

Chapter 6

Evolution and Future of Terrorism

**“All politics is a struggle for power... the ultimate kind of power is violence”
- C. Wright Mills¹²⁰**

Terrorism is changing. While at the surface it remains “The calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear...” it is rapidly becoming the predominant strategic tool of our adversaries. As terrorism evolves into the principal irregular warfare strategy of the 21st century, it is adapting to changes in the world socio-political environment. Some of these changes facilitate the abilities of terrorists to operate, procure funding, and develop new capabilities. Other changes are gradually moving terrorism into a different relationship with the world at large. This chapter will examine the evolution of characteristics and capabilities of terrorism, particularly the merging of terrorists with other state and sub-state entities.

In order to put these changes into context, it will be necessary to look at the historical evolution of terrorism, with each succeeding evolution building upon techniques pioneered by others. While Chapter 1 provided historical milestones of terrorism, this section will explore evolutionary developments that contributed to modern terrorism. This evolution is driven by ongoing developments in the nature of conflict and international relations. It is also necessary to consider some of the possible causes of future conflicts, in order to understand the actors and their motivations. Finally, we examine how terrorism will be integrated into this evolution of conflict, and what that will mean for U.S. military forces.

When describing the evolution of terrorism and the use of terror through history, it is essential to remember that forms of society and government in the past were significantly different than they are today. Modern nation-states did not exist in their present form until 1648 (Treaty of Westphalia), and the state’s monopoly on warfare, or inter-state violence, is even more recent. The lack of central governments made it impossible to use terror as a method of affecting a political change, as there was no single dominant political authority. Also, the absence of central authority meant that the game of warfare was open to many more players. Instead of national armies, a variety of non-sovereign nobility, mercenaries, leaders of religious factions, or mercantile companies participated in warfare. Their involvement in warfare was considered to be perfectly legitimate. This is in contrast to the modern era, where nations go to war, but private participation is actually illegal. The Department of State’s definition of terrorism (see Chapter 1) clearly shows the concern for violence initiated by “sub-national actors” today.

Section I: The Evolution of Terrorism

Early Theories of Terrorism

Early practitioners of terrorism, such as the Zealots and the Assassins did not leave any particular philosophy or doctrine on their use of terrorism. With the exception of spectacular failures such as Guy Fawkes’ religiously inspired attempt to assassinate King James I and both Houses of Parliament in England, terrorism did not separate itself or progress beyond the normal practices

¹²⁰ Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 183.

of warfare at that time. As political systems became more sophisticated, and political authority was viewed as less of a divine gift and more as a social construct, new ideas about political conflict developed.

The French and American Revolutions in the latter 1700s provided impetus to future revolutionary thought. They created precedents for the overthrow of established regimes, and introduced levels of extremism and fanaticism that had not been common to socio-political change before. Prior to this, most revolts were about replacing the specific members of a government, such as deposing a king or killing a dictator. Significant changes in social structure were rarely attempted. The fact that sweeping change of the political and social system was possible by revolution was a lesson later revolutionary theorists embraced. The power and violence of unorganized mass demonstrations planted the prototype of urban insurrection so firmly into the concepts of revolutionary theory that it still is a principal goal of most revolutionary doctrine today.

Developing Theoretical Basis for Terrorism

The period of warfare and political conflict that embroiled Europe after the French Revolution provided inspiration for political theorists during the early 1800s. Several important theories of social revolution developed during this time (see text box on the next page for summaries of the key revolutionary thinkers). The link between revolutionary violence and terror was developed early on. Revolutionary theories rejected the possibility of reforming the system and demanded its destruction. This extremism laid the groundwork for the use of unconstrained violence for political ends.

Two ideologies that embraced violent social change were Marxism, which evolved into communism, and anarchism. Both were utopian; they held that putting their theories into practice could produce ideal societies. Both advocated the complete destruction of the existing system. Both acknowledged that violence outside the accepted bounds of warfare and rebellion would be necessary. Communism focused on economic class warfare, and assumed seizure of state power by the working class (proletariat) until the state was no longer needed, and eventually disposed of. Anarchism advocated more or less immediate rejection of all forms of governance. The anarchist's belief was that after the state is completely destroyed, nothing will be required to replace it, and people could live and interact without governmental coercion. In the short term, communism's acceptance of the need for organization and an interim coercive state made it the more successful of the two ideologies. Anarchism survived into the modern era and retains attraction for violent extremists to this day.

The Russian Narodnya Volya (Peoples Will)¹²¹ was heavily influenced by anarchist theory; it was a small group of elitists who took it upon themselves to kill government officials as a means of inspiring a mass revolution of the people. While they were successful in a terror campaign of assassination, eventually killing Tsar Alexander II in 1881, they failed to inspire revolt or resistance by either the peasantry or the moderate intelligentsia.

In these evolutionary steps we see terror becoming a weapon for those out of power, a method for a small core of revolutionary activists to use violence to inspire or cow the masses. A means

¹²¹ *International Encyclopedia of Terrorism*, 1997 ed., s.v. "Russian Anarchist Terror."

of striking great blows against the state with limited means. Given the great world conflicts and upheavals that were just around the corner, the firm foundation of terror in revolutionary philosophy and practice guaranteed its continued employment.

Key Thinkers in the Development of Revolutionary Theory

Karl Marx – Prolific author and theorist who's "Communist Manifesto" laid out the ideas of struggle between economic classes for control of the means of production, and thus control of the state. He predicted a revolutionary force composed of a mass of urban industrial workers. A key for future terrorists was his "materialistic theory of history". It claims scientific justification for the assertion that capitalism will inevitably fail and be replaced by utopian communism. This "scientific" proof is used as justification for actions, including terrorism, that hasten the destruction of the capitalist order.

Mikhail Bakunin – Aristocrat and former officer of the Russian Imperial Guard, Bakunin developed an anarchist theory that viewed all forms of authority as ultimately oppressive, including religious concepts such as gods. Since all authority systems were inherently oppressive, they are therefore legitimate targets for destruction. Such destruction, he argued, must be prosecuted with no scruples. Exiled to Siberia, he escaped and eventually made his way to Switzerland, where he published pamphlets and works such as "God and the State".

Johann Most – A late 19th century anarchist who explicitly advocated terrorism in the pamphlet "Revolutionary War Science". Fascinated by the new technology of powerful, compact explosives such as dynamite, Most saw bombs made from these explosives as "equalizers" between the individual anarchist and the forces of the established order. Expelled from various European countries, he eventually made his way to the United States, and became a significant influence on American anarchists. Most later repudiated violence, and subsequently lost his influence over the anarchist movement.

Vladimir Lenin – Leader of the Bolshevik party that seized power in Russia after the 1917 Revolution. Lenin, unlike the Anarchists, believed that terrorism could not provoke a revolution, and organization was necessary. The small size of the industrial proletariat in Russia precluded a true Marxist class insurrection, so Lenin conceived the idea of a small disciplined political party to achieve the revolution, and then develop the conditions for the communist utopia. Many modern terrorists have used this concept to justify their lack of popular support among those they claim to represent. "**If Socialism can only be realized when the intellectual development of all the people permits it, then we shall not see Socialism for at least five hundred years.**" - Lenin

Leon Trotsky – Peoples Commissar for War in the Bolshevik Revolutionary government. Conceived the internationalization of the Revolution, which meant continual efforts worldwide to initiate revolution, including terrorist activities. Eventually purged from the Party, he fled overseas, and after surviving multiple assassination attempts, was killed by a Soviet sponsored agent in Mexico in 1940.

Mao Zedong – Leader of the Chinese Communist insurgency and eventual Chairman of the Party. Mao wrote primarily on the use of guerilla warfare in the political struggle. His chief contribution to modern terrorist thought is the application of revolutionary theory to rural, rather than urban environments.

Carlos Marighella – A Brazilian politician who opposed the military government of the 1960s, he wrote the *Mini-manual of the Urban Guerilla*. This work brought guerilla war into an urban context, and because of the nature of such an urban campaign, used terrorism exclusively.

20th Century Evolution

In the early years of the 20th Century nationalism and revolutionary political ideologies were the principal developmental forces acting upon terrorism.

Nationalism

When the Treaty of Versailles redrew the map of Europe after World War I by breaking up the Austro-Hungarian Empire and creating new nations, it acknowledged the principle of self-determination for nationalities and ethnic groups. This encouraged minorities and ethnicities not receiving recognition to campaign for independence or autonomy. However, in many cases self-determination was limited to European nations and ethnic groups and denied others, especially the colonial possessions of the major European powers, creating bitterness and setting the stage for the long conflicts of the anti-colonial period.

In particular, Arab nationalists felt that they had been betrayed. Believing they were promised post-war independence, they were doubly disappointed; first when the French and British were given authority over their lands; and then especially when the British allowed Zionist immigration into Palestine in keeping with a promise contained in the Balfour Declaration.¹²²

A further spur to the nationalism of the colonial possessions throughout the world was the Atlantic Charter, an agreement between the United States and Great Britain announced early in World War II. In it, the Allies agreed to forego any “territorial aggrandizement” and “respect the right of all people to choose the form of government under which they will live.”¹²³ Strict interpretation of these points clearly meant the renunciation of the colonial empires of France and Great Britain, amongst others. Major conflicts in Algeria, Indo-China, and Palestine, with significant components of terrorist violence, resulted from the expectations that these points would be honored. These principles also influenced the approach of later institutions such as the United Nations to look more favorably on groups whose aims were “national liberation” or “anti-colonial.” This eventually muddied the water between freedom fighters and terrorists in the struggles of de-colonization.

Another contribution to the development of terrorism was the loss of legitimacy of existing nations and international institutions. World War I seemed to demonstrate that the governments of the major powers were amoral, if not immoral, in their prosecution of the war. Whether German Schrecklichkeit (frightfulness) policies in Belgium or British violations of the Law of the Sea in enforcing its blockade, all nations were seen as obeying conventions only when it furthered their aims. This “ends justify the means” worldview became a frequent argument in alleging moral equivalence between governments and their opponents.

Revolutionary Ideologies

The mass casualties and perceived futility of World War I fueled social violence and radicalized political action in many countries afterward. For example, 354 known political assassinations took place in post-WWI Germany in the two-year period of 1919-1921.¹²⁴ Both Communist and Fascist political systems rose to power in the political vacuum resulting from the destruction and despondency of the war. The failure of various international conventions regulating or outlawing

¹²² *International Encyclopedia of Terrorism*, 1997 ed., s.v. “The Origins of Arab-Jewish Terrorism.”

¹²³ Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 47.

¹²⁴ William Manchester, *The Arms of Krupp* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1968), 303.

violence such as The Hague and Geneva Conventions caused a loss of faith in arbitration before international bodies.

As previously mentioned, the “total war” practices of all combatants of World War II provided further justification for those inclined to use terror.¹²⁵ In addition, the failure and perceived arbitrariness of international justice regarding violations of the rules of war during both World Wars (1914-1945) bred a conviction that winning a conflict permitted the imposition of “justice”. Many viewed the extremely punitive nature of the post-World War I Treaty of Versailles as revenge masquerading as diplomacy. It did not establish a stable peace and set the stage for future conflict. The post-World War II trials in Nuremberg and Tokyo lacked clear legal precedent in their attempts to hold individuals responsible for the aggression of entire nations.¹²⁶ The lesson to those who were inclined to distrust the victors, or who had future goals at odds with the status quo, seemed to be “Winners make the rules, and the first rule is losers get shot.”

Post World War II Evolution

Since the end of World War II, terrorism has accelerated its development into a major component of contemporary conflict. Primarily in use immediately after the war as a subordinate element of anti-colonial insurgencies, it expanded beyond that role. In the service of various ideologies and aspirations, terrorism sometimes supplanted other forms of conflict completely. It also became a far-reaching weapon capable of effects no less global than the intercontinental bomber or missile. It has also proven to be a significant tool of diplomacy and international power for states inclined to use it.

The seemingly quick results and shocking immediacy of terrorism made some consider it as a short cut to victory. Small revolutionary groups not willing to invest the time and resources to organize political activity would rely on the “propaganda of the deed” to energize mass action. This suggested that a tiny core of activists could topple any government through the use of terror alone. The result of this belief by revolutionaries in developed countries was the isolation of the terrorists from the population they claimed to represent, and the adoption of the Leninist concept of the “vanguard of revolution” by tiny groups of disaffected revolutionaries. In less developed countries small groups of foreign revolutionaries such as Che Guevara arrived from outside the country, expecting to immediately energize revolutionary action by their presence.

In addition to instigating mass action through terrorism, revolutionary groups of both Left- and Right-wing views hoped that the reaction of the state to terrorist attack would result in repressive actions against the population. The Left oriented groups hoped repressive actions would further increase enthusiasm for revolution. Right wing groups, such as the Italian neo-fascists, hoped for a general repression that they could then hijack for their own purposes, much as the Nazis had used street battles against the Communists in the 1930s to frighten the people into demanding order, despite the costs to civil liberties.

The record of revolutionary groups bypassing political organization or social instruction and relying solely on terrorism has been one of unrelieved failure. The “Euro-terror” groups such as

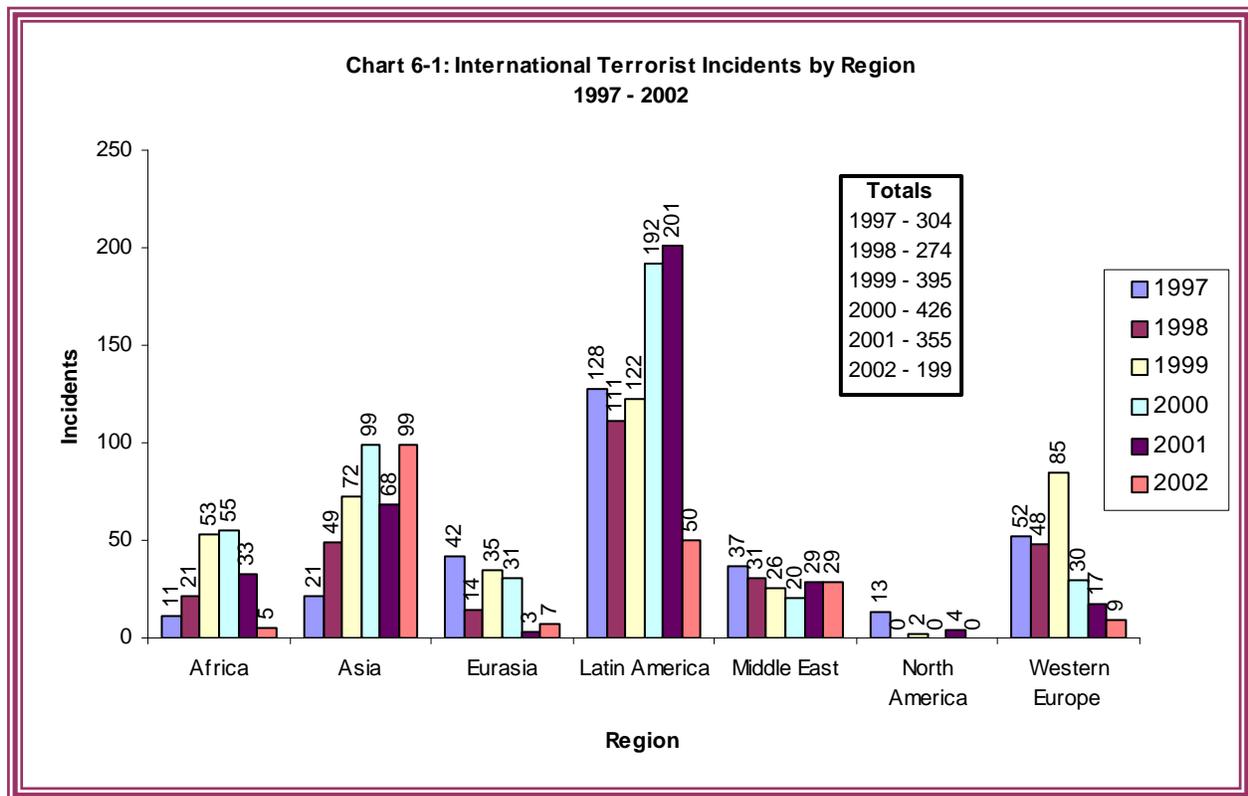
¹²⁵ *International Encyclopedia of Terrorism*, 1997 ed., s.v. “Terror in World War II: Introduction.”

¹²⁶ *International Encyclopedia of Terrorism*, 1997 ed., s.v. “World War II War Crimes Trials.”

Action Directe and the Red Army Faction were viewed more as a threat to life and limb than as a real alternative to the status quo. The Weather Underground in the U.S. lost confidence in mass action by labor or students in America, and consigned itself to terrorism in pursuit of a revolution it knew could not be realized.

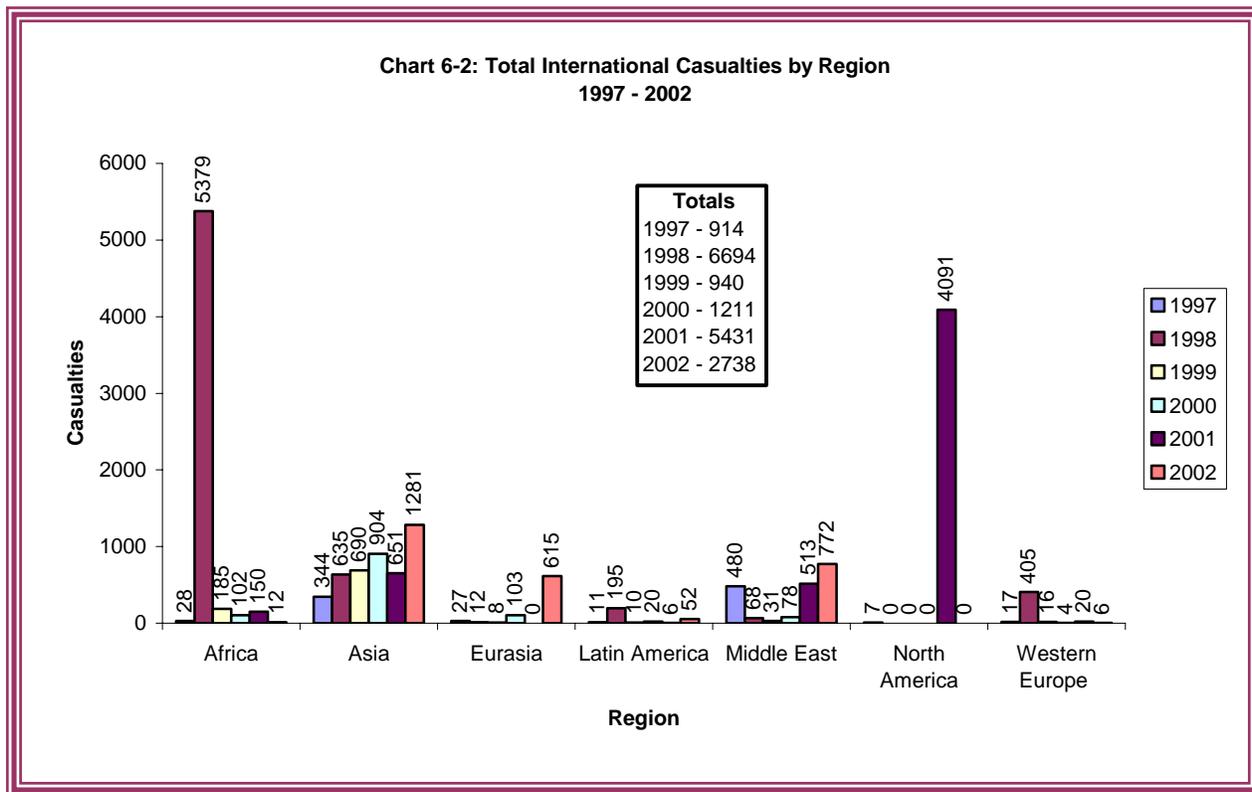
For many of the social revolutionaries, the failure of the Soviet Union, and of virtually all of the Eastern Bloc communist governments, severely discredited Marxist-Leninist ideologies. The loss of supportive governments also impacted the viability of the left-wing groups in Europe. Also, nationalist movements that might have previously turned to terrorism have had success in realizing their goals in the post Cold War world. A large number of separatist movements were accorded international recognition and acceptance as the old world order shifted. Although in some areas, such as the former Yugoslavia, this process has been anything but peaceful, it has not seen long campaigns of insurgent warfare and terrorism previously associated with nationalist struggles.

As revolutionary terrorism began to reach its limits, the next evolution was to create a larger impact by moving the campaign outside of the immediate theater of conflict. Moving terrorist operations onto the international stage made what happens in the West Bank or Kashmir of immediate concern to a much larger audience. Terrorist operations became platforms for the deliberate use of specific and effective media management. Targeting choices changed to reflect the power of international mass media. From trying to influence the perceptions of decision makers or members of ruling elites directly, targeting of mass popular opinion was used to leverage leaders' decisions.¹²⁷ Chart 6-1 shows the number of international terrorist incidents by



¹²⁷ *International Encyclopedia of Terrorism*, 1997 ed., s.v. "The Media and International Terrorism."

region for 1997 through 2002, and Chart 6-2 shows the number of casualties by region over the same timeframe. These charts reflect the true international nature of terrorism.¹²⁸



State involvement with terrorism, including sponsorship and operational direction, became more and more common during this time. While state sponsorship of terrorism to promote worldwide revolution was officially acknowledged as far back as the Third Communist International (Commintern) in 1919, its widespread use developed in the 1970s and 1980s. Deniable acts of terrorism provided flexible and effective tools to various nation-states for advancing their foreign policy goals, or pursuing and neutralizing political opponents overseas. For relatively small investments, isolated nation-states could impact world affairs. From the terrorists' point of view, the significant increase in effectiveness (especially lethality) was worth the slight loss of operational freedom.

Section II: Future Trends in Terrorism

As a conflict method that has survived and evolved through several millennia to flourish in the modern information age, terrorism continues to adapt to meet the challenges of emerging forms of conflict, and exploit developments in technology and society. Terrorism has demonstrated increasing abilities to adapt to counter-terrorism measures and political failure. Terrorists are developing new capabilities of attack and improving the efficiency of existing methods. Additionally, terrorist groups have shown significant progress in escaping from a subordinate role in nation-state conflicts, and becoming prominent as international influences in their own

¹²⁸ Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2002* (Washington, D.C., April 2003), 162-163.

right. They are becoming more integrated with other sub-state entities, such as criminal organizations and legitimately chartered corporations, and are gradually assuming a measure of control and identity with national governments.

Adaptive Capabilities of Terror Groups

Terrorists have shown the ability to adapt to the techniques and methods of counter-terror agencies and intelligence organizations over the long term. The decentralization of the network form of organization is an example of this. Adopted to reduce the disruption caused by the loss of key links in a chain of command, a network organization also complicates the tasks of security forces, and reduces predictability of operations.

Terrorists have also been quick to use new technologies, and adapt existing ones to their uses. The debate over privacy of computer data was largely spurred by the specter of terrorists planning and communicating with encrypted data beyond law enforcement's ability to intercept or decode this data. To exchange information, terrorists have exploited disposable cellular phones, over the counter long-distance calling cards, Internet cafes, and other means of anonymous communications. Embedding information in digital pictures and graphics is another innovation employed to enable the clandestine global communication that modern terrorists require.¹²⁹

Terrorists have also demonstrated significant resiliency after disruption by counter-terrorist action. Some groups have redefined themselves after being defeated or being forced into dormancy. The Shining Path of Peru (Sendero Luminosa) lost its leadership cadre and founding leader to counter-terrorism efforts by the Peruvian government in 1993.¹³⁰ The immediate result was severe degradation in the operational capabilities of the group. However, the Shining Path has returned to rural operations and organization in order to reconstitute itself. Although not the threat that it was, the group remains in being, and could exploit further unrest or governmental weakness in Peru to continue its renewal.

In Italy, the Red Brigades (Brigate Rossi) gradually lapsed into inactivity due to governmental action and a changing political situation. However, a decade after the supposed demise of the Red Brigades, a new group called the Anti-Capitalist Nuclei emerged exhibiting a continuity of symbols, styles of communiqués, and potentially some personnel from the original Red Brigade organization. This ability to perpetuate ideology and symbology during a significant period of dormancy, and re-emerge under favorable conditions demonstrates the durability of terrorism as a threat to modern societies.

Increasing Capabilities

**"Between now and 2015 terrorist tactics will become increasingly sophisticated and designed to achieve mass casualties."
- National Intelligence Council's "[Global Trends 2015: A Dialogue About the Future With Nongovernment Experts](#)" Report (December 2000).**

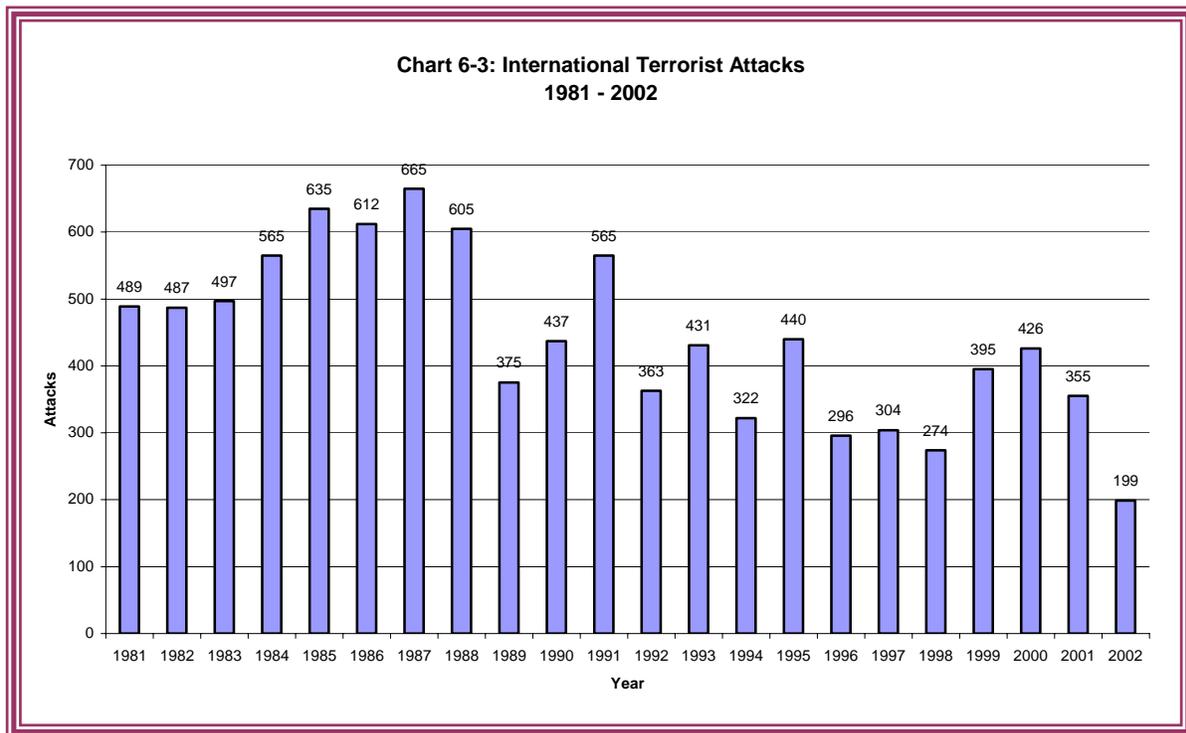
¹²⁹ Thomas Homer-Dixon, "The Rise of Complex Terrorism", *Foreign Policy Magazine* (15 January 2002): 2.

¹³⁰ *International Encyclopedia of Terrorism*, 1997 ed., s.v. "Terrorism in Peru."

Terrorists are improving their sophistication and abilities in virtually all aspects of their operations and support. The aggressive use of modern technology for information management, communication and intelligence has increased the efficiency of these activities. Weapons technology has become more increasingly available, and the purchasing power of terrorist organizations is on the rise. The ready availability of both technology and trained personnel to operate it for any client with sufficient cash allows the well-funded terrorist to equal or exceed the sophistication of governmental counter-measures.¹³¹

Likewise, due to the increase in information outlets, and competition with increasing numbers of other messages, terrorism now requires a greatly increased amount of violence or novelty to attract the attention it requires. The tendency of major media to compete for ratings and the subsequent revenue realized from increases in their audience size and share produces pressures on terrorists to increase the impact and violence of their actions to take advantage of this sensationalism.¹³²

An indicator of this trend is the fact that terrorist incidents have been going down in total numbers since 1991, but the lethality per incident has gone up.¹³³ Chart 6-3 shows that the number of incidents began to rise in the early 1980s and peaked in 1987.¹³⁴ Since then the number of incidents has been declining. In fact, 2002 had the fewest number of attacks during the 21-year period reflected on the chart. This is probably the result of both the war on terrorism and a conscious decision on the part of terrorist groups.



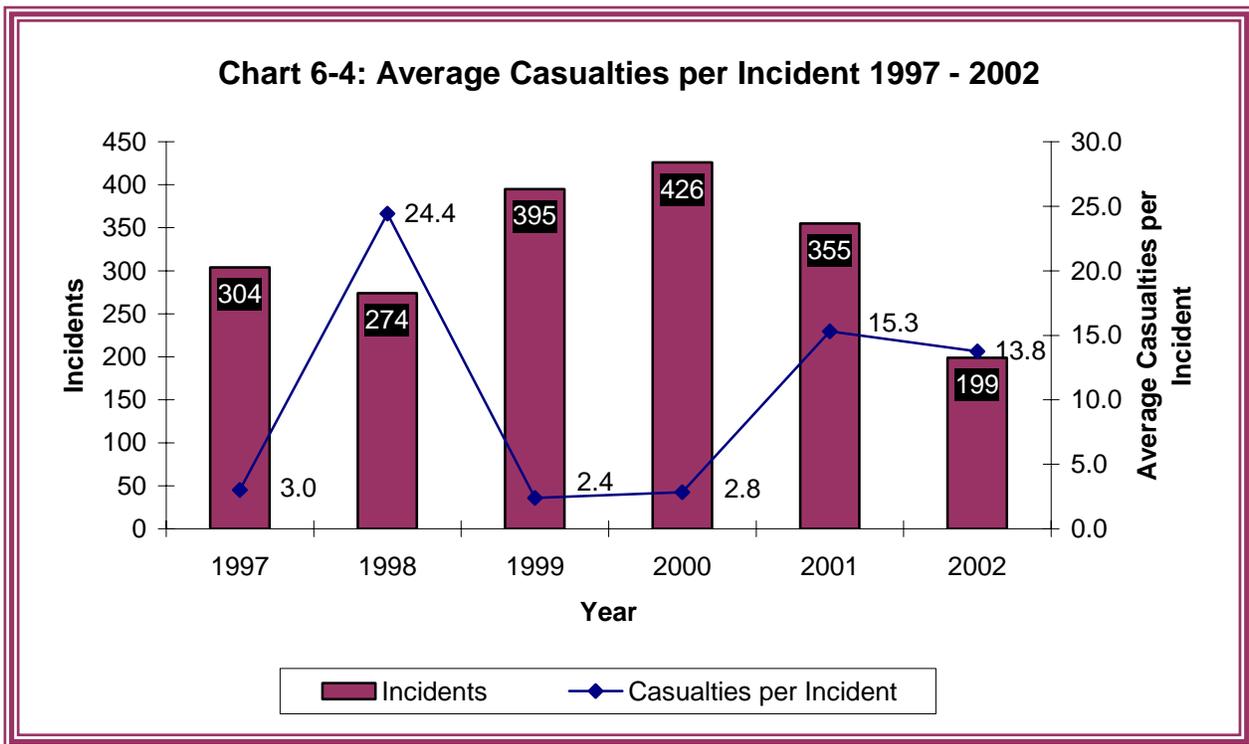
¹³¹ Fred L. Fuller, “New Order Threat Analysis: A Literature Survey”, *Marine Corps Gazette* 81 (April 1997): 46-48.

¹³² *International Encyclopedia of Terrorism*, 1997 ed., s.v. “The Media and International Terrorism.”

¹³³ Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 200.

¹³⁴ Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2002* (Washington, D.C., April 2003), 161.

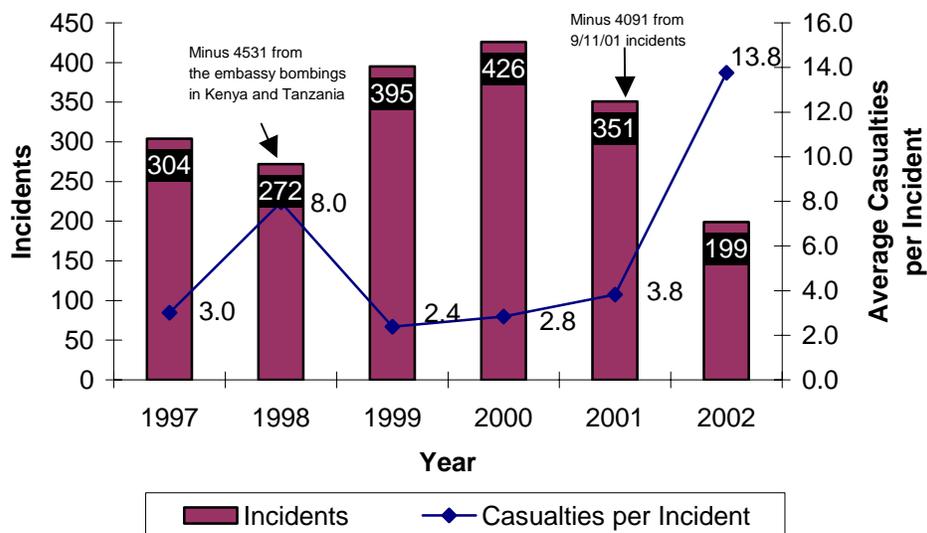
Fewer incidents with greater casualties appear to be the goal for many groups. This is not just a function of efficiency and developing skills, but also a tendency by the increasing number of religiously motivated groups to view ever-larger casualty lists as a measure of their influence and power. An ideal example of this attitude was the use of airliners as manned cruise missiles to strike the Pentagon and World Trade Center in September 2001. Using the data from Charts 6-1 and 6-2, Chart 6-4 shows the average number of casualties per incident covering the period 1997 through 2002. As can be seen, the average number of casualties in 1997 was 3.0 per incident, whereas casualties in 2002 increased to 13.8 per incident. The years 1998 and 2001 show a large increase in the number of casualties per incident due to the embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 and the 9/11 incidents in 2001, which accounted for over 8600 casualties.



If the casualties from the embassy bombings of 1998, and the Pentagon and World Trade Center attacks in 2001 are removed from the data, as shown in Chart 6-5 on page 97, the average casualties per incident in 2002 indicates a significant increase in lethality over past years. There were no catastrophic events during the year, but of the 199 incidents, 29 resulted in casualties of 30 or more, and 6 of the 29 resulted in casualties that exceeded 100.¹³⁵

¹³⁵ Ibid.,83-98.

**Chart 6-5: Average Casualties per Incident 1997 - 2002
Minus 1998 Embassy Bombings and 9/11/01 Incidents**



The trend to exploit available technologies and the desire for more casualties will probably accelerate the eventual employment of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) by terrorists. Documented uses of chemical (Tokyo 1995) and biological weapons (Oregon in 1984¹³⁶ and Florida and Washington D.C. in 2001) have already occurred. Several more attempts to use chemical, biological, or radiological weapons have been foiled in various stages of planning. While there has been no documented acquisition by terrorists of working nuclear devices or sufficient weapons grade material and technical expertise to readily construct one, the potential is clearly there.

Escaping Dependence

During the evolution of modern terrorism in the Cold War era, even nationalist insurgent groups sought out, indeed required, a sponsor from one of the two competing ideological blocs. These sponsors could effectively influence the policy of their clients, and exercise a limited form of control over their actions. This gradually shifted to a less rigid control as more sponsors, such as Libya, entered the field. The death of the bipolar world order removed both the motivations and capabilities of a large number of state sponsors. This loss of significant resources eliminated many terrorist groups; particularly those closely aligned with the communist bloc, and increased the costs for sanctuary and training for many others.¹³⁷

In addition, punitive actions against “rogue states” have gradually shut down some geographical sanctuaries and sources of support for terrorists. Although this can be temporarily disruptive,

¹³⁶ Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 121.

¹³⁷ Christopher C. Harmon, *Terrorism Today* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2000; reprint, Portland: Frank Cass Publishers, 2001), 3.

new players will replace the old. Groups based in Libya shifted to Iraq or Syria when support was restricted due to international sanctions and U.S. military action against Libya because of their sponsorship of terrorism. Similarly, al Qaeda shifted key functions from the Sudan to Afghanistan when U.S. missile attacks and diplomatic pressure were brought to bear in that geographical area.

In response, terrorists have adjusted their financial operations to become more self-sustaining in their activities, resulting in greater independence from any external control. Terrorist operations require extensive financial support. The facility with which groups can obtain and move funds, procure secure bases, and obtain and transport weaponry determines their operational abilities and the level of threat that they pose. The international nature of finance, the integration of global economies, and the presence of terrorists in the illegal “black” economies of slaves, drugs, smuggling, counterfeiting, identity theft, and fraud have aided this new independence from traditional sources of sponsorship and support.¹³⁸

This evolutionary development has inverted the previous relationship between terrorists and governments.¹³⁹ In the earlier relationships, the nation-state sponsor had some measure of control. Due to the ability of terrorist groups to generate tremendous income from legitimate and illegal sources, it often becomes the terrorist organization that “sponsors” and props up its weaker partner, the national government. For example, during the period it was based in Afghanistan, al Qaeda was running an annual operating budget of approximately \$200 million, while their hosts, the Taliban had only \$70 million annually.¹⁴⁰ In addition to financial supremacy, al Qaeda personnel also provided much of the technical expertise the Taliban lacked. The only asset the Taliban had to offer was sanctuary and the advantages their status as a recognized national government provided in some countries.

Although the explosion in terrorist income has been tied to the increasing involvement of terrorists in international crime, simpler support by the more traditional means of donations, extortions, and extra-legal contributions can be leveraged into significant sums through investment. The PLO is an excellent example of financing through legitimate investments. The organization managed to acquire sufficient wealth by these means in the 1980s that it was receiving an estimated 80% plus of its annual operating budget of \$600 million from investments.¹⁴¹ This allowed the PLO progressively greater autonomy in dealing with other nations.

Merging Identities

¹³⁸ Kimberly L. Thachuck, “Terrorism’s Financial Lifeline: Can it Be Severed,” *Strategic Forum* no. 191 (May 2002): 2.

¹³⁹ Maurice R. Greenberg, Chair, William F. Wechsler and Lee S. Wolosky, Project Co-Directors, *Terrorist Financing: Report of an Independent Task Force Sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations* (New York: Publication Office, Council on Foreign Relations, 25 November 2002), 5.

¹⁴⁰ David Albright, “Al Qaeda’s Nuclear Program: Through the Window of Seized Documents,” *Policy Forum Online Special Forum* 47 (6 November 2002): 8. Available from http://www.nautilus.org/fora/Special-Policy-Forum/47_Albright.html; Internet accessed 14 February 2003

¹⁴¹ Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 84.

“States with poor governance; ethnic, cultural, or religious tensions; weak economies; and porous borders will be prime breeding grounds for terrorism. In such states, domestic groups will challenge the entrenched government, and transnational networks seeking safe havens.”

- **"Global Trends 2015: A Dialogue About the Future With Nongovernment Experts"**
Report (December 2000).

Terrorist groups and other illegal sub-state organizations are rapidly becoming indistinguishable from each other. The increasing role of criminal activity in financing terrorism, either in partnership or competition with traditional criminal activities, is making it impossible to clearly determine where one stops and the other begins. These enterprises include well-publicized activities such as drug trafficking and smuggling, which some terrorists, insurgencies, and even less reputable governments have been engaged in for decades. They also include newer, less well-known illegal activities such as welfare fraud, tax evasion and fraud, counterfeiting, and money laundering. Many of these activities are offshoots of terrorist groups' evolving capabilities of false documentation and concealment of money transactions for their operational purposes. These activities now generate a profit for additional funding.

Terrorists and criminal organizations are becoming more closely related, as terrorists utilize criminal networks and methods to operate, and as criminals become more politicized.¹⁴² As national governments fail, their ruling elites frequently criminalize the nation itself, lending their sovereignty to smuggling, money laundering, piracy, or other illicit activities. Their security forces may retreat into terrorism to hold onto what power or authority they can, and use terrorist groups to function in place of the official arms of the government. Successful coups often generate governments that immediately resort to terror to consolidate their position.¹⁴³

This interpenetration of a criminal element into the government while government officials are “seeping” down to the terrorists’ level is the result of governments feeling that legality, in the international sense, is a luxury they cannot afford, and perhaps do not need. They lack the resources to adhere to “legalistic” notions, and thus sink into criminality. The better-funded sub-state organizations (terrorist, criminal, etc.) infiltrate or supplant the government. Eventually,

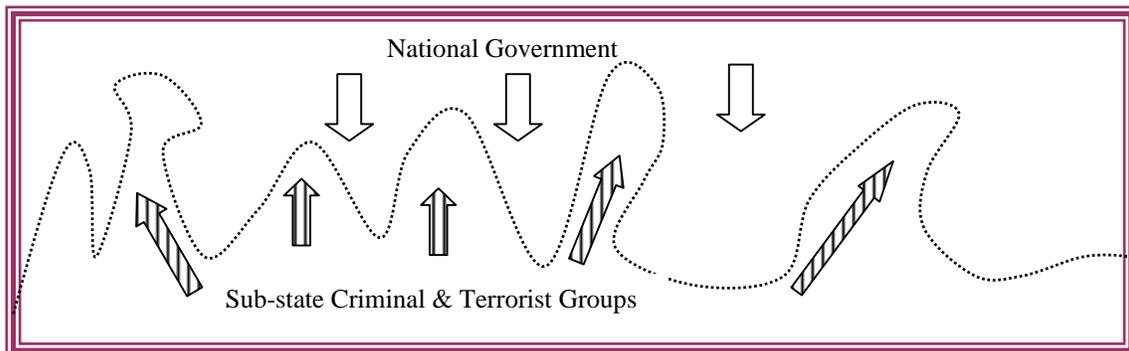


Figure 6-1: Merging Identities

¹⁴² “The New Threat of Organized Crime and Terrorism” *Jane’s Terrorism & Security Monitor* (6 June 2000): 1-5; available from http://www.janes.com/security/international_security/news/jtasm/jtasm000619_1_n.shtml; Internet; accessed 27 June 2000.

¹⁴³ Robert Kaplan, *The Coming Anarchy: Shattering the Dreams of the Post Cold War* (New York: Random House, 2000), 48.

there is no distinction between the two as they effectively merge. The situation in Liberia at the start of the 21st Century is an excellent example of this phenomenon.

A development related to this is the emergence of “gray areas”; those places where no government exercises actual control, and any order is imposed by sub-state, usually criminal organizations. Militias, traffickers, mafias, and terrorists operate their own fiefdoms, either as coalitions or in various states of coexistence ranging from truce to open hostility. These “gray areas” may be ungovernable slums or shantytowns in urban centers, or rural stretches too far away from the central government for effective control.¹⁴⁴

Section III: The Future of Conflict

**“All diplomacy is a continuation of war by other means.”
- Chou En-Lai**

Whether you view the post-Cold War world with alarm or optimism, it is clear that there will be future conflicts. There are more unresolved international issues left over from the forty-plus years of the Cold War than from the conclusion of either of the two World Wars. However, now there is no “balance of power” or two-power system to regulate the conflicts that will arise from these issues. Finally, the types of issues, and the antagonists involved with them, have fundamentally shifted. The nation-state system is showing signs of erosion in many parts of the globe, and a return to the days of mercenary chieftains and small city-states is already underway in some areas of the world.

In this section we will look at what will inspire conflicts in the 21st Century, and what some of the differences from the existing pattern will be. We will then look at some of the resulting practical impacts on the use of terrorism against U.S. forces.

Future Conflicts

The world order has changed significantly. The number of new, sovereign nations that emerged from the end of the Cold War rivals the new nations created after the two World Wars and the retreat of the colonial empires in the 50s and 60s. However, not all of these nations are viable states and most of them do not have stable leadership other than that of local ethnic or tribal strongmen. Many have significant problems aside from poor leadership, especially in the developing world. The most significant of these problems include:

- Disease
- Resource Depletion
- Factionalism

¹⁴⁴ Xavier Raufer, “New World Disorder, New Terrorisms: New Threats for the Western World,” in *The Future of Terrorism*, ed. Max. Taylor and John Horgan (Portland: Frank Cass Publishers, 2000), 32.

Disease: The incidence of newer pandemics such as HIV/AIDS and Ebola are just now beginning to equal the lethality of older scourges such as malaria and other tropical fevers. Further, both are concentrated in the developing nations of the world, where the metamorphosis of productive populations into invalids exacerbates the health-care costs these diseases inflict. Particularly in Africa and Southeast Asia, countries are seeing their populations decimated in their most productive years.

Resource Depletion: Those countries that lack a base of sufficient industrial or technological production to sustain an economic system fall back on basic agriculture and resource extraction. However, population pressure and lack of foresight encourage rapid depletion of finite resources. The result is further degradation of the economy, with nothing to show for it in the way of infrastructure improvement or alternative production. The establishment of a viable economic system to support a national government becomes impossible, and what little economic activity is possible is usually conducted illegally.

Factionalism: Many nations resulting from the post-colonial era are simply geographic “fictions”. They are reminders of an earlier power system on a map, lacking any sense of national or geographic identity, and riven with tribal and ethnic divisions. Africa is a particular case in point, with national boundaries being the result of colonial influences, not indigenous tribal identities. The tensions between factions, and the attraction for a minority in one country to join with their ethnic brothers who are a majority in a nation next door, is a destabilizing influence on many nations. Lacking a cohesive identity, other pressures eventually cause weak states to splinter, or gradually pull apart.

In a related development non-state and sub-state organizations and power blocs are assuming military roles and utilizing organized forces in conflicts, and terror tactics in socio-political conflicts. Major corporations, private security companies, and well-funded transnational terror groups have all played kingmaker in failed or dysfunctional states in the last decade. In some cases parts of the world are returning to a pre-nation-state condition as non-state actors, capable of challenging or disrupting governments and nations, are emerging in the “gray areas”.

Inevitability of Conflict

Because of the widespread instability resulting from these problems, a multitude of small to medium conflicts is inevitable. There are two likely models regarding the fundamental nature of these future conflicts, and while they are not mutually exclusive, they emphasize different things. The first model is strategic in nature, and holds that past conflicts have moved gradually upward in level from tribal to national to ideological struggles, culminating with World War II and the Cold War. The next conflicts will be between cultures.¹⁴⁵ This view predicts fighting along the parts of the world where cultures intersect, such as the Central Asian confluence of the Islamic

¹⁴⁵ Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations,” *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1993): 2; available from http://www.lander.edu/atannenbaum/Tannenbaum%20courses%20folder/POLS%20103%20World%20Politics/103_huntington_clash_of_civilizations_full_text.htm#I.%20THE%20NEXT%20PATTERN%20OF%20CONFLICT; Internet; accessed 6 December 2002.

and Eastern Orthodox cultures. The assumption is that wherever there is a line of engagement between two differing cultures, there will be conflict.

In light of this view, a transnational network like al Qaeda becomes more than a fundamentalist religious terror movement, whose goal of replacing the power structures in the historical Arab world with a new Caliphate is impractical and unlikely. When viewed at this “clash of cultures” level, al Qaeda becomes a true transnational insurgency, fighting against imposed Western political ideals and alien social order across multiple countries and regions simultaneously. Stateless for the moment, much as the early Communist revolutionaries before the Russian Revolution, these cadres hope to organize the vanguard of a religious revolution whose eventual success they consider inevitable.

The second model predicts the failure of significant numbers of the current nation-states in the developing world. Unable to overcome such challenges as depleted resources, disease, and ineffective leadership, there is no way for these countries to become viable. Unable to exert authority, protect their citizens, or control their borders, they are disintegrating. Many of these countries are splintering into tribal and ethnic factions that might coalesce into a new, more stable form, or continue to devolve through violence into lawless zones of minor warlords and bandits.¹⁴⁶

Regardless of which model more accurately describes the future, a most important occurrence common to both will be the blurring and blending of terrorists as we now categorize them with other groups that will resort to force and violence to achieve their aims. As discussed at the end of Section II, the expansion of “gray areas” and the criminalizing of what remains of the nation-state will render parts of the world essentially “no-man’s land” in terms of our currently understood international system.

How Changes Impact Terrorism and U.S. Forces

Terrorism has generally seen success as a tactic and failure as a strategy. Many of the emerging entities that are rising to wield effective power in failing states are only concerned with the immediate tactical effects of their actions. They therefore look upon modern terrorism as an effective mode of conflict. They can point to the fact that al Qaeda invested \$500,000 in an attack that is estimated to eventually cost the U.S. Government \$135 billion in damages and recovery costs.¹⁴⁷ Considering that these figures do not reflect the costs of military and law enforcement efforts to investigate and destroy the organization responsible, the comparative return on the investment is even greater.¹⁴⁸

Since these emerging and sub-state entities are not party to any established rules regarding the uses of force, terrorism and the use of terror to oppress are viewed as logical and effective methods to accomplish their objectives. The development of rules of war and the framework of

¹⁴⁶ Robert Kaplan, *The Coming Anarchy: Shattering the Dreams of the Post Cold War* (New York: Random House, 2000), 7-9.

¹⁴⁷ Kimberly L. Thachuck, “Terrorism’s Financial Lifeline: Can it Be Severed,” *Strategic Forum* no. 191 (May 2002): 4.

¹⁴⁸ Fred L. Fuller, “New Order Threat Analysis: A Literature Survey,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 81 (April 1997): 46-48.

international laws that attempt to protect the civilian from military action are irrelevant to these combatants. Thus the expansion of where and to whom violence may be applied will accelerate, and the treatment of prisoners will rely more on the provision for ransom or retribution for mistreatment than on the rulings of the Geneva Convention.¹⁴⁹

This is important for the unit leader and planner because the mind set necessary to operate in a completely chaotic, unstructured environment will have to be developed. This mind set includes the sobering, and for Americans, unusual, concept that their units will likely be the only order or structure in their area of operations. There will be no “host nation government” and perhaps no local government. If there is any government at all, there very well may be several, all claiming some degree of legitimacy, and potentially all of which could be hostile.¹⁵⁰ U.S. forces deployed in these environments will constitute mobile capsules of order and structure, but that order will disappear after they pass through the area.

Although this sounds as if all future operations will be attempts to impose order or stability against sub-state adversaries, and implies that major conventional conflict is a thing of the past, there is another possibility. There are theories for using all of these levels of disorder, as well as economic warfare, information warfare, and conventional military force, in an orchestrated campaign against an adversary. This would be conducted as a long-term effort of undeclared conflict that might appear as amicable relations between the two adversaries, but with one pursuing the eventual defeat of the other through as many appropriate methods as possible simultaneously.¹⁵¹

The effectiveness of this approach is in the costs to the victim to defend against multiple threats with no clear foe. Operational control over the various “tools” employed by the aggressor is not required, as long as the “tools” perform their role of bleeding the adversary of resources and resolve. Deniability is maintained and diplomacy pursued to keep the conflict from becoming focused before the aggressor is ready. Although all manner of unconventional threats may be employed, terrorism is a key component of this strategy.

On the practical level, what changes to terrorist operations will concern U.S. forces? As already addressed, terrorism will continue to increase in lethality. The acquisition and eventual use of effective WMDs by terrorists is highly likely. Terrorism is merging and combining with various other state and sub-state actors, further blurring the difference between criminals, rogue governments, and terrorists.

There are several practical considerations in the evolution of terrorism that have not yet been addressed. These are concerns regarding the impacts and interactions of mass media, technological advances, urbanization, and illegal fundraising with terrorism.

¹⁴⁹ Martin L. Van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 202

¹⁵⁰ Robert Kaplan, *The Coming Anarchy: Shattering the Dreams of the Post Cold War* (New York: Random House, 2000), 47.

¹⁵¹ Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare*, trans. Department of State, American Embassy Beijing Staff Translators (Washington, D.C., 1999).

There is an increasingly technological and informational nature to all conflict, and terrorism is no exception. Terrorists will continue to cultivate their ability to use new and innovative technologies, and methods of applying existing technologies to new uses. This is not to say that terrorists will go exclusively “high-tech”, but they will explore the increase in capabilities that technology provides, especially the synergy between simple operations and selective technologies to ensure success.

Terrorists will attempt to exploit U.S. vulnerabilities to information dominance. Casualty avoidance and the “CNN” effect are interrelated perceptions held by many potential adversaries of the U.S. socio-political situation. Most of our adversaries believe the U.S. is extremely casualty averse, and that images and news of casualties will be easy to deliver to American living rooms. While this effect may be overemphasized, we should expect it to be a significant part of terrorist planning and targeting.

In the techniques of the “CNN war”, terrorists were pioneers.¹⁵² Since the terrorists prepare their operations around the desired media effect, they will always be out in front of the reporting. They will orchestrate supporting events and interviews to reinforce the desired message. Terrorists have well-established methods of presenting disinformation and false perspectives. The use of “spin” has become widespread, and is relatively successful. Frequently, military reluctance to comment on ongoing operations in the media for OPSEC reasons can play into the hands of the terrorist, as there will be no balancing information from official sources for hours or days after an incident, leaving the terrorist message as the only one in play.

Terrorists will exploit the vulnerabilities of new technologies to attacks or disruption. Terrorists have a great deal of flexibility in their ability to acquire new technology. The historical vignette of the Fenian Ram (see text box on page 105) shows how the application of innovative technology to a specific target eliminates the advantages held by conventional military forces. They also have the advantage of only needing to attack or neutralize specific systems or capabilities. Consequently, they can narrowly focus their expenditures on the limited counter-technology they need. Also, they can neutralize some advanced systems or capabilities through the use of innovative and unconventional techniques, such as the employment of suicide bombers.

There are potential impacts here in relation to U.S. Army transformation. As the U.S. Army increases its battlefield information capabilities, vulnerabilities peculiar to networks such as overload feedback between nodes and destruction of key concentration nodes become available for terrorists to exploit.¹⁵³ Deception techniques exploiting our reliance on technology have already been used with some success.¹⁵⁴ The military will not be the only, or even primary target of new strategies useful against leading edge technologies and organizations. The dispersal of key civilian infrastructure nodes into locations remote from the urban complexes they serve increases their vulnerability.

¹⁵² Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 133-139.

¹⁵³ Thomas Homer-Dixon, “The Rise of Complex Terrorism,” *Foreign Policy Magazine* (15 January 2002): 3-4.

¹⁵⁴ “Osama’s Satellite Phone Switcheroo,” *CBS News.com*, 21 January 2003, 1; available from <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/01/21/attack/main537258.shtml>; Internet; accessed 10 February 2003.

Vignette: 19th Century Technology & Terrorism



The Fenian Ram at the New York State Marine School (1916-1927)

John Holland

(Photos Courtesy of US Navy)



The threat of cutting edge technology in the hands of terrorists is not unique to the modern era. What was arguably the first practical modern submarine design was commissioned by the Fenian Brotherhood to sink British warships. The Brotherhood was an Irish nationalist movement active in the U.S. and Britain in the late 19th century. In addition to assassinations and bombings, they conceived several bold projects to strike at the British, not least of which were two attempted invasions of Canada, with the goal of holding the Dominion hostage for Irish independence.

A more feasible, but still daring project was the construction of a submarine capable of sinking Royal Navy warships. Designed by John Holland, and launched in 1881, the *Fenian Ram* carried a crew of three and could operate up to 45 feet beneath the surface. Holland was an Irish immigrant to the U.S. whose brother Michael was involved with the Brotherhood, and financed his design and construction efforts. The submersible would be delivered to the target area by an innocent looking merchant ship. Using a compressed air gun to launch 100-pound dynamite projectiles several hundred yards, the *Ram*

would attack with complete surprise, and escape submerged.

The Fenians' selection of the Royal Navy as the target shows a keen appreciation of the psychological effects of terrorism. While Holland hoped for a military role for his invention, and later worked with the U.S. Navy, the Fenians' regarded it as a more sophisticated way to place a bomb. Britain's fleet was absolutely essential to the security and maintenance of the far-flung empire, and was also a national institution of great tradition and pride. A successful campaign using the *Ram* and others like it would have been a tremendous blow to both the security and prestige of Britain.

The *Ram* was stolen by the Brotherhood in 1883 in a dispute over money. Although they had the vessel, they were not familiar enough with it to operate it, and it was never used. John Holland continued with his experiments, and his eventual design became the basis for the submarines used by the U.S., Netherlands, and Japanese navies, among others. Ironically, the Royal Navy's first submarines were manufactured from Holland designs. Admiral Sir Arthur Wilson may have known about the designers' original intent when he pronounced submarines, including those of the British Royal Navy, as "...underwater, underhanded, and damned un-English".

Participation in and use of terrorism will increase. Individuals and groups that are not currently employing terrorism will adopt it as a tactic, and those that are employing terror tactics at low levels of lethality will become more violent. This is a combination of existing terrorist groups

trying to destabilize the existing order on an ever-widening basis, and the previously discussed tendency of terrorist groups to increase the level of violence when not immediately successful.¹⁵⁵

Terrorist basing and operations in urban environments will increase. Terrorists have typically operated in urban environments, but the emergence of “megalopolis” cities in undeveloped or poorly developed countries, with poor services, weak governance, and rampant unemployment and dissatisfaction has created a near perfect recruiting ground-cum-operating environment for terrorists. Many of these cities have adequate international communication and transport capacities for the terrorists’ purposes; yet have ineffective law enforcement and a potentially huge base of sympathizers and recruits. The inability of external counter-terror and law enforcement organizations to effectively intervene where the local government is unable to assert authority is another advantage.¹⁵⁶

The advantage to terrorist organizations that use criminal activities to fund operations will continue to grow. Money is the great force multiplier for terrorists, and criminal activity produces more money than other strategies. The annual profit from criminal activity is estimated at 2-5% of the world Gross Domestic Product, or \$600 billion to \$1.5 trillion *in profit*.¹⁵⁷ Terrorists are emphasizing criminal activities for their support funding because it allows them to compete more effectively with their adversaries, and conduct larger and more lethal operations.

Cyber-Terrorism

Cyber-terrorism is a development of terrorist capabilities provided by new technologies and networked organizations. Cyber-terrorism is a new and somewhat nebulous concept, with debate as to whether it is a separate phenomenon, or just a facet of information warfare practiced by terrorists. Plus there are divergent views on whether cyber terror causes damage in “physical space” versus “cyber space”.

Not every individual or group who uses information technology to further their agenda or attack their opponents are cyber terrorists. Hackers inflict damage to data or cause disruption of networks for personal motivations, such as monetary gain or status. “Hactivists” often have a political motive for their activities, and identify that motivation by their actions, such as defacing opponents’ websites with counter-information or disinformation. Alone, these actions bear the same relation to cyber terrorism that theft, vandalism, or graffiti do to mundane physical terrorism; they may be an unrelated activity, or a supporting piece of a terrorist campaign.

Cyber terrorism differs from other improvements in terrorist technology because it involves offensive information technology capabilities, either alone or in combination with other forms of attack. Some examinations of cyber-terrorism focus on the physical destruction of information hardware and software, or physical damage to personnel or equipment using information technology as the medium. Examples of this approach would include the chaos and destruction

¹⁵⁵ Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 162-163.

¹⁵⁶ Xavier Raufer, “New World Disorder, New Terrorisms: New Threats for the Western World,” in *The Future of Terrorism*, ed. Max. Taylor and John Horgan (Portland: Frank Cass Publishers, 2000), 32.

¹⁵⁷ Kimberly L. Thachuck, “Terrorism’s Financial Lifeline: Can it Be Severed,” *Strategic Forum* no. 191 (May 2002): 2.

caused by disrupting a nations' air traffic control system, crashing two trains together by overriding the railroad signal and switching system, or the loss to the economy by blocking and falsifying commercial communications.

Other views of cyber terror stress the manipulation, modification, and destruction of non-physical items such as data, websites, or the perceptions and attitudes this information can influence. Attacks that would destroy electronic records of financial transactions, or permit large-scale electronic theft would cause significant economic damage to a country, but not truly "exist" in the physical world. Changing the information or appearance of an enemy's official web page allows the terrorist to spread negative perceptions or false information without physical intrusion.

One common aspect of both schools of thought is that organizations trying to attack using information technology will want to keep the information network up, or limit their destruction or disruptions to discrete portions of it. For a true "cyber-terrorist" the network is the method of attack. It is the weapon, or at the least, the medium through which an attack is delivered. Information warfare of this sort requires that messages are transmitted, fraudulent transactions take place, and information is available for exploitation. Defacing websites, crashing portions of a target network, accessing enemy information, denying network access to other groups, manipulating financial confidence and causing panic have all been done. Still, they require that the target network remain more or less intact. It is possible that a terrorist group could crash a network through physical destruction or technological attack, but only a group whose perceived gains would offset their loss of information, communication, and other capabilities would do this.¹⁵⁸

Outside of computer networks, communications networks can also be targeted for destruction, disruption, or hijacking. Destructive and disruptive attacks upon communication networks would likely be supporting operations designed to increase the effectiveness of physical attacks. Hijacking, or taking control of a communication network might support another operation or be attempted for it's own impact. Dissident factions have already substituted their own satellite TV signals for state controlled broadcasting.¹⁵⁹ Terrorists could exploit such capabilities to bypass mainstream media restraint in covering particularly shocking actions, or to demonstrate their power and capability to challenge their enemies.

For U.S. military forces, likely "cyber terror" threats include attempts to overload data transmission and information processing capabilities. Physical destruction of some communications nodes, combined with decoys, false chatter, and deception to overload the remainder could significantly slow the ability to assess and respond to threats. Another threat is the use of unsecured personal information to target service members or their families for physical and electronic harassment campaigns. This technique has found widespread use amongst single-issue terrorists. Making phone numbers, addresses, and any other available personal information public via the Internet, and urging sympathizers or proxies to threaten and harass service

¹⁵⁸ John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, ed., *Networks and Netwars* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2001), 5.

¹⁵⁹ "Chinese Satellite TV Hijacked by Falun Gong Cult" *People's Daily Online*, 9 July, 2002, available from http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200207/08/eng20020708_99347.shtml Internet, accessed 27 November 2002.

members, their families, and associates, vandalize their property, or steal their identity would aim at eroding morale and inflicting uncertainty and fear throughout the military community.

Conclusion

This final chapter examined evolving threat philosophies, with emphasis on the integration of terrorism with concepts of world disorder and new forms of conflict. The evolution of today's terrorist into a non-state "politicized criminal" is well on its way. The merging of criminals, rogue political leaders, and terrorists into one collective identity, which operates for the realization of economic and political power outside of the recognized international system of nation-states is at hand. The United States will have to adapt to modes and states of conflict we have been traditionally uncomfortable with, but can now no longer ignore.