When acts of terrorism are planned and/or committed, the people who are the targets want to bring the perpetrators to justice and punishment, but the urge to punish is a highly emotional one. It matters little to angry citizens and leaders whether or not the act of punishment helps or hinders in pursuing the broader policy goal of abolishing terrorism. The urge to punish may even contribute to the continuation and escalation of terrorism, but that will often make little difference to the frustrated individuals crying out for retribution. As one might guess, the desire to punish can easily disguise itself as a seemingly more rational policy of deterrence.

In the final analysis, how one responds to terrorism may depend upon how one views the phenomenon. Viewing terrorism as an act of war to be deterred by threat of retaliation or, deterrence failing, to be met with a military response seems relatively unproductive. It provides neither a means of dealing with any underlying problems that might cause terrorism nor a method for minimizing the damage that results from terrorism that is not deterred.

If one sees the terrorism one confronts as a tactic of individuals or groups who are involved in a rational, goal oriented action, then a political or diplomatic approach would seem to be indicated. If one can solve whatever problems led the terrorists to undertake their attacks on innocent civilians, the terrorism should disappear.

Some terrorism, however, may not appear to be the result of rational, goal oriented behavior. In such cases, terrorism becomes a phenomenon much like crime; it can be controlled but not eliminated. One must take a police approach to the problem and develop an ability to live with a low level of terrorist activity in the same way people adjust to living with a degree of criminality in their societies.

Before effective remedial action can be taken against terrorists that will help diminish the problem throughout the world, however, many of the people concerned with the problem will need to alter their perceptions of it. People in the United States, for example, must recognize that they cannot obtain support in their efforts to end terrorism in one area or of one type if they are not willing to

condemn terrorism of other kinds in other places. As Americans have found in the past, gaining allies to fight against Islamic terrorists in Europe and the Middle East was sometimes made more difficult by U.S. support of counterrevolutionary terrorists in Central America and the reluctance of U.S. leaders to work more forcefully to end government terror in countries such as South Africa. At the very least, consistency in defining terrorism and greater uniformity in dealing with terrorists of all kinds would base United States policy on principle instead of expediency.

People who live in the developed world should recognize that they can do a great deal more than they are now doing to help solve a number of serious global problems. At times, inhabitants of wealthy nations lose sight not only of the problems plaguing people throughout the world, but also of the way in which the wealthy can be perceived as being responsible for the continuation of those problems. Unless people are willing to attempt to view their own behavior through the eyes of their critics, even if the critics are also terrorists, they may never gain the understanding needed to curb terrorist attacks and the steady erosion of civilized life that those attacks have caused. At best, solving the problem of terrorism promises to be a very long and difficult task, and we can only hope that it will not prove to be an impossible one.

[1] Frederic C. Hof, "The Beirut Bombing of October 1983: An Act of Terrorism?," *Parameters*, 15 (Summer, 1985), 69-74.

[2] See, for example, Michael Stohl, "Demystifying the Mystery of International Terrorism" in Charles W. Kegley, Jr., ed., *International Terrorism: Characteristics, Causes, Controls* (New York, 1990), 81-96. Intelligent analysis of the topic can also be found in Robert O. Slater & Michael Stohl, eds., *Current Perspectives on International Terrorism* (New York, 1988).

[3] J. Bowyer Bell, "Transnational Terror and the World Order," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 74 (1975), 405.

[4] Amnesty International, *Torture in the Eighties: An Amnesty International Report* (1984), 5.

[5] Ibid.

[6] J. Bowyer Bell, "Trends of Terror: The Analysis of Political Violence," *World Politics*, 29 (1977), 477.

[7] 1986 newspaper cartoon signed Meddick I D.

[8] "International Terrorism: In Search of a Response," *Great Decisions '86* (1986), 36.

[9] Walter Laqueur, "Interpretations of Terrorism: Fact, Fiction and Political Science," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 12 (1977), 15.

[10] Ibid., 14.

[11] Hof, "The Beirut Bombing," 71.

[12] Ibid.

[13] See, in particular, Ch. 3 of Departments of the Army and Air Force, *Military Operations in Low Intensity Conflict* (Washington, D.C., 1990).

[14] Benjamin Netanyahu, "Terrorism: How the West Can Win," *Time* (April 14, 1986), 48.

[15] *The Daily Record* (Wooster, Ohio, February 5, 1986).

[16] Hof, "The Beirut Bombing," 72.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Netanyahu, "Terrorism," 49.

[19] Roger Trinquier, *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency* (London, 1964), 16.

[20] Stephen E. Daskal, "The Insurgency Threat and Ways to Defeat It," *Military Review*, 66 (1986), 38-39.

[21] Ibid., 39.

[22] "Hitting the Source," *Time* (Apr. 28, 1986), 23.

[23] Ibid., 17.

[24] "Targeting Gaddafi," *Time* (Apr. 21, 1986), 20.

[25] "Hitting the Source," *Time* (Apr. 28, 1986), 23. Shultz also saw terrorism as "a form of warfare," *The New York Times* (Apr. 4, 1984), 13.