

THE DECADE OF THE TERRORIST

"There has been no effective international consensus on how to combat the terrorist."

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"Terrorism is an arm the revolutionary can never relinquish. To be an assailant or a terrorist ennoble any honorable man."

—Carlos Marigheila
(professional terrorist)

THE INCIDENCE of transnational terrorist activities is increasing yearly. The past decade has witnessed a steady rise in terrorist incidents, with 1976 setting a record for bombings and assassinations. Hijackings, so popular in the early 1970's, have increased from a low in 1975. Moreover, they are no longer confined to airplanes, as trains have become a favorite target of the Dutch Molluccan terrorists. More importantly, neither the U.S. nor the world is adequately prepared to deal with these threats to their national security. There has been no effective international con-

sensus on how to combat the terrorist.

This is largely due to a problem of definitions. What may be a terrorist to one man is a freedom fighter to another. Furthermore, many civil libertarians and staunch human rights activists do not want an international definition of terrorism. They fear that authoritarian regimes may use this as an excuse to crush legitimate domestic opposition by labeling them terrorists.

Terrorists, guerrillas, and urban guerrillas all employ revolutionary violence, but each has different targets and objectives. Terrorism is a systematic attempt to induce fear and anxiety among peoples expressly for some political purpose. Guerrillas are organized groups with political motives which attack only the armed forces of the state with which they are at war. Urban guerrillas have the same motivations, but they focus their attacks primarily on North American industries, managers, and capitalists operating within their country. The guerrillas can usually operate effectively because they are either provided safe

haven by the residents of their nation or, in the case of the urban guerrilla, the government tacitly supports their efforts against the North Americans. In this instance, investigations by the host government are usually façades for their real feelings. The one common factor which becomes evident when aggregating these three groups is that no one person can realistically expect or hope not to be touched by the terrorist or the guerrilla. In this game, there are no innocent bystanders.

The history of terrorism is foggy at best. In all societies, there have always been the few who employed political violence to fulfill their dreams. The evolving system of international order has served to fuel these attacks of violence. To the terrorist, order becomes synonymous with oppression and the denial of social justice. This is nothing new—terrorist tactics, such as political assassinations, have been around for thousands of years. Sheikh al-Jebal, the Old Man of the Mountains, supposedly created an elite corps of professional assas-

sins in the 11th century to rid his land of potential opposition. In 1595, Ottoman Sultan Mohammed had his brothers killed for the same reasons. During 1793 and 1794, the French parties in power practiced government by intimidation and fear.

The real roots of modern terrorism can be traced back to 19th-century Czarist Russia. In 1879, a group of Russian populists formed an organization known as the People's Will. They were bent on a radical transformation of Russia and chose a strategy of terror to achieve their goals. In March, 1881, they assassinated Czar Alexander II after previous attempts had failed. The importance of the People's Will was that it became a model of the classic clandestine revolutionary movement. Theoretically oriented anarchists such as Mikhail Bakunin and Serge Nechayev advocated the use of the People's Will's favorite strategy—assassination. As the People's Will became a model for the anarchists, so have the modern terrorists embraced the writings of these Russians. Nechayev's classic, *Revolutionary Catechism* has become the bible for revolutionaries around the world.

Types and goals of terrorism

Terrorism can be broken into two distinctive types. The first case is direct terrorism—actions which are perpetrated against the actual tenets of power. Specifically, this takes the form of an assassination or a kidnapping of a public official. The common man in this instance is spared the direct effects of the terrorist action.

A more common and probably more effective type is indirect or pure terrorism—random attacks on civilians designed to produce severe psychological reactions. The purpose is to create a general feeling of anxiety among the populace. Pure terrorism takes the form of bank robberies, bombings, and hijackings. It attempts to create chaos by making the average citizen aware of the fact that he may become a target at any particular time. It is the randomness which is the important key in pure terrorism.

Each of these two types of terrorism attempts to create the specific end result of political change along with the terrorists' other particular goals. However, five general aims or goals of terrorist activity can be distinguished. First, there is the desire to spread a message or a specific doctrine. The Croatian hijackers of 1976 were prime examples

of this type of terrorism. By focusing world press headlines on themselves, they had their demands for Croatian independence published on the front pages of the world's major newspapers.

Advanced communications technology and especially the advent of television have become essential tools for the would-be terrorist. A dramatic terrorist action such as a hijacking or a hostage situation provides free airtime for the doctrinaire terrorist. Even if the terrorist is eventually killed or captured, this does not necessarily mean that he has failed, since the group's manifesto and demands have been published by the media. The Dutch Molluccans holding the train in the Netherlands were finally captured in a massive paramilitary effort, but, for their purpose, they were successful. Before the hijacking, most people did not have the slightest indication of who or what was a Molluccan. After a prolonged siege, however, the world knew exactly what the Molluccans demanded. A short-run loss for the particular terrorists resulted in long-term recognition. On the other hand, the Lufthansa hijacking of October, 1977, could be considered a failure since the terrorists were killed without their demands being fulfilled or their message being clearly broadcast and understood.

A second aim of the terrorist may be to gain official recognition from a government. Constant harassment of innocent civilians by way of small-scale bombings or bank robberies forces the home government to acknowledge the existence of the terrorists. When the government announces a counterterrorist campaign, it can be seen through the eyes of the terrorists as a major victory. They have established themselves as a credible force which has to be reckoned with. It is this recognition which leads to the third aim of the terrorist.

With acknowledgment of their existence, the terrorists will often attempt to broaden their base of power. This is accomplished by recruiting civilians to join them in resisting the government. Mao Tse-tung, as a revolutionary theoretician, stressed this goal throughout his writings. If the terrorist has any hope of precipitating political change, he needs at least the tacit support of many civilians to provide safe havens, money, and weapons.

A fourth goal is to undermine the morale and the prestige of the authorities. The major desire is to demonstrate that the current government can not effectively rule the nation. By a carefully planned series of assassinations of

mid-level bureaucrats, the terrorist can destroy any *esprit de corps* which exists within the halls of power. As fear increases among government workers, their effectiveness and morale fall. An ineffective government is made out by the terrorists as unable to rule or protect the lives of their officials, much less protect the common man. Ideally, in terms of the terrorist, a collapse will begin from inside the government.

A fifth goal coincides with the collapse of prestige. A political leader who sees his regime being destroyed may resort to desperate counterattacks. The most common result is an overreaction by the government. Martial law, curfews, and widespread arrests are likely to cause discontent among the citizens. An overreaction will often serve only to drive the citizens toward the terrorist or the guerrilla—their alternatives seem preferable to an authoritarian police state. What the terrorist does is to drive a wedge between the government and its citizens. The real dilemma that confronts a political leader is just how to react to widespread terrorist activities. Overreaction may drive the people toward the terrorist. However, prolonged indecision can be just as devastating. As mentioned previously, this makes the government appear ineffectual and politically weak.

It is unrealistic to separate these five aims or goals, since each terrorist group is probably pursuing all of them, in a different order of preference at any one time. Most simply, we can see a definite cycle emerging. The terrorists begin their activities either as minor harassments or as a major action such as a hijacking. This precipitates media coverage and popular recognition of their philosophy. A government may take action against the terrorists, granting them a type of temporary pseudo-legitimacy and possibly overreacting, which causes further terrorist resistance and recruitment into the terrorist group. All of this is designed to affect political change.

Why terrorism exists

Before we can discuss how to stop the terrorist, we must ask why this phenomena exists. We can discern three basic reasons for terrorist activities: a perceived sense of relative deprivation, the general appeal of violence, and the low risks involved in a terrorist operation.

There has been considerable discussion over the past 15 years over the concept of the revolution of rising expectations. As people around the world—

especially in the developing world—become more cognizant of their and others' surroundings, it is assumed they will desire more goods and services. The widespread dispersal of television, radio, and printed materials has undoubtedly exposed many underprivileged persons to the American life style, although in many instances it is highly distorted. If we assume that these people want a better life and they can not find a way in which to become economically upwardly mobile, they may resort to violence.

While this view is open to discussion, it probably is true to a certain extent. Perhaps the terrorist does not want to realize the American dream *per se*, but he may wish to draw worldwide attention to the plight of the oppressed poor in his nation. There are, of course, political ramifications involved also, since the blame for the miserable state of the masses will be laid on the government by the terrorist. However, if we see that there is an underlying sense of deprivation, the politics of terrorism falls into place.

To many youths, both in the U.S. and around the world, there is a great appeal for violence. So, while the youths may only superficially extoll the over-all aims of the terrorists, they are transfixed with their sudden rise to power. They can now kill 'rob or destroy with little fear of being caught.

This brings us to the third reason for terrorism. In a realistic sense, terrorism involves very few risks of being caught or ever being brought to trial. At the same time, there is the possibility of achieving fairly great gains. Many times, a terrorist is apprehended within a nation and his group immediately takes hostages who they are willing to trade for their comrade. The result is the freeing of the captured terrorist or, more commonly, the terrorist in transit is left alone. Many nations are fearful of incurring the wrath of a terrorist group, so, as long as they are not planning any action within the nation's borders, the terrorists are encouraged to move along. This was the case of the September, 1977, hijacking of a Japanese airliner. The Japanese government acceded to the terrorists' demands by releasing a number of prisoners and paying a ransom. Again, it is this tremendous psychological anxiety reaction that the terrorist creates that provides him with international immunity.

Countermeasures

How can the terrorist be stopped? This question now confronts nearly

every government in the world. Interdependence has also come to mean increased vulnerability. At the national level, there is no single agency in charge of combating the terrorists. In the U.S., responsibility and authority is divided between the State Department, the FBI, the Federal Aviation Agency, and, on occasion, the Defense Department. Also included is the U.S. Mission to the U.N., the Treasury Department through the Secret Service, the Justice Department, and the CIA and National Security Council in regards to the intelligence-gathering process. Quite simply, the attempt to coordinate an American response is trapped within a bureaucratic jungle.

The U.S. and many European nations have opted for increased security precautions. The X-ray machines in airports, fortification of government buildings, and the growth of private security forces are costly stopgap measures at best. The terrorist simply chooses non-guarded buildings, resorts to bombings, or hijacks a bus or a train. Any international cooperation is minimal at this time, but this is precisely where gains against the terrorist can be made.

Agreement on the elimination of safe havens for terrorists is a valuable first step. The elimination of sanctuaries in Algeria, Libya, and other radical Arab rations is believed to be necessary for incidents to decrease. While airport security measures have been partially effective, the hijacking of planes to Cuba fell sharply when Cuba began to return hijackers. The airport measures seem to be more of a psychological barrier to the disturbed person than an effective deterrent. The Croatian hijackers successfully bluffed the authorities even though they went through the screening procedure.

A more esoteric possibility is an Entebbe-type raid, which would be sanctioned by the U.N. In this context, it is punishment against the country providing sanctuary for the terrorists. There is evidence that there are contingencies planned for this type of action. The incident at Tel Aviv's Lod airport in 1972 and the German commando attack in Somalia in October, 1977, lead to the possibility of a new type of anti-terrorist action. The *Mayaguez* incident and the operation to free American prisoners in Son Tay, North Vietnam, indicate that these types of U.S. military reprisals, however unlikely, have been under discussion.

As stated earlier, the U.N. has not yet developed a definition of terrorism. At the international level, for instance,

hijacking conventions such as the 1963 Tokyo Convention, the 1970 Hague Draft, and the 1971 Montreal Convention have all been ineffective. This is because many states have not ratified the conventions. Responses to terrorists by both the U.S. and the world have been *ad hoc*. There is no consistent or coherent strategy to counter the terrorists.

A valuable beginning towards developing an effective counter is through better intelligence. At the present time, by virtue of their small numbers and continuous movement, terrorist groups are not susceptible to advanced electronic surveillance. On the other hand, attempts to infiltrate terrorist groups present an equally difficult problem. In the post-Watergate era, there is a widespread distrust of the government and of intelligence-gathering procedures in general. The conflict between civil liberties and intelligence-gathering must be resolved. There needs to be better coordination both within and between nations.

Along with intelligence, there must be better analysis. When a terrorist strikes, there is little time to conduct analytical studies. Research on habits, methods, and strategies of various terrorist groups, coupled with analysis of countermeasures, is necessary for prompt dispersal during a crisis.

A final measure would be a worldwide "no bargain" convention. Basically, this is the officially stated position of the U.S. at the present time. The U.S. government refuses to negotiate or provide concessions to any terrorist group. At a worldwide level, if strictly adhered to, this would remove some of the incentives to the terrorist. However, there is also the problem of a loss of human life in the short run to provide for long-term world security. Any government would face a real dilemma when it had to make the decision to let a group of hostages die. This presents a philosophical and moral problem that will not be easily resolved in the near future.

Terrorism poses a threat by creating anxiety among the citizens that, in turn, can destroy the democratic process through repression. An incompetent or indecisive government with no definite plan of action will only add to the public's fears. This appears to be the situation which the U.S. government is working itself into. Only through international cooperation and an intensified effort can the U.S. or any other government effectively fight the political terrorist.