

THE EVIL OF TERRORISM

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THE EVIL OF TERRORISM

Diagnosis and Countermeasures

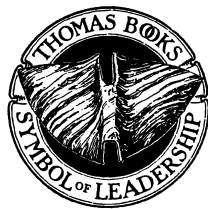
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PREFACE

We are still at the very beginning of the twenty-first century, but in the first years of this new era the world has experienced the new terrorism in its most appalling form. The United States and other countries throughout the world have suffered from catastrophic terrorism causing mass casualties. Elsewhere, terrorists have taken the lives of prominent people in ostentatiously cruel ways. There is no reason to expect a reduction of the new terrorism in the foreseeable future. On the contrary, experts and intelligence services predict new waves of terrorism, including attacks with unconventional means.

The threat of terrorism is a greater than ever risk, but in many parts of the world the sense of urgency is waning. While writing this book, we have been well aware of these undeniable facts. For that reason, we have tried to state our case in a vigorous manner. We accept the idea that Western democracies should strike a balance between antiterrorism policies and upholding the rule of law. We are convinced, however, that democracies and the rule of law are best served by tough strategies, policies, and concrete measures that defend and protect citizens against the ordeal of new terrorism.

We wish to thank those many scholars, politicians, diplomats, military and police officials, intelligence experts—from both the academic community and intelligence services—and students with whom we have exchanged and shared our ideas over the last fifteen years. We are grateful that we have the opportunity to be actively involved in both the academic community and the worlds of politics and administration. We hope this has prevented us from falling prey to academism on the one hand and overplaying the practitioner's hand on the other.

U.R.
E.M.

The Hague
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THE EVIL OF TERRORISM

Chapter 1

TERRORISM AND TERROR

“From the Old Terrorism to the New: The First World Trade Center Bombing. At 18 minutes after noon on February 26, 1993, a huge bomb went off beneath the two towers of the World Trade Center. Six people died. More than a thousand were injured. An FBI agent at the scene described the relatively low number of fatalities as a miracle.” (The 9/11 Commission Report, Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, 2004, p. 71)

“This is only the beginning.”(Walter Laqueur, commenting on the Madrid attacks of March 11, 2004, NRC Handelsblad, March 13, 2004)

“*Choc et peur à Amsterdam*” [Shock and fear in Amsterdam]. (in connection with the assassination of filmmaker Theo van Gogh on November 2, 2004, *Le Monde*, November 10, 2004)

NEW TERRORISM, CATASTROPHIC TERRORISM

To distinguish it from the terrorism of the last century, some people simply call it the new terrorism.¹ Others say that it concerns the ominous combination of catastrophe and terrorism: catastrophic terrorism. We still have not grown used to it: terrorists who kill or threaten to kill thousands of innocent people for the purpose of intimidating millions of people in this way and arousing fear in democratic

1. W. Laqueur, *The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1999; I.O. Lesser et al., *Countering the New Terrorism*, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, 1999.

societies. For a long time we have quoted the Chinese aphorism about terrorism as the height of evil: “Kill one, frighten ten thousand.” We now know that there are people for whom this is not enough. Their motto is “Kill thousands and frighten millions.”

Neither have we grown used to terrorists sending not only adults but also children to their deaths without showing any compassion, nor to the extreme brutality with which they kill people in a calculating and cold-blooded manner for the purpose of arousing terror and attempting to disrupt society. In this case, traditional terrorism exploits new methods and blends with catastrophic terrorism. The terrorism of the twenty-first century is the terrorism that beats all previous records. In France it is called “hyperterrorism.”

In the twenty-first century we are facing dangers we thought we had left behind. It was only a few decades ago that many predicted the definitive victory of democracy. The end of the Cold War had removed the continuing threat of a nuclear confrontation between the two superpowers: the United States and the Soviet Union. Some experts warned that even though the world was going to be a safer place as a result of it, it would also become a more unstable place. True enough, many new hot spots emerged. Some conflicts—such as the tragedy in the Balkans—came perilously close and claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. Apart from the exceptions in Africa and Southeast Asia, these conflicts did not expand all the time and drew to a close after a few years. The arrival of international criminal justice boosted the idea that the world was heading in the right direction. The terrorism confronting many countries in the second half of the last century did not affect this sense of optimism. It was limited to a number of disputed areas—Ireland, the Basque country, Israel and Palestine—and it died out in some countries, such as Germany and Italy, after some time.

OLD TERRORISM: NOT OVER

The history of terrorism can be traced back to hostage-takings in Hellenic times, targeted assassination campaigns launched by the Hashshashin in the early Middle Ages, the deployment of plague-infected soldiers and civilians in sieges, and the anarchist propaganda of the deed at the end of the nineteenth century. We need not go back

into the past that far to grasp the differences between the old and the new terrorism, because the terrorism that gripped many countries for a shorter or longer period since the 1960s also differs greatly from the new terrorism, which now strikes so much terror in our hearts. This terrorism was and still is characterized by a clearly defined objective and the use of more or less limited violence. This is true of terrorist organizations that lay claim to the area or a region of a sovereign state: the Front de Libération de Québec (FLQ), the Irish Republican Army (IRA), Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA), and Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO); or terrorist groups that are after an ideological revolution: the Red Army Faction (RAF), the Red Brigades (Brigate Rosse), the Japanese Red Army, the Tupamaros in Uruguay, and the Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso) in Peru.

Old-style terrorists sought, and still seek, to press home their territorial or ideological demands to the maximum extent possible. They manage to present these demands in a clear and transparent manner. They use reprehensible methods for this purpose: targeted assassinations of public figures, hostage-takings, hijackings, and kidnappings. They entail violent intimidation. That is all the more true when they resort to the terrorist detour: taking arbitrary residents, passersby and passengers—"dummies"—hostage or threatening them in order to put pressure on public opinion and the government. The last thing these terrorists are after is to kill the dummies, because these residents, passersby, and passengers are used as bargaining chips in negotiations with the authorities, and the terrorists lose these bargaining chips when they kill these chance victims. They will sometimes kill a number of hostages to emphasize how serious their action is, but they know that this will only diminish the chance that the authorities will give in to their demands. For the same reason, old-style terrorists will usually warn the authorities that they have planted a bomb in a shopping street, building or tourist resort shortly before the explosion takes place. They prefer "a lot of people watching than a lot of them dead."²

An example of the old terrorism is the hostage-taking of the Turkish embassy in Ottawa carried out by members of the Armenian Revolutionary Army (March 1985). The terrorists took twelve embassy staff members hostage and planted explosives in and against the building. They established contact with the Canadian media and were

2. M. Jenkins, *International Terrorism: A Balance Sheet*, in *Survival*, 17(4), July–August 1975, p. 158.

given the opportunity to enlarge on their demands to the Turkish authorities for six hours. In this way, they achieved their goal: a great deal of attention for the Armenian cause. The hostage-taking was ended without shedding any blood.³

In The Netherlands, the South Moluccan terrorism of the 1970s falls into the same category. In December 1975 terrorists hijacked a train and shot dead two hostages in cold blood during the first days. That was an unprecedented and shocking event, even worldwide. For this reason, it was remarkable that the terrorists themselves escaped with their lives after two weeks of negotiations. Two years later, in May to June 1977, South Moluccan terrorists hijacked a train again and also took teachers and schoolchildren hostage in an elementary school. On this occasion, they had all the more reason to avoid killing people. Remembering December 1975, they thought that they were free to engage in a lengthy and harsh hostage-taking operation. This time, the authorities put a stop to the train hijacking and the hostage-taking of the school by force. They wanted to make it clear that terrorism cannot be tolerated in any way, even if the terrorists do not kill any people.

RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN OLD AND NEW TERRORISM

The distinction between the old and the new terrorism should not be given too much weight. We made this distinction to clarify the changes in the nature and manifestations of terrorism. Even though we characterize the old terrorism as the terrorism of the previous century for the sake of clarity, it would be shortsighted to think that the reign of old terrorism is over. It may surface again at any time, if only because in its standard form—hostage-takings, kidnappings, hijackings—it is invariably perceived as a shocking transgression of the ordinary course of events in an orderly society. The strong emphasis that is now being put on the threats of the new terrorism may allow old-style terrorists to regroup themselves.

There is another reason why the distinction between the old and the new terrorism is relative. If terrorist organizations continually

3. M. J. Kelly, The Seizure of the Turkish Embassy in Ottawa, in Rosenthal, U., et al., *Coping with Crisis: The Management of Disasters, Riots and Terrorism*, Charles C Thomas, Springfield, IL, 1989, pp. 117–138.