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## TERRORISM

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### INTERDISCIPLINARITY OF TERRORISM

Terrorism is an interdisciplinary topic that requires the contributions of experts in the areas of history, political science, social science, philosophy, religion, psychology, sociology, finance, strategic studies, international relations, criminal justice, crime prevention and control, public safety, warfare, counterterrorism theory and practice, anthropology, languages, and cultural studies. History, the social sciences, political science, and psychology are especially useful in understanding the origins, reasons, justifications, motivations, and changes in the meaning and definition of terrorism. The recent emergence of terrorism, which is inspired by religious fundamentalism and ethnic-separatist elements rather than political ideology, serves as but one critical example of the complex nature of this phenomenon. For these reasons, diverse theoretical approaches are needed to explain the worldwide growth and expansion of terrorism within the complex matrix of social, cultural, economic, religious, psychological, political, and strategic variables (Ross 1996; Sharif 1996).

Terrorism is political in its objectives and motives; violent or threatening violence; meant to have wide and deep psychological repercussions beyond the particular victim or target; committed by an organization with a command hierarchy that can be identified or a cell configuration that permits conspiratorial activities; and carried out by a subnational group or nonstate body. Thus, terrorism can be defined as the deliberate generation, instillation, and exploitation of fear into a competing group, party, government, or public opinion through violence or the threat of violence with the goal of introducing political change (Noble 1998).

Terrorists may be loners or people working in cells, small groups, or large coalitions. They do not answer to nor are they dependent on any government, they function across national borders, use advanced technology, and receive funding from anywhere in the world. Contemporary terrorists are not worried about limiting casualties. Current terrorism takes great advantage of ease and speed of travel, advanced communications and technology, anonymous financial transactions, and scientific and technological breakthroughs that greatly facilitate its mission. Most of all, the “new” terrorism has a global dimension. Indeed, globalization and religious extremism have greatly facilitated the activities of terrorism.

The interest of the social sciences in terrorism dates back to the analysis by political sociologists of anarchism, revolutionary movements, and insurgencies. Sociologists focusing on social change have also dedicated considerable space to the topic. In the past, Marxist and leftist sociologists addressed issues related to terrorism but did so within the context of liberation movements. The analysis and development of the area expanded in the 1970s, spurred by the growth of terrorism in the Middle East, related especially to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict; in Europe, particularly in Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland), and Italy; and in various Latin American countries. In South America, reformers involved in the liberation theology movement and the struggle for social and political change in the hemisphere also contributed to the field. Work on the phenomenon was no doubt influenced and colored by political currents such as Marxism and other left-leaning approaches that stressed themes related to the struggle of the oppressed against

subjugation and exploitation by colonialism and capitalism. On the opposite side of the spectrum, the center and center-right perspectives emphasized instead the darker, criminal, or antidemocratic side of terrorist activities. Sociology provided the conceptual approaches, theories, and tools to analyze, understand, and explain terrorism as a social phenomenon and to formulate remedial and preventative interventions.

### THE DEFINITION OF TERRORISM

The statutory definition that the U.S. government uses to track and keep statistics on terrorism is as follows: “premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience” [22 U.S.C. 2656f (d)]. By this definition, terrorism has several elements:

1. Premeditation. There must be an intent and a prior decision to commit an act that entails this type of violence.
2. Political motivation, thus eliminating criminal violence for monetary gain or personal revenge. Of course, criminal violence can have political repercussions too as it generates more and more fear of crime. And, on the other hand, terror is often connected with criminal activities but its goal is serving a greater good as defined by the terrorists.
3. Attacking people who cannot defend themselves or respond in kind.
4. Planned and carried out by a group. There is debate whether or not there can be a case of “individual” terrorism. The place and the role of clandestine agents and subnational groups is a delicate issue because at times governments, including the United States, have used both. This has sometimes meant the use of force, which has generated civilian casualties.

It is noteworthy that the definition does not include the threat of violence and thus serves to establish that terrorism is but one form of behavior along a continuum of possible political behaviors people engage in to express themselves and to cast attention toward the social, economic, and political conditions they desire to change. In this area, then, it is essential to bear in mind that terrorism is first and foremost a method that is centered on what people do rather than who they are and what they are attempting to achieve. Thus, counterterrorism can be viewed as an attempt to civilize the way in which a heated political contest is waged.

### THE HISTORY OF TERRORISM

Terrorism is basically and fundamentally political in nature. It is also very much about power—that is, pursuing

power, acquiring power, and using power to cause political change. Consequently, terrorism is also violence or, just as importantly, the threat of violence used and aimed in the pursuit of or in the service of a political objective.

The word *terrorism* initially became popular during the French Revolution when it did have a progovernmental, “positive” connotation. The *régime de la terreur* of 1793–1794, from which the English word originates, was established as a means to impose and consolidate power during the transient anarchical time of disorder and unrest that followed the revolution of 1789. Thus, instead of meaning an antigovernment operation, like it does today, the *régime de la terreur* was a government tool used to consolidate and firm up the power of the new government by intimidating, terrifying, and eliminating counterrevolutionaries, political opponents, and other dissidents deemed to be “enemies of the people.” Less than a year after the execution of Robespierre, the word *terrorism* was popularized in English by Edmund Burke (1790) in his polemic tract against the French Revolution where he wrote about “thousands of those Hell hounds called Terrorists. . . . let loose on the people” (p. 34).

One of the major outcomes of the French Revolution was the growing rejection of absolute monarchical systems that claimed to derive their authority directly from God and therefore to be entitled to a divine right to rule without constraints or limits. It also inspired the overall political awakening of Europe. Independence and nationalist movements flourished and succeeded in creating modern nation-states in some parts of Europe, as in the case of Germany and Italy. At the same time, dramatic socioeconomic changes were taking place as a consequence of massive industrialization, particularly in England and Germany. The alienation and exploitation of workers by nineteenth-century capitalism provided the fertile ground for the sprouting and growing of new “universalist” ideologies. The most important ones are socialism and eventually communism.

During this period of social change in Europe the concept of terrorism was expanded and elaborated on. For example, an Italian revolutionary, Carlo Pisacane, who forsook his nobility status to lead an ill-fated rebellion against the Bourbon monarchy in Southern Italy, developed the idea of “propaganda by deed,” a concept that has exerted considerable influence on revolutionaries, insurgents, and terrorists ever since. Pisacane argued that violence is needed not only to attract attention to the cause or to generate publicity but to inform, educate, and, in the end, get the masses behind the revolution. Pamphlets, wall posters, or gatherings will never effectively substitute for the didactic value of violence.

One of the most notable groups to put Pisacane’s theory into practice was probably the Narodnaya Volya (people’s will or people’s freedom), a small group of Russian proponents of constitutional government in Russia started in 1878 to limit the unconstrained power of the tsar. Ironically, the success of the group in assassinating Tsar

Alexander II on March 1, 1881, led to its complete suppression. The message of Pisacane and of Narodnaya Volya deeply affected the growing anarchist movement. An anarchist conference in London in 1881 endorsed the killing of the tsar and supported the idea of tyrannicide as a means for achieving revolutionary change.

By the 1930s, terrorism did not mean so much revolutionary movements and violence against governments or empires but rather the politics and practices of mass oppression and repression used by dictatorships and their leaders against their own citizenry. In other words, it meant again, like at the end of the terror regime in France, governmental abuse of power as it was taking place especially in Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and the Stalinist Soviet Union.

Similar forms of state-planned, imposed, or directed violence have taken place and are still occurring in various parts of the world. Violence has been a well-known aspect of right of center military dictatorships in Latin America, Europe, Asia, and Africa, especially in Chile, Argentina (Buchanan 1987; Cox 1983), Brazil, Greece, Spain, Portugal, various African countries, the Philippines, Indonesia, Burma, and Pakistan. Use of violence and intimidation by government authorities against their own people is generally identified as *terror* to distinguish such behavior from terrorism or violence that is carried out by nonstate entities (Moxon-Browne 1994).

The meaning of terrorism changed once more after World War II, thereby reclaiming the revolutionary reputation with which it is associated today. In the late 1940s, 1950s, and into the 1960s, terrorism was connected with the uprisings by indigenous populations in various parts of the world—Africa, Asia, the Middle East—to expel European colonial powers from their countries. At times they involved long guerrilla wars or terrorism. Well-known examples are Algeria, Cyprus, Israel, Kenya, and Vietnam. Many nationalistic rebellions took the form of guerrilla war. The Cuban Revolution of 1956 became a model for left-wing ideologues as a struggle against capitalist powers. Because these movements were perceived internationally as a struggle for liberation, decolonization, and self-determination, thanks in part to adroit public relations campaigns by the insurgents and their supporters in the First World, the term *freedom fighter* became increasingly used to describe them. This was also part of the Cold War's psychological and political warfare between the Soviet Union and its supporters, which praised the insurgents fighting against capitalism, and the United States and Western European countries, which resisted them, for instance, in the Philippines and Puerto Rico.

At the end of the 1960s and into the 1970s, terrorism was still viewed within a revolutionary framework even though usage of the term was expanded to encompass nationalist and ethnic separatist groups beyond a colonial or neocolonial context as well as radical and ideologically driven organizations. In particular, ethnic minorities seeking independence or autonomy used terrorism not only to inflict casualties and serious damage to the dominant

group but also to attract international attention, sympathy, and aid. The late 1960s also saw major student's upheavals in Western Europe and the United States that had in some cases terrorist overtones and rhetoric (Wilkinson 1994).

More recently, the term *terrorism* has been used to describe broader, less narrow phenomena. In the early 1980s, terrorism was considered a planned and calculated strategy to destabilize the Western world as part of a vast global conspiracy. Claire Sterling (1981) in her book *The Terror Network* described apparently isolated terrorist events committed by different groups around the globe that were actually connected elements of a secret plan, under the direction of the former USSR and implemented by its Warsaw Pact countries to annihilate the free world. At the time the Cold War atmosphere offered the theory as appealing, particularly to the American and some western European governments.

The communist conspiracy was eventually overshadowed in the mid-1980s when a series of suicide bombings aimed mostly at American diplomatic and military targets in the Middle East abruptly called attention to the growing menace of state-sponsored terrorism. Several renegade foreign governments such as Iran, Iraq, Libya, and Syria were suspected and accused of being actively involved in sponsoring or commissioning terrorist acts.

In the early 1990s, the meaning and use of the term *terrorism* were once again changed by the appearance of two new expressions—narco-terrorism and the “gray area phenomenon.” Narco-terrorism was initially linked to an overall communist and Soviet plot to sabotage Western society. It presumably involved the use of drug trafficking to support and implement the objectives of certain governments and terrorist organizations, such as the Soviet Union, Cuba, Bulgaria, and Nicaragua. But the emphasis on this supposed type of narco-terrorism may have effectively diverted attention from yet another emerging trend—namely, the alliance of criminal and violence-driven organizations with terrorist and guerrilla entities that employed violence not only for the advancement of their business activities but for achieving political ends as well. One of the best-known examples of this was the growing power and influence of the Colombian cocaine cartels with their close alliance with left-wing terrorist groups in Colombia and Peru (Brown and Merrill 1995).

In the 1990s, terrorism was also cast by some analysts into a “gray area phenomenon,” thereby stressing the difficulty in clearly pinpointing what terrorism is. Basically, this approach reflects the growing fluidity of subnational conflict in the post-Cold War era. Terrorism in this sense represents threats to the stability of nation-states by nonstate actors and violence affecting large regions of the world or major urban areas where the central government has lost its influence and control to new half-political, half-criminal groups. It also covers different types of conflicts that do not fit well into traditionally recognized concepts of war as the fighting between clearly marked armed forces of two or more countries. It involves instead irregular forces as one or

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more of the combatants. The shift here is clearly toward nonstate conflict. Consequently, one could argue that terrorism is simply a manifestation of violence in a particular time period and thus it evolves and manifests itself in different ways. In a sense, terrorism is always changing (Alexander and Latter 1990; Baumel, 1999; Coates 1987; Corcoran, 1995; Smith 1994; Stern 1996; Walter 1995).

### THE NEW TERRORISM

The United States and the world, particularly the Western world, were awakened to the existence of a new form of terrorism based in the Middle East by a series of events that ultimately culminated in the September 11, 2001, catastrophic attacks in New York and Washington, D.C. Since then, the names of Osama Bin-Laden and Al-Qaeda have become universally known and immediately connected with a violent struggle with an international reach and a strong religious dimension (Stern 1999) against the United States and Western interests based in the Middle East. The new terrorism has greater potential to cause damage to the United States, the West, and other countries, including parts of the Muslim world. The dangerous nature of the new terrorism stems from its being organized around loosely linked cells that do not depend on a single leader or a state sponsor. It is transnational, borderless, and carried out by nonstate actors. In comparing the "new" with the "old" terrorism, one would emphasize the following:

1. The new terrorism is more violent. In the old model, terrorists sought attention, not mass casualties. Presently, they want both.
2. The most dangerous terrorists today are transnational nonstate actors who operate at the global level and want to inflict damage and even destroy all secular state systems, including those with Islamic roots. Previous terrorist organizations held locally oriented aspirations; today's terrorism is global in reach and has strategic objectives. Its members are transnational, nonstate actors whose allegiance goes to a cause, not a particular state or political entity.
3. The new terrorism is much better financed than its predecessors that depended on state sponsors to fund their activities.
4. Current terrorists are more impenetrable than previous groups. The loose, but networked, cellular structure of Al Qaeda and similar terrorist organizations are especially difficult. Religious and highly motivated extremists are also difficult to entrap using money, entertainment, and sex.
5. The reputed availability of weapons of mass destruction greatly raised the risk on the threat posed by contemporary terrorists and the potential damage they can inflict. In the past, the major concern was about small arms; explosives, particularly Semtex or plastique; rocketpropelled

grenades and an occasional shoulder-fired antiaircraft missile (Gavel 2002).

The planned use of liquid explosives in London to down airplanes is the latest addition to the growing list of terrorist tools.

### TERRORISM AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Significant changes in the terrorists' methods include the use of new technologies, the deployment of terrorists across international frontiers, and changes in the origins of support. Information technologies used by terrorists include the Internet, cellular phones, instant messaging, and real-time photographic and filming capabilities. Such capabilities have amplified the global reach of terrorist organizations. As but one example, hacking has been used. Internet sites have been placed under attack; Web sites have been hijacked or defaced; there are documented cases of denial of Internet service, automated e-mail bombings, and Web sit-ins. Management and administrative functions of terrorist organizations; coordinating operations; recruiting possible members; improving communications between members; attracting people sympathetic to the cause; collecting, managing, and transferring funds; and spreading the group's message and philosophy have been greatly facilitated by the impressive technological advances in global information. This has facilitated the tasks of the terrorists and allowed them to expand the range of their activities. In particular, the synchronization of terrorist attacks, such as those of September 11, 2001, and those on various U.S. embassies in East Africa in 1998, was made possible by the use of contemporary information technology (Denning 2000).

Globalization and the establishment of regional trading zones such as the European Union, Mercosur, the North American Free Trade Area, and others have made it easier for terrorists to expand their activities across international borders, borders that seemingly no longer exist. Thus, terrorists recognize their efforts are less easily detected through the Internet. This has facilitated the territorial expansion of terrorist groups, assisted in the establishment of terrorist cells, and promoted free movement across vast regions of the world in the planning and execution of terrorist activities.

Technological innovations and the ease of financial operations worldwide have also assisted terrorists in expanding their operations. While Al-Qaeda is reputed to be one of the best-financed terrorist networks, it is reported that Aum Shinrikyo, Hamas, Hezbollah, the IRA (O'Day 1994), the Tamil Tigers, and others groups benefit from the vast network of funding sources. These sources may include legal enterprises such as nonprofit and charitable organizations, legitimate companies, and illegal enterprises such as drug production, trafficking, smuggling, bank robberies, fraud, kidnappings, and extortion. Web sites have also been used to raise funds (Center for Strategic and International Studies 1998).

The smooth movement of terrorists' financial resources is illustrated by the reported movement of gold and U.S. currency across the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Once the gold and currency arrived in Pakistan, they were swiftly transferred to the informal *hawala* or *hundi* banking system to other Middle Eastern countries. There it was converted into gold bullion and dispersed around the world. Additionally, terrorist funds have been converted into other commodities such as diamonds and tanzanite. In general, terrorist groups, whose assets may be a small fraction of the total amount of funds moved daily by organized transnational crime groups, use a variety of vehicles for the transfer of money, from couriers to banks, money changing enterprises, and informal exchanges such as the *hawala* or *hundi* systems (Viano 2003).

## TERRORISM IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD SCENE

Samuel Huntington (1996) outlined a theory of conflict for the twenty-first century, stating that particular types of conflict are known to dominate different historical periods. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the United States is the world's only superpower. The struggles that may threaten world peace will no longer focus on nationalism or ideology. Rather, most conflicts result from cultural confrontations that threaten to spread violence; one such cultural conflict is religion. In Huntington's view, international peace will be especially threatened in "torn countries," where more than one sociocultural orientation exists. The Balkans, where violent ethnic and religious strife and ethnic cleansing took place in the 1990s, represents but one example of Huntington's thesis in which religion and terrorism are linked.

According to Huntington's thesis, terrorism will probably continue to find supporters among violent, true believers in areas of conflict. The implications for the United States seem clear: First, it will be targeted by religious zealots from different cultural backgrounds because they believe that the United States has wrongly intervened and violated their religious norms. Western Europe and Japan may be targeted as well. Second, since the United States routinely is open to immigration there is a growing potential for religious strife. While the United States is not a "torn" country, it does provide a fertile field for zealots of different religions who want to change or punish America with violence and for right-wing extremists who violently object to the increasing diversity of the country and forcefully oppose those who tolerate it and the government that makes it possible. The 1995 Oklahoma City bombing is a clear example of the latter.

Bruce Hoffman (1998) and Walter Laqueur (1996, 1997, 2000) state that we are not only witnessing a resurgence and expansion of terrorist groups motivated by religion, but the situation is made even more difficult by the fact that religious terrorists behave differently than ethnic

and nationalistic terrorists. The reason is that they are not constrained by the same factors that may inhibit other types of terrorists. In Hoffman's view, religious terrorists differ from political terrorists in many ways. *Holy terror* represents a value system that is opposite to "secular terror;" secular terrorists function within the dominant political and cultural reality that they to replace with their own. Religious or "holy" terrorists are under no such constraint. Although fundamentalist and violent extremists may be attracted to any religion (Sargent 1995), for holy terrorists the world is a battlefield between the forces of good and evil, light and darkness. Winning is not understood in political terms. Rather, the enemy must be completely destroyed and, for this reason, killing is the outcome of an operation. For holy terrorists, killing is a sacramental act; the goal of their operation. For Islamic terrorism, the purpose of terrorism is to kill the enemies of God or to convert them to Islam (Rapoport 1988).

## TERRORISM AND GLOBALIZATION

The current threat posed by terrorism is the product of the collision of different elements: maximum Western power, particularly that of the United States; globalization, driven mostly by Western interests; and the fundamentalist reaction to these trends affecting centuries-old ways of life in different parts of the world (Barber 1996). The root causes of and the growth of religious terrorism can be located in the declining influence of traditional forms of social and cultural cohesion within societies. The impact of globalization, political repression, economic disparity, and social change enhance the sense of fragility, instability, and unpredictability that exists throughout various parts of the world. Presently, the scale, amount, and intensity of religious terrorism, rather unprecedented in militancy and activity, indicate the depth of perception that those particular faiths and the communities linked to them stand at a critical survival juncture and that extreme measures must be taken to ensure that they continue to exist.

The perceived corruption of indigenous customs, religions, languages, economies, and entertainment are blamed on an international system that is frequently associated with American culture and values. The resulting distortions in local communities that result from being exposed to the global marketplace of ideas, goods, and values are more frequently blamed on the U.S.-led modernization. Christopher Coker (2002) aptly observes that while globalization is reducing the propensity for instrumental violence between states and communities, it is increasing the incentives for expressive violence or violence that is ritualistic, symbolic, and communicative. The current international terrorism is more frequently rooted in a need to assert identity or meaning against the advancing forces of homogeneity, particularly on the part of those cultures that are threatened by or are left behind by the secular atmosphere created by Western-led globalization.

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According to a report published by the United Nations Development Program, one of the regions with the biggest deficit in terms of human development—the Arab world—is also the epicenter of the world's most intense religion-driven terrorism. There is discontent in disenfranchised areas of the region of the world where the belief exists that the promises of globalization that include greater freedom, economic prosperity, and access to education, training, and knowledge are unfulfilled. As a result, there are dashed expectations, increasing resentment toward the hegemonic and often corrupt governments supported by the United States, and a desire to strike at the forces of modernization and globalization. There is also a desire to change the course of U.S. policy in the Middle East and Persian Gulf, particularly as it affects the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Given the enormous military power of the United States, the preferred course of action is not direct confrontation but the asymmetrical response that is terrorism.

The United States is a preferred target because of its involvement in the politics and conflicts of various regions of the world and because it is perceived to be the primary force behind globalization. Thus, today it is not possible to analyze terrorism without taking into consideration globalization. Both are tightly interwoven forces that affect and characterize global security in the twenty-first century. The main concern is whether or not terrorism will be able to disrupt the promise of a better life for millions of people.

Thus, one could say that terrorism is a by-product of larger historical shifts in the worldwide distribution of power and economic, military, political, ideological, and cultural resources. Assuming that current trends will continue, global disparities and inequalities will also continue to grow. Thus, we can anticipate that terrorism will not only continue to exist but will grow and expand. At the same time, terrorists will have continued access to more powerful technologies, increased territory and more targets, enhanced recruiting techniques, and more exploitable sources of discontent and rage than before (Laqueur 2004).

A serious problem is that the response of the West to terrorism is inadequate, superficial, and unlikely to dampen or mitigate any of the long-term trends already mentioned above. The benign intentions of the mostly and increasingly secular West do not necessarily appear benign to those who are marginalized by globalization. To frustrated people in the Arab and Muslim world and elsewhere, the strict following of fundamentalist religious doctrines and practices appear to be a rational response to the perceived threat when their own governments offer no alternative solution. The reality is that small groups of dedicated terrorists could not survive and operate for any extended period of time without the widespread support of the larger population. Any effective interventions by the West would begin at and focus on the broader, enabling environment that must be studied and understood (Kupperman 1985; Kupperman and Trent 1979).

Moreover, a panoply of long-term policy instruments should be used to address the international environment

that makes it possible for terrorist networks to remain formidable organizations (Howard 2002). There is no question that the more effective policy tools are probably nonmilitary in nature such as intelligence, public diplomacy, cooperation with allies, updated international conventions and treaties, reforms leading to genuine democratization, and economic assistance (Burton 1976; Campbell 1988; Cobban 1984).

## SECULAR, RELIGIOUS, AND FUNDAMENTALIST TERRORISM

Religious beliefs are a useful, powerful, and ready-made source for justifying terrorism because beliefs sanctify the terrorist and deify the terrorism. Religious terrorism employs theological issues to justify violence and terror. Thus, terrorists are not subject to social limitations relating to violence and killing is justified given those being killed are enemies of their deity. To be “deified” means that the act of terrorism itself is made sacred and holy. The religious terrorists are mortals who are on a mission from God (Kibble 1996).

There is yet another difference between secular and religious terrorists. Political terrorism is also the theater aimed at influencing a wider audience to spread a message and obtain support. Thus, targets must be carefully chosen and there are some limits to what one can do. On the other hand, religious terrorists work only for their god. Thus, they need no wider audience or social approval. Juergensmeyer (1992, 1999) describes the conditions that must exist for terrorists to reach these conclusions: Believers must identify with a god and believe they are participating in a struggle to change the course of history by addressing good and evil. True-believing terrorists actually mimic and exaggerate mainstream social patterns and beliefs. They use the established social paths and models of religion and ideology to justify their actions (Oliverio 1998; Pearlestein 1991).

Fundamentalist terrorism in the twenty-first century exists mostly in the Middle East and/or in Islamic countries. The roots of terrorism in the Middle East are complex but can be reduced to four major areas: (1) questions on the political control of Palestine or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Nusse 1998); (2) who should rule the Arab world or intra-Arab rivalries and struggles; (3) the relations between the two main branches of Islam, Sunnis, and Shiites; and (4) how to eliminate and expel Western colonialism and imperialism and once again create a pan-Arab “Caliphate” or realm of Islam.

Terrorism originating in this area is especially driven by anti-Western feelings because of the historical colonial domination and exploitation of the region. France and especially Great Britain dominated the region or attempted to for centuries. The Soviet Union also made forays attempting to gain a warm water port and counteract the other two colonial countries' influence. The United

States has also played an increasingly dominant role in the region linked to the exploitation of its energy resources and at times in direct or indirect confrontation with the other Western colonial powers and the Soviets. The rejection of Western influence is connected with the colonial experience and also with the deeply held feeling that this entire region should be an exclusive Islamic realm. The presence of foreign troops in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere in the region is perceived as colonialism, sacrilegious, and as a modern version of the medieval crusades. The ideology of Al Qaeda and of other groups inspired or associated with it stresses both themes—anticolonialism or “anticrusaders” and the reestablishment of the Caliphate—as a justification for their terrorist activities (Gurr 1993; Hoffman 1998; Howard and Sawyer 2003, 2004; Johnson 1997). The terrorist is fundamentally an altruist who believes he is serving a good cause. The terrorist is basically a violent intellectual ready and committed to use force in the realization of his goals (Perdue 1989).

## NEW AREAS OF INQUIRY

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After September 11, 2001, interest and research in terrorism has grown exponentially. One such area of inquiry addresses the mind-set of the terrorists and the tactics they employ in their quest for power and, ultimately, political and social change. Although terrorists bank on the efficacy of violence in achieving change, their actions are not random, crazed, or capricious acts as politicians maintain they are. On the contrary, these actions are carefully planned and conservatively executed. Innocent and harmless people get caught in the middle just as they are in acts of war. Both the military and the terrorists claim that they are performing carefully targeted acts—“precision bombing” in U.S. military parlance. Recently, there have been increases in the use of violence. Possibly due to the “CNN effect” or the need to attract worldwide media coverage for maximum impact, terrorists have been engaging in more dramatic and destructively lethal deeds to garner the same amount of attention that a less violent and bloody action would have obtained in the past, looking for recognition and publicity. In a world saturated with violence and aggression by the media, entertainment, movies, video games, and sports such as football, hockey, boxing, terrorists seem to have understood that to hold a jaded public’s attention they must increase the level and drama of their actions (Miller 1982).

Another element that is affecting terrorism’s organizational and operational dynamics is the Internet. The rise and expansion of network forms of organization is a central outcome of the continuing information revolution. The speed of communications, the facility of sharing and diffusing information, and the ease and instantaneity of transferring funds worldwide have changed contemporary life, including terrorism’s conduct and modes of operation.

This permits the creation of organizations with multiple, dispersed leaders and private sources of funding. The reasons, motives, and rationales of the terrorists may not have changed but their modus operandi certainly has. What the information and Internet age have made possible are flatter, less hierarchical, very flexible, and localized structures and networks of power with centripetal dynamics fueled by intense and easy communications and exchanges (Picard 1993).

Terrorism is evolving. Terrorists’ shift toward less hierarchical organizational structures and their growing use of advanced communications technologies for command, control, and coordination will further empower small terrorist groups and even individuals. While most of the governmental efforts and public concern, anxiety, and attention are focused on preventing and foiling traditional violent terrorist acts, the next 9/11 might very well be an act of cyberterrorism or massive *netwar*, disabling regional, national, or even international computer-driven systems that control practically every aspect of our lives (Pollit 1988; Whine 1999). The content of information and the conduits of information infrastructures very likely will become the new targets. In this area, the destructive power of terrorism will be exponentially greater than it has been in the past, even if it had been able to use “weapons of mass destruction.” It is also true, of course, that the frequency and extent to which terrorist organizations use information infrastructures to carry out their activities may eventually make them vulnerable to detection and destruction by counterterrorist entities (Rubin 1991).

The widespread uncertainty of the forces of globalization and the search for a new world order create a fertile ground for the creation and development of religious terrorist groups, with religious conviction functioning as a firm anchor. These groups perceive an opportunity to shape history and the world in line with their divine duty, cause, and mission. It is essential that we understand the inner logic of these groups and the dynamics that produce terrorism. As we progress further into the twenty-first century, it is doubtful that the United States and other Western governments are adequately prepared to meet this challenge (Juergensmeyer 1999). Thus, the need exists for further research in areas such as nationalistic and ethnic terrorism, technological terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, changing group structures and the metamorphosis of terrorism, the origins of terrorism in the Middle East, and the role of the media (Zanni 1999).

Future public policy concerns include counterterrorist measures and the impact such policy will have on democratic society. The passage and reauthorization of the Patriot Act is a clear indication that in the future a democratic government will respond to a real or perceived terrorist threat by introducing measures that greatly limit civil and political liberties. In the wake of 9/11, population movement control, transportation security, the protection of infrastructures deemed vital, the introduction of a system of threat warnings, and immigration and border control

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measures were quickly introduced. The de facto adoption of a national identity card, in the form of a federally standardized driver's license, was approved. Moreover, the federal government has engaged in widespread detention and interrogation; introduced new surveillance tools, instituted new financial regulations, controls, and rewards; modified the administration of the justice system; and promoted greater information sharing among law enforcement and intelligence agencies. The public desire for a completely risk-free life and society in a world dominated by science and technology, which promise and deliver a constantly increased control of daily life and death situations, provided vast popular support for this approach (Labeviere 2000). However popular the international war on terrorism is, the civil and human rights of citizens and noncitizens alike were reduced and at times violated in the process. This is a fertile field for investigation, analysis, inquiry, and affirmation of democratic values for the social scientist (Merari 1985).

### **FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIOLOGISTS**

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The lack of a comprehensive strategy to address terrorism based on a deep-rooted, well-grounded comprehension of the history, patterns, motivations, and types of terrorism reflects the lack of understanding of terrorism in the academic community. Some academics consider terrorism a too policy-oriented area to be worthy of serious research. Since terrorism is a multidisciplinary topic it depends on the interaction and collaboration of a number of disciplines. In the United States, most of the analyses on terrorism are being conducted in policy-oriented research institutes, which are often narrowly defined to fit the interests and time frame attendant to government-supported contracts.

The academy, on the other hand, is no more strategically oriented, visionary, and creative than the government. There is an urgent need for multidisciplinary collaboration that also includes law enforcement, intelligence, and finance. What is most needed is a concerted effort to move beyond the episodic interest in this phenomenon and instead develop, plan, and fund a long-term research and policy development agenda. Sociologists and in particular political sociologists can have a major role to play in researching the impact of antiterrorism measures and exposing whatever threats are posed to democracy, human freedom, and individual rights. And sociologists who focus on mass movements, group-think, mob reactions, and race and ethnic relations also have much to offer to a society in need of such information.

Additionally, the repercussions of the "war on terrorism" on international human rights and humanitarian laws provide a fertile ground for research and analysis for the sociologist of law. The creation of the "enemy combatant" label to facilitate weakening of the Geneva Conventions on the treatment of prisoners of war and the alleged mistreatment and torture of prisoners held at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, the Bagram base in Afghanistan, and Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, among others, serve as important sociological reminders of the effects culture and civil society have on human nature and the aggressive and violent instincts of *Homo sapiens*.

There is no question that social scientists have a major contribution to make to the analysis, understanding, prevention, and policymaking relative to terrorism. But within sociology it will also be important, given the political nature of actions identified as terrorist, that the sociologist be vigilant, adhere to professional standards, and maintain an independence of thought, analysis, and vision. In the future, the discipline may again be confronted with issues relating to Howard Becker's question and critical challenge of the past, "Sociology for whom?"