SECTION I
THE ORIGINS OF TERRORISM
IN MODERN SOCIETY

The Origins and Nature of Terrorism:
Foundations and Issues

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SUMMARY. Terrorism has been present for centuries in a myriad of forms and locations. However, the events of September 11, 2001 gave terrorism a new meaning in the United States and many other nations. Following a brief historical review of terrorism, we examine the background of *Al Qaeda*. We then look at definitions of terrorism and review factors that contribute to its development. In the conclusion, we note the challenge that faces the world in combating terrorism, not only with mil-

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itary means, but also by acknowledging and treating its diverse origins, expressions, and consequences. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@ haworthpress.com> Website: <http://www.HaworthPress.com> © 2004 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]*

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HISTORY

There are a number of useful scholarly sources that trace the origins of terrorism across time (e.g., Center for Defense Information [CDI], 2003; Nash, 1998; Rapoport, 2001; Reich, 1998). Many consider the earliest acts of terrorism to have started in ancient Palestine during the first century CE, when Jewish citizens sought freedom from Roman occupation by engaging in assassinations of Romans and suspected Jewish collaborators. One group was called the *Sicari* because of their favored use of the *sica* or short dagger to murder Jewish collaborators. Another group, led by Simon Ben Koseba, exhibited intense fanaticism by killing mainly Romans and Greeks, often in open displays of violence similar to those seen today. This group was called the *Zealots*, and it is from them that we derive the present meaning of the word for individuals who are fanatics (CDI, 2003).

By the early middle ages, a radical Muslim group in the Middle East began to kill those who failed to follow fundamentalist versions of Islam. It was rumored that these killers used hashish prior to their killings and it is from the term "hashish" that the modern word "assassin" is derived (CDI, 2003). Another group in India that functioned between the 7th and the 19th centuries, the *Thugees* (it is from them that we derive the word "thug"), strangled their victims as an offering to the Hindu goddess of terror and violence (CDI, 2003).

It is widely held that the beginnings of modern terrorism occurred in Russia around 1880 when a radical ideological group, *Narodnaya Volya* (The People's Will), used terrorism to attempt to overthrow the Czarist state. In the years that followed, anarchists, political ideologues, and demented individuals used assassination and bombings (e.g., United States President William McKinley in 1901; Ferdinand, Archduke of Austria, in 1914).

The English word "terrorism" comes from the French term "regime de la terreur" that swept across the country between 1793-1794 in the course of the French Revolution. Always value-laden, terrorism was viewed as legitimate and positive by the revolutionaries because it was deemed vital for the revolu-

tionary government to gain power over the royalty and survive the forces seeking to destroy it in its infancy. As Maximilien Robespierre proclaimed in 1794, "Terror is nothing other than justice, prompt, severe, inflexible; it is therefore an emanation of virtue; it is not so much a special principle as it is a consequence of the general principle of democracy applied to our country's most urgent needs" (cited in CDI, 2003, p. 8). Governments, especially those led by despots, have long used harsh methods to control their citizens. The best example of state-sponsored terrorism is Stalinist Russia. Josef Stalin used brutal methods to control the Russians during his reign of terror.

ATTACKS ON AMERICA

The September 11, 2001, bombing was not the first terrorist attack on American soil, nor was it the first attack on American international interests and possessions (see Nash, 1998 for a detailed listing). There was the 1993 attack on the World Trade Center (WTC) led by Ramzi Ahmed Yousef, in which six people were killed and hundreds injured. This attack failed to bring down the WTC but it did signal American vulnerability on its own soil as well as overseas as evidenced by the attacks on the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia, the American Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, and the USS Cole in Yemen. The message of these attacks was clear: America and Americans would no longer be safe. They would join a world that had been at war for decades in more than 60 low-intensity conflicts in which civilians, not soldiers, were now the primary victims.

In time, it became known that the September 11 attacks, as well as the others around the globe, were part of a larger master plan guided by an international terrorist group known as *Al Qaeda*, a well organized and richly-funded Muslim fundamentalist group headed by an educated and wealthy Saudi Arabian citizen, Osama Bin Laden (Bodansky, 2001; Williams, 2002). In the words of Osama Bin Laden, he and *Al Qaeda* [translation: The Source or Base] were seeking revenge for what they viewed as America's many economic, political, and cultural exploitations of Islamic people and cultural traditions. In an interview conducted in 1998, long before the September 11 attacks, Osama Bin Laden had already registered his contempt for America:

> ... The people of Islam had suffered from aggression, iniquity, and injustice imposed on them by the Zionist-Crusaders' alliance ... the latest of these aggressions incurred by the Muslims since the death of the Prophet is the occupation of the land of the two Holy Places ... by the armies of the American Crusaders and their allies. . . . For over seven years

the United States has been occupying the lands of Islam in the holiest of places, the Arabian Peninsula, plundering its riches, dictating to its rulers, humiliating its people, terrorizing its neighbors, and turning its bases in the Peninsula into a spearhead through which to fight the neighboring Muslim people. (Osama Bin Laden, 1998; Source: Strategic Studies Institute, www.army.mil.usassi)

In subsequent remarks aired on October 8, 2001, and published by the Associated Press, Osama Bin Laden commented on the attack of September 11, 2001:

What America is tasting now is something insignificant compared to what we have tasted for scores of years. Our nation [the Islamic World] has been tasting this humiliation and this degradation for more than 80 years, its sons are killed, its blood is shed, its sanctuaries are attacked, and no one hears and no one heeds. (Osama Bin Laden, October 8, 2001; Source: Associated Press)

The intent and purpose of Osama Bin Laden and the *Al Qaeda* network was clear. America was to be punished for its many offenses against the Muslim people and Islam. Revenge would be had and it would be meted out in destructive scenarios designed to bring the *Al Qaeda* cause to people around the world. Osama Bin Laden knew very well that his destructive acts would bring cheers from many who shared his views of America's perceived role as "Satan," and not all among them would be Muslims. Others who perceive America to be the source of their problems would use this opportunity to condemn America's foreign and economic policies. For example, Arundhati Roy, a popular English journalist with the *Manchester Guardian*, likened Osama Bin Laden to America itself. He wrote:

What is Osama bin Laden? He's America's family secret. He is the American President's dark "doppelganger." The savage twin of all that purports to be beautiful and civilized. He has been sculpted from the spare rib of a world laid to waste by America's foreign policy: its gunboat diplomacy, its nuclear arsenal, its vulgarly stated policy of "full-spectrum dominance," its chilling disregard for non-American lives, its barbarous military interventions, its support for despotic and dictatorial regimes, its merciless economic agenda that has munched through the economies of poor countries like a cloud of locusts. Its marauding multinationals who are taking over the air we breathe, the ground we stand on, the water we drink. The thoughts we think. Now the family secret has been spilled, the twins are blurring into one another and gradually becoming interchangeable. (Roy, 2001. p. 1)

Roy's comments were cheered by many who saw the events of September 11, 2001, as a declaration of war against American political and economic policies. While this is offensive to many Americans who accurately see themselves as good and caring citizens of a great nation that has done much to advance human civilization through intellectual, cultural, and humanitarian means, it is necessary for American society to open its eyes to the dynamics and consequences of life in a global community. Above all, there is a need to evaluate the complexities of today's globalized world within the historical and situational contexts that shape the meaning and perception of the many frightening events unfolding before us.

THE CONUNDRUMS OF DEFINITION

The stinging words of Osama Bin Laden (a terrorist) and Arundhati Roy (a popular journalist) communicate some of the many controversial issues surrounding the nature and meaning of international terrorism today. First, let it be said clearly and without doubt that the actions of *Al Qaeda* on September 11, 2001 constitute a crime of mass murder and destruction and demand punishment and retribution. The acts meet the criteria needed to define terrorism and as such are subject to international legal action. Murder of innocent civilians to promote political, economic, or social aims is a horrendous crime, and cannot be justified by cries of oppression or abuse. Efforts to alter political, economic, or social conditions by sub-national groups are not crimes in themselves, but the efforts must be conducted within the constraints of law and morality as codified in local, national, and international systems. Nevertheless, it is now obvious that in an age of easy access to weapons of mass destruction, even a few individuals can wreak havoc on nations. There is an urgent need to refine conceptualizations and definitions of "terrorism."

Although there are many definitions of terrorism (see Burgess, 2003; Hallett, 2003; Moghaddam & Marsella, 2003), an obvious sign of its controversial and confusing nature, many legal and scholarly experts accept the definition used by the United States Department of State in Title 22 of the United States Code, Section 2656f(d): ". . . premeditated, politically-motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience" (quoted in Reich, 1998, p. 262). The essential elements of terrorism are thus: (a) The use of force or violence; (b) by individuals or groups; (c) directed toward innocent civilians; (d) intended to influence or coerce changes in political or social decisions and policies; (e) by instilling fear and terror. This definition is, however, a narrow one. As discussed below, others advocate a

broader definition, which would include state-sponsored terrorism and state terrorism.

The fact of the matter is that the non-State terrorist position of powerlessness *vis-à-vis* a given government or State may encourage secretly planned acts of violence designed to give a "media" or "theatrical" portrayal to the act; the greater the damage, the greater the value of the act in the eyes of the terrorists and their supporters. However, this cannot condone nor rationalize the violence disguised as a guerrilla liberation movement or anti-colonial act by people seeking freedom from oppression. To right the wrongs of centuries or moments is best accomplished through patient diplomacy and constructive peaceful actions rather than violence, a fact the United States is learning in Iraq.

ADDITIONAL ISSUES REGARDING THE DEFINITION AND CONCEPTUALIZATION OF TERRORISM

As this article is being written, there have been numerous bombings in Russian cities, resulting in the murder of hundreds of innocent victims by Chechen groups seeking freedom from Russian Federation domination and rule. Chechnya was not granted its independence as the former Soviet Union collapsed. Indeed, its struggle for freedom from Russia and the Soviet Union has been going on for more than 150 years. Finally, in 1994 Russian troops invaded Chechnya. The resulting war has left more than 40,000 dead and hundreds of thousands as refugees. In response to the Chechen rebel bombings in Russian cities, which are clearly acts of terrorism, Russian troops then destroy and kill Chechen fighters and innocent civilians caught in the crossfire, especially in Grozny, its capital. The cycle of hate and violence continues unabated. It is noteworthy that Chechnya has extensive oil and mineral reserves. Obviously, this encourages Russia to maintain control in spite of the violence.

In this struggle, many of the dilemmas surrounding the origin, definition, and prevention of terrorism can be found. Which side is the victim? Which side is the terrorist? Research and professional psychologists have responded to the new threat, as evident by the broad variety of critical assessments already available (e.g., Atran, 2003; Chomsky, 2001; Moghaddam & Marsella, 2003; Stout, 2002). At the heart of the challenge are questions central to all of psychology. Such questions concern the role of unique and contextual factors: To what extent does terrorism arise because of the particular personality characteristics of terrorists? To what extent is terrorism a result of broader cultural conditions? The first question leads to explorations of the supposedly "abnormal" characteristics of individual terrorists. An alternative approach has been

to dig deeper into the cultural characteristics of the contexts that give rise to terrorism, in the tradition of experimentalists who explored the conditions in which individuals selected to represent the 'normal' population obey an authority figure and do extreme harm to others (Moghaddam, 2003).

While the contextual or 'sociocultural' (Moghaddam & Marsella, 2003) approach to understanding terrorism seems to be the most promising, it is also in many ways the most challenging, particularly given the traditional reductionist leanings of mainstream psychology. After all, the sociocultural and contextual approaches require us to consider individual behavior in the larger historical, political, economic, and social context, an approach still only found in the more recent and innovative (and still less influential) areas of psychological research (e.g., social constructivist, cultural, and post-modernist psychologies). These approaches require us to conduct deeper and more serious assessments of such questions as hatred toward the U.S., as well as the long-term foreign policies of the U.S. on lower-income and impoverished societies.

There are numerous other struggles between governments and disaffected minority groups who seek independence. Consider the situations between the Israelis and the Palestinians, Spain and the Basques, England and the IRA in Northern Ireland, China and the Tibetans, and, of course, the Shiite and Kurdish efforts against the former government of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. But what is it that justifies the use of violence and the label guerilla, insurgent, or freedom fighter rather than terrorist? Many unresolved issues remain surrounding the nature, definition, meaning, and legal implications of terrorist acts (e.g., Burgess, 2003). Do any of the following conditions warrant consideration in reaching legal and/or moral definitions of terrorism:

1. If the government is oppressive and not duly constituted by the vote of all the people (e.g., Saddam Hussein's former government in Iraq, Chinese occupation of Tibet)?
2. If the act is directed beyond military targets and personnel and involves the intentional murder and harming of innocent civilians (e.g., the events of September 11, 2001 in New York, Washington, DC, and the airline crash in Shanksville, PA)
3. If the government is corrupt and exploits the people it is intended to represent, as often occurs in Sub-Saharan nations in Africa (e.g., Sierra Leone, Liberia, Rwanda, Zimbabwe)?
4. If the government is dominated by foreign interests to the exclusion of the perceived interests of its people (e.g., Cuba under Fulgencio Batista prior to his overthrow by Castro; the Russian presence in Afghanistan between the 1970s and 1990s)?
5. If a subgroup of ethnic and cultural minorities desire and wish for separation because of their desire to pursue cultural identification and preservation and/or economic well-being (e.g., Chechnya and Russia)?

6. If the government is a colonial power (e.g., Great Britain in Palestine/ Israel, Kenya, or India; France in Tahiti; China in Tibet)?
7. Can religion be used as a source of peace rather than the source of war and conflict? Consider the fact that in the majority of conflicts in the world today, intolerance for religious variation constitutes a major reason for anger and hatred (e.g., Philippines, Bosnia, Sri Lanka, Northern Ireland, Russia, Indonesia, East Timor, Israel/Palestine).

These questions are not intended to justify the murder, kidnapping, and arson by any individuals or groups or by any government, but rather to point out that the historical and situational context must be considered in arriving at judgments. The questions are provided to provoke discussion and thought among the readers, compelling them to weigh their conclusions against certain criteria that may or may not be shared by others. It is the relativity, the problem of alternative perspectives, that poses a serious problem for courts and even for individual moral judgments.

Ultimately, the best example of a moral and ethical effort in pursuit of a group or peoples' interests against oppression and colonization is Gandhi's non-violent approach in India. Non-violence can be an effective means for change (e.g., Bondurant, 1969; Paige, 2002) but the people seeking change must be willing to endure the often punishing consequences of their actions in favor of a sense of ethical and moral righteousness. One can only wonder if non-violent protests would result in any progress in the current situations in Russia, China, Northern Ireland, or Israel. We are compelled to argue that non-violence must be considered as the legal, moral, and ethical approach rather than acts of "terroristic" violence.

CONCEPTUALIZING AND CLASSIFYING TERRORISM PATTERNS

Even as we call attention to the conundrums of defining terrorism, it is useful to discuss the patterns or types of terrorist groups. This too has been the source of considerable debate, but what is emerging in recent years is an increased clarity regarding categories and classifications of terrorism and terrorist acts.

Early efforts to classify terrorism relied on analyses of (a) motives (e.g., political, economic, psychosocial, religious), (b) methods (e.g., bombs, kidnappings, chemicals), and (c) goals (e.g., instilling fear, collapse of governments, altering policies, establishing a power base). More recent efforts have recognized the complex patterns and variations in terrorism related to sponsorship and support. For example, Post (2002a) proposes that terrorism be separated into (a) sub-state ter-

rorism (e.g., groups not affiliated with a national government); (b) state-supported terrorism (e.g., Libya, North Korea, Sudan); and (c) state or regime terrorism (e.g., use of state resources to terrorize citizens or neighboring states). Post noted that sub-state terrorism was the most diverse and included revolutionary leftist groups (e.g., *Sendero Luminoso* in Peru), rightist groups (e.g., Nazi/Fascist groups), national separatist groups (e.g., *ETA* in Spain, IRA in Northern Ireland), religious extremists (e.g., *Aum Shinryko*), and single-issue groups (e.g., anti-abortion). He also divided the religious extremists into two groups: fundamentalists (e.g., *Al Qaeda*) and new religions (e.g., *Aum Shinryko*).

Post's classification illuminates the spectrum of terrorist groups, orientations, and purposes. In this respect, it is a welcome addition to the research literature. Others have been critical of his classifications because, they argue, it is ethnocentric. For example, Montiel and Anuwar (2002) argue that there are other forms of "terrorism," including "global structural violence," economic exploitation, and U.S. legitimated acts of terrorism. They contend that U.S. economic, political, and military hegemony fosters inequities around the world and cultural domination. They also propose that the United States belongs in the category of state-sponsored terrorism because it has supported rightist regimes in Central and South America and in the Middle East.

ENABLING TERRORISM

The causes of terrorism are complex and reside within formative, precipative, exacerbative, and maintenance causes (Marsella, 2003). That is to say, some of the causes have historical roots (formative) reflecting antagonisms that may have origins in past struggles against a government (e.g., Northern Ireland) or group of people (e.g., Palestinian-Israeli conflicts). These causes often are brought forward in recent conditions of oppression and punishment (precipative and exacerbative) by the dominant groups, leading to an endless cycle of violence in which each new action is considered yet another provocation (consider the Israeli-Palestinian conflict).

The simple fact of the matter is that military action against terrorism will never be sufficient unto itself. It must be combined with diplomatic, political, economic, psychological, and humanitarian efforts. Oppression, exploitation, abuse, marginalization, poverty, indignity, and cultural destruction are root causes of most terrorism, albeit some terrorist acts obviously emerged from the demented psyches of some individuals (e.g., Unabomber, Oklahoma City bombing).

As long as military actions remain the primary response to terrorism, then the precipitating, exacerbating, and maintenance causes of terrorism will remain and

terrorism will continue. Even if *Al Qaeda* is defeated, history indicates that other terrorist groups and other leaders will arise. The response to terrorism must be multidimensional. It must be part of a long-term commitment to global peace and cooperation, not of suppression or oppression (e.g., Marsella, 2003). This means that governments must be prepared to negotiate and engage in creative diplomatic dialogues and interactions with terrorist groups. The doors must be kept open for discussion and resolution through international conflict mediation. This does not require yielding or surrendering national security. Pride and hubris must be set aside as the sole arbiters of governmental action. This is not an endorsement of terrorist actions but rather a realistic consideration of the origins, consequences, and complexities of contemporary terrorism.

For example, it is fashionable among many government officials to say that, contrary to the claims of academic scholars, poverty does not cause terrorism. They point to the fact that the 9/11 terrorists came from middle-class backgrounds and were educated. What this contention fails to recognize is that revolutions are often led by the wealthy speaking on behalf of the poor because the former are better educated and have more access to the power needed for action. It is the perceived injustice that often leads the educated to take action against the powerful as witnessed in the formation of unions.

Poverty is fertile ground for recruiting terrorists because of the hopelessness and helplessness it breeds. When there is poverty, there is also social injustice, prejudice, deprivation, and shame. When there is poverty, social cohesion breaks down, and the result of the disintegration is often crime, illness, social deviancy, identity confusion and loss, and cries for massive structural changes. Poverty, in the opinion of the authors of this article, is a major enabling condition for terrorism (e.g., Marsella, 2003; Moghaddam, 2003). When a country has 50% unemployment, cries for revolutionary change emboldened by terrorism often emerge as the preferred choice for discharging anger and for stimulating social and political change.

It must be recognized that the enabling conditions for terrorism still require the presence of actual persons whose individual beliefs, motives, goals, and leadership skills and talents can respond to the conditions with terrorist actions. Marsella (2003) reviews some of the psychological characteristics and qualities that may interact with certain contexts to promote the risk of terrorism (e.g., aggression, anger, authoritarian personality qualities, "true believer" qualities). Thus, the origins of terrorism reside in a spectrum of factors including individual personality predispositions and acquired behavior patterns, historical and situational contexts of oppression and punishment, and some interactions of the two. Each terrorist act is unique in its determinants, and yet it also reflects certain commonalities with other terrorist acts.

SUICIDE BOMBERS

Among the many acts of terrorism that have emerged through the centuries, one of the most terrifying and deadly has been suicide bombings in which the perpetrators willfully destroy themselves as they detonate deadly bombs in crowded civilian settings (i.e., buildings, restaurants, bars, supermarkets, buses). For many counter-terrorist agencies, suicide bombers have been a source of bewilderment. While courage in carrying out a terrorist mission might be understood, the willingness of suicide bombers to die for their cause has led to the incorrect assumption that these individuals are deranged or mentally ill. Nothing could be more inaccurate.

The rewards for suicide bombers are numerous and varied, including the promise of an eternal afterlife; financial support for families; a post-death status of prestige and honor in their community; a felt sense of righteousness and justification; and revenge for indignity, abuses, and perhaps the deaths of family members. The Israeli-Palestinian situation is the best example of the suicide bombing. While no one can condone the deaths of innocent non-combatants (i.e., civilians), the hatred and anger that has built up against the Israelis among the Palestinian communities and terrorist groups is so strong that it readily justifies the bombings in the minds of the Palestinians. The fact remains that men, women, and children who commit these bombings find rewards for doing so in religious martyrdom, heroic revenge, implacable anger, and fiscal awards to their family.

CONCLUSION

The number of terrorist acts and terrorist organizations is growing. In a global community, this growth poses a critical challenge to everyone's security and safety. While the reflexive response to the increased tide of terrorism may be increased military actions, it is obvious that root causes are not being addressed. The result is that the history of terrorism is being written each day in headlines and television images. The struggle for recognition and for retribution will continue through bombings, assassinations, kidnappings, cyberwars, and agroterrorism. The low intensity wars and conflicts, now considered to be in excess of 60, will continue as groups turn to terrorism as a way of achieving their political and social aims. World leaders have shown little imagination, vision, or creativity in addressing terrorism beyond increased military responses. The result will be continued global unrest and insecurity. Terrorism, an ancient tactic and strategy rooted in hate, anger, and revenge, viable because of its low risk and cost, increasingly deadly because of access to weapons of mass destruction, will continue until it is

re-construed by nations, governments, and people everywhere as a response that is part of the closely-woven tapestry of other challenges present in our world. Isolating terrorism from the problems of poverty, injustice, indignity, prejudice, hate, fundamentalism, oppression, helplessness, and hopelessness that is spurred on by political, economic, and religious abuse assures its continuation and empowerment. Until such time as this spectrum of problems is also addressed, terrorism will remain a daily threat across the globe.

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