COMBATING TRANSNATIONAL TERRORISM

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The Strategy and Tactics of Terrorism

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Introduction

Terrorists exist for political reasons. Groups that practice terrorism do so in order to bring about political change of some type. Usually, these groups are small and often lack broad public support. Therefore, they are unable to achieve their desired goals through a peaceful political process. Instead, they use acts of violence, inflicted upon deliberately chosen noncombatant targets, in order to bully and intimidate governments into changing policy or granting concessions.

Despite the prominence of terrorism as a global security threat, the majority of terrorist groups do not survive long. Seventy per cent of terrorist groups perish within a year after their first attack.[1] There are a number of possible explanations that may clarify why some groups survive and thrive and others do not. However, one of the determining factors is the degree to which the group's leadership has effectively planned their campaign, exploited the group's resources and selected appropriate methods and tools to achieve their objectives, i.e. their strategy and tactics.

The core characteristics of strategy remain the same for both states and non-state actors. Hundreds of books by great thinkers such as Sun Tzu, Machiavelli, Clausewitz, Liddell Hart and Lawrence Freedman have addressed the enduring features of strategy and its intricacies and nuances. For our purposes, however, we will employ a practical approach focused upon ends, ways and means. *Ends* are the goals and objectives of the terrorist group. Simply put, what they say about why they are carrying out their actions. *Ways* are the methods of influence and persuasion used by terrorist groups to achieve their stated goals. *Means* are the resources and tactics employed on the ground. The means reflect the broad methodologies (ways) which support the accomplishment of the goals (ends) of the group.

Terrorists can be quite open in laying out their strategy. It is useful for counter-terrorism (CT) professionals to examine and analyze these strategies whenever possible. They communicate their grievances, identify whom they

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[1] Joseph K. Young and Laura Dugan, "Survival of the Fittest: Why Terrorist Groups Endure," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 8, no. 2 (2014): 2-23, accessed May 22, 2015, http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/334/html.

hold responsible, and tell their followers what they should do about it. Terrorist strategies also provide insights into the group's goals, likely targets, tactics and the audience they are trying to recruit. Gaining an understanding of these elements helps to illuminate the points at which governments must apply the instruments of national power to defeat, degrade or destroy these groups.

Terrorists' Goals

Terrorists must communicate their goals to three primary audiences that they wish to influence. The first audience consists of the leadership and decision-makers of the state whose policies they are trying to change. A second audience is the public, the noncombatants, who are the medium against whom violence will be used. Lastly, terrorist groups need to advertise their cause to potential supporters, so that the organization can grow in power and influence. Groups often produce slick-looking propaganda which outlines aspects of their strategy in order to inform and recruit new followers. The 'Islamic State' (IS) journal *Dabiq* and al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula's (AQAP) *Inspire* magazine openly provide detailed insights into each group's intent and activities.

The ends or goals of terrorist groups are different depending on their grievances and can be categorized in a number of ways. One method is to place groups into one of five categories that have proven their relevance over time: 1) regime change, 2) territorial change, 3) policy change, 4) social control, and 5) maintenance of the status quo.[2] *Regime change* is the replacement of a government either by the terrorist group or a regime more acceptable to them. Left wing terrorist groups of the 1970s and '80s, such as the Shining Path in Peru, would fit this model. Separatist movements, aiming at *territorial change*, were the biggest drivers of terrorism in the second half of the 20th century. These groups fought for freedom from an occupying power or colonial regime, or for certain 'rights' or protection for an ethnic minority (e.g. the ETA in Spain or the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) in Sri Lanka). While some of these factors remain significant, there has been little change in the number or severity of attacks by separatists over the past decade.

An example of *policy change* would be al-Qaeda's (AQ's) demand that the United States withdraw its forces from the Middle East and end support for "corrupt" Arab regimes. An example of terrorism aimed at *social control* would be violence against ethnic or racial minorities, such as committed by certain neo-Nazi groups. Other forms of right wing terrorist violence are aimed at preserving a political *status quo* against groups fighting for change. Examples would include Colombian paramilitaries or violent Protestant groups in Northern Ireland. Often the goals of terrorist groups are interrelated and complementary, e.g. AQ's desire for US withdrawal from the Middle East (*political change*) supports the goal of overthrowing the Saudi Kingdom (*regime change*). The establishment of a caliphate by IS in the territory formerly controlled by

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2   Andrew H. Kydd and Barbara F. Walter, "The Strategies of Terrorism," *International Security* 31, no. 1 (2006): 52.

governments in Damascus and Baghdad is an example of *territorial change*, leading to *regime change*, which could also lead to long-term *social change*.

Examining the goals of a particular group will help to determine the type of target they are likely to attack. Separatist groups are most likely to attack the symbols or figureheads of the enemy government. Assassinations of senior officials and attacks on government headquarters or buildings that house civilian officials are common, in addition to assaults on the police and critical infrastructure. Terrorists may also bring the fight to the homeland of an occupying force in order to demonstrate their reach and power and to cause fear among its citizens, which in turn is aimed at generating political pressure to withdraw. Groups whose goal it is to replace an existing regime will frequently target the security forces. In addition to the tactical gain of weakening the opposition, such attacks can undermine the confidence and will of the police and military to carry out their mission. The slaughter of Iraqi military captives by IS following the capture of Mosul in 2014 is a case in point. The group's subsequent propaganda campaign included a video series called *The Clanging of the Swords*, which featured brutal scenes of interrogation and murder of soldiers and government officials. This appears to have thoroughly demoralized the Iraqi security services and contributed to their subsequent collapse when confronted by advancing IS forces.[3] For groups like IS, whose goal is not merely to obtain territory but to also essentially wipe out another social, ethnic or religious group, targets also frequently include schools, churches, cultural centers, media outlets and other cultural symbols.

Terrorists' 'Ways' or Methods of Influence

The general methods of influence and persuasion used by terrorists have not varied greatly over time (see Case Study 3.1). In general terms, terrorists use violence against civilian populations in order to pressure governments to change certain policies. Publicity is vital to spreading or amplifying the scale of the violence as a form of psychological warfare. Governments of course feel compelled to react. However, inept, ill-disciplined or poorly coordinated overreaction can be manipulated to feed the terrorist narrative, gain support and weaken the will to resist the terrorists' demands.

Terrorists use violence as a psychological weapon against civilian or non-combatant targets. The use of violence is intended to cause fear and uncertainty in the target community. A conscious decision is often made to attack so called soft targets, which are lightly guarded, easy to access and destroy, rather than directly targeting government security forces. Attacking poorly protected

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[3] Muhammed al-'Ubaydi, Nelly Lahoud, Daniel Milton and Bryan Price, *The Group That Calls Itself a State: Understanding the Evolution and Challenges of the Islamic State* (West Point, NY: The Combating Terrorism Center, 2014), 87, accessed May 19, 2015, https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-group-that-calls-itself-a-state-understanding-the-evolution-and-challenges-of-the-islamic-state.

Case Sudy 3.1. Armed Propaganda: The Core of Terrorist Strategy.

At the end of the 19th Century, Italian anarchists coined the phrase "propaganda by the deed" to describe the mobilizing and symbolic power of acts of revolutionary violence. In 1969, Brazilian urban terrorist, Carlos Marighella, referred to this process as "armed propaganda" in his book, the "Mini-Manual of the Urban Guerrilla." In Marighella's words "…armed action is the primary way of making armed propaganda. These actions carried out with the specific objectives and aims in mind inevitably become propaganda material for the mass communication system."[4]

   Marighella was killed in action by the Brazilian police shortly after his book was published, but it influenced a whole generation of leftist terrorist groups in the 1970s and '80s. More recently, Australian counterinsurgency analyst and Pentagon adviser, David Kilcullen, described groups such as AQ and the Taliban as "…essentially armed propaganda organizations. They switch between guerrilla activity and terrorist activity as they need to, in order to maintain the political momentum, and it's all about an information operation that generates the perception of an unstoppable, growing insurgency."[5]

   Armed propaganda reflects an enduring characteristic of terrorist strategies, that they are usually more concerned with the psychological than the physical impact of their violence, even when they indulge in mass casualty attacks. Shaping public perception is therefore the strategic center of gravity of most terrorist campaigns. Worldwide media coverage, the Internet, and social media sites allow contemporary terrorist groups a global reach for their propaganda that their anarchist predecessors could only have dreamed about.

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civilian targets is obviously less dangerous and risky to the terrorists and tends to have a stronger resonance within the wider society. Attacks on school children in particular have an impact far beyond those directly affected. The 2004 Beslan siege in Russia, Tehreek-e-Taliban's attack in Peshawar in 2014, Boko Haram's kidnapping of school girls in Chibok in April 2014 and the al-Shabaab attack in Garissa, Kenya in 2015 are recent examples.

   Affecting the security and well-being of the population can be powerful methods of achieving leverage for a terrorist group. In a Gallup Poll in 2013, 40 percent of the American public still professed worry that they or a family member might become a victim of terrorism, despite the fact of very few successful attacks in the US since 9/11.[6] From a terrorist's perspective, fear is intended to make citizens pressure their governments to agree to terrorists' demands or moderate policies in exchange for refraining from violence. Al-Shabaab's attacks in Kenya on the Westgate shopping mall in 2013 and on the stu-

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[4] Carlos Marighella, "Armed Propaganda," in *Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla,* June 1969, accessed September 10, 2015, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marighella-carlos/1969/06/minimanual-urban-guerrilla/ch31.htm.

[5] George Packer, "Know the Enemy: Can Social Scientists Redefine the 'War on Terror'?" *The New Yorker*, December 18, 2006, accessed May 22, 2015, www.newyorker.com/ magazine/2006/12/18/knowing-the-enemy.

[6] "Terrorism in the United States," *Gallup.com*, undated, accessed May22, 2015, www.gallup.com/poll/4909/Terrorism-United-States.aspx.

dents of Garissa in 2015 were meant to pressure the Kenyan government into curtailing their military operations against the group in Somalia.[7] The July 2010 bombing in Uganda, which targeted civilians watching a World Cup football match, was likewise intended to impose a cost on Ugandan society for their government's contribution of forces to AMISOM, the African Union military mission in Somalia. Similarly, AQ's leadership directly linked the attacks on public transport in Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005 to continuing coalition military operations in Iraq.[8]

Terrorist groups depend on the publicity generated by the media to amplify their actions and influence a larger audience beyond the immediate reach of their violence. As British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher famously stated in 1985, terrorists depend upon "the oxygen of publicity" and violent, destructive actions inevitably draw widespread media attention. Terrorism analyst Brian Jenkins famously commented during the 1970s that *terrorists wanted a lot of people watching rather than a lot of people dead*, but sadly only the former part of this statement still holds true. Terrorists are increasingly willing to indulge in mass casualty attacks in order to gain the attention that they crave.

In the past, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was masterful at exploiting and manipulating the media. The 1972 Munich Olympics was the first live, globally televised sporting event, with an unprecedented audience of up to a billion viewers. As a result, targeting the Games was incredibly effective in drawing world attention to the Palestinian cause. During the same era, the Italian Red Brigades timed their actions and communications to newspapers to meet the news cycle of the higher circulation Thursday and Sunday editions in order to reach the largest audience.[9] Similarly, American right wing terrorist Timothy McVeigh chose to target the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City because it had plenty of open space around it to allow the best possible media coverage.[10] In a letter intercepted by the authorities in 2005, Ayman al-Zawahiri (then second in command for AQ) admonished Abu Musab al-Zarqawi for his brutal tactics, explaining that "We are in a battle, and more than half of this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media, we are in a media battle in a race for the hearts and minds of our people."[11]

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[7] See, for example, Jamal Osman, "Why Did al-Shabaab Strike at the Heart of Kenya's Capital?" *Channel 4 News,* April 23, 2013, accessed May 22, 2025, http://www.channel4.com/news/kenya-somali-islamist-group-al-shabaab-nairobi-westgat-mall.

[8] See, for example, "US Rejects bin Laden's Tape's Truce Offer," *CNN,* January 20, 2006, accessed May 20, 2015, http://edition.cnn.com/2006/US/01/19/binladen.tape/index.html.

[9] Harvey W. Kushner, *Encyclopedia of Terrorism* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003), 227.

[10] Michel Lou and Dan Herbeck, *American Terrorist: Timothy McVeigh and the Oklahoma Bombing* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001): 168-169.

[11] "Letter from al-Zawahiri to al-Zarqawi," *GlobalSecurity.org*, July 9, 2005, accessed May 22, 2015, www.globalsecurity.org/security/library/report/2005/zawahiri-zarqawi-letter_9jul2005.htm.

Would terrorists be defeated if simply deprived of publicity? Pressure by governments on the media not to publicize terrorist actions or demands may seem an attractive option, but the media has an obligation to inform the public—particularly when they may be at risk—and a free media is a cornerstone of democratic societies. In any case, the debate regarding government censorship is increasingly irrelevant, given the terrorists' ability to directly spread their messages via the Internet (see Chapter 6). Groups are now able to rapidly produce and disseminate large amounts of high quality content online within minutes. During his January 2015 assault on a kosher grocery store in Paris, Amedy Coulibaly used a personal body camera to film the attack and then edited the images on his laptop and uploaded them to the Internet while waiting for the police to intervene.[12] During the 2013 Westgate mall attack in Nairobi, al-Shabaab claimed responsibility via social media as soon as the attack commenced and then used Twitter and other online platforms from within the shopping mall to provide live updates as the attack unfolded over several days.[13] IS has been extremely successful at recruiting young men and women worldwide using Internet sites and social media tools, including Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram and AskFM.[14]

Undermine Confidence in the Legitimacy and Capability of the Government

Terrorist attacks against civilian targets are planned to demonstrate not only the power of the group, but also the impotence of the government. One of the most basic responsibilities of a government is to provide security for its citizens in return for their support. When terrorists undermine that ability, they also undermine the legitimacy of the government.

The political leadership is therefore anxious to swiftly and publicly demonstrate to their people that they are taking resolute action. Often, terrorist attacks are designed with the hope that they will provoke a poorly disciplined and disproportionate response. "Bloody Sunday," which took place in January 1972, was an overreaction by British paratroopers during a civil rights demonstration in Londonderry, which led to the deaths of fourteen civilians. The incident resulted in widespread condemnation of the British government and dra-

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[12] Rukmini Callimachi and Jim Yardley, "From Scared Amateur to Paris Slaughterer," *New York Times*, January 18, 2015.

[13] Alexander Harriet, "Tweeting Terrorism: How al Shabaab Live Blogged the Nairobi Attacks," *The Daily Telegraph,* September 22, 2013, accessed May 22, 2015, www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/kenya/10326863/Tweeting-Terrorism-How-al-Shabaab-live-blogged-the-Nairobi-attacks.html.

[14] Christina Schori Liang, "Cyber-Jihad: Understanding and Countering Islamic State Propaganda," *Policy Paper* 2015/2 (Geneva: Geneva Center for Security Policy, February 2015), 1.

matically boosted support for the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA).[15] The French government's deployment of 10,000 troops onto the streets of Paris following the *Charlie Hebdo* attack was meant to reassure the public, but also succeeded in amplifying the impact of what was (by global standards) a comparatively small-scale incident. Repeated military operations against Hamas in Gaza have increased support for the 'resistance' and led to widespread international criticism of Israel.

Violent overreaction weakens a government's legitimacy and erodes public support, while increasing sympathy for terrorists. In particular, persecuted minorities whom the terrorists claim to represent are often pushed into siding with the militants, who readily offer them protection. Indeed, government oppression risks alienating the ethnic or religious group that the terrorists are trying to attract, and reinforces their narrative of injustice. This dynamic was evident when members of the Sunni minority in Iraq gave support to IS in 2014 in response to Shia Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's oppressive and divisive sectarian policies. Significant government overreaction may inadvertently assist terrorist groups in achieving their core objectives. The attack on America in 2001 was a provocation that threatened the very survival of AQ as it brought down the full weight of the world's only superpower on the organization. But post 9/11, US military action in Afghanistan and Iraq reinforced AQ's narrative that the West was at war with Muslims. From a longer-term perspective, it could be argued that Western overreaction to the events of 9/11 helped AQ gain additional worldwide support and at least partially advanced its goal of "bleeding the enemy," while making it appear a greater threat than it could ever be in reality.[16]

The US Patriot Act and similar legislation in Europe have weakened civil liberties. The use of the military base at Guantanamo to detain prisoners without trial has done great damage around the world to the American image as an advocate for human rights and the rule of law. As noted above, AQ was certainly effective at portraying the US invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan as a war against Islam. These wars cost trillions of dollars and caused the deaths of thousands of soldiers and hundreds of thousands of civilians. In the US alone, expenditure on homeland security grew by more than $1 trillion in the decade after 9/11.[17] The psychological, human and financial toll of combating AQ and its affiliates since 2001 has undoubtedly made the US and its European allies question the utility of deploying military forces to the Middle East, as evidenced most recently by unwillingness to commit troops on the ground in Libya or against IS in Iraq and Syria.

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[15] Eamonn McCann, *The Bloody Sunday Enquiry – The Families Speak Out* (London: Pluto Press, 2006), 4-6.

[16] John Mueller and Mark Stewart, "The Terrorism Delusion: America's Overwrought Response to September 11," *International Security* 37, no. 1 (2012): 103.

[17] "Is America Spending Too Much on Homeland Security?" *The Economist,* April 30, 2011.

The Means or Tactics of Terrorism

The particular means that a terrorist organization employs depends on the resources available to them, the ease of carrying out attacks and the imagination of group members. The Global Terrorism Index (GTI) provides a comprehensive summary of the key global trends and patterns in terrorism from 2000–2013 and includes over 125,000 terrorist incidents. According to this database, the primary targets of terrorism have been private citizens and the police. Of course, this makes sense since terrorism is defined as violence against non-combatants for political purposes, while the police are a symbol of the state and also present one of the biggest threats to terrorists. As for weaponry, this remained constant over the course of the study – approximately 60 percent used explosives, 30 percent were attacks with firearms and 10 percent used other types of weapons.[18]

Bombings

While the use of explosives may not be new, they have grown over time in lethality and complexity. Indeed, as terrorist incidents have seemingly become more common and religious ideology has emerged as a dominant motivating factor, terrorists have developed a greater desire to kill more victims in order to generate publicity and simultaneously annihilate the enemy. For example, large, vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs) can cause extensive damage to targeted buildings and generate large numbers of casualties, as well as powerful images that are irresistible to the media, as illustrated by attacks in Beirut, Dar as Salaam, Nairobi, Oslo, and many other places.

Bombs contained in backpacks or in the form of suicide vests have become an immensely popular and effective way of striking against desired targets. Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) using innocuous commercial products, such as fertilizer or hydrogen peroxide, have been exploited by terrorists for decades. However, easy online access to information needed to build such devices is a troubling recent development. For instance, the Boston Marathon bombers in 2013 were able to manufacture simple "pressure cooker bombs" using information from an AQ magazine.[19]

Suicide Bombing

According to the GTI data only 5 percent of terrorist attacks since 2000 have been suicide bombings.[20] But they have proven to be highly effective. A suicide bomber acts as a human guided missile, able to get close to the desired target and strike with precision. Moreover, the inherent flexibility of using a human

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[18] *The Global Terrorism Index* (New York: Institute for Economics and Peace, 2015), 29, accessed May 2, 2015, http://www.visionofhumanity.org/sites/default/files/Global %20Terrorism%20Index%20Report%202014.pdf.

[19] Evan Perez, Devlin Barrett and Andrew Grossman, "Boston Bomb Clues Surface," *The Wall Street Journal,* April 16, 2013.

[20] *The Global Terrorism Index*, 30.

carrier, sometimes combined with the option of remote detonation or booby-trapped devices, makes them exceptionally difficult to guard against. Consequently, suicide bombings are on average five times more deadly than other types of attack.[21] In addition, suicide bombings tend to attract greater media interest and are thus ideal for gaining publicity for the terrorists and their cause. Demonstrating the willingness to deliberately sacrifice cadres for the 'greater good,' or simply to inflict pain on the enemy, is a powerful psychological weapon. With the right publicity, it can give terrorists an almost supernatural aura of ruthless commitment.

Armed Assaults

Armed assaults have a number of features which make them an extremely effective terrorist tactic. To begin with, they often generate huge media interest and publicity, especially if they take place within crowded urban areas. These attacks are extremely challenging to respond to and may go on for days, as was the case in Mumbai in 2008 and the Westgate mall attack in Nairobi in 2013 (see Case Study 3.2). Both of these incidents were protracted by hostage-taking and resulted in hundreds of hours of global media coverage for the respective terrorist organizations. Assaults of this type are also powerful because they appear random to the general population, thereby emphasizing a personal sense of vulnerability. By the same token, they demonstrate the inability of the government to protect its citizens as they go about their daily lives.

The end of the Cold War and recent conflicts in the Balkans, the Middle East, South Asia and Africa have resulted in an uncontrollable global flood of cheap, easily concealed automatic weapons which are simple to operate. Most of the world's 875 million small arms are in civilian hands,[22] which benefits groups such as AQ and IS that frequently encourage their followers to independently conduct attacks on their behalf using any means available.

Conspiracies to conduct these types of attacks involving small, close-knit groups or individuals are extremely difficult for security services to detect while in the planning and preparation stage.[23] Unless the conspirators somehow reveal their plans, for example in their interactions with friends and family or in their social media postings, there may be few opportunities to detect them. The June 2014 Jewish Museum attack in Brussels, the October 2014 shooting at Parliament Hill in Ottawa and the January 2015 Charlie Hebdo at-

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[21] *The Global Terrorism Index*, 32.

[22] *Small Arms Survey 2012* (Geneva: Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, 2012), accessed May 22, 2015, www.smallarmssurvey.org/weapons-and-markets/stockpiles/civilian-inventories.html.

[23] Steven Erlanger, "Europe Focuses on Emerging Threats From Smaller Crews of Terrorists," *New York Times,* January 13, 2015, accessed May 19, 2015, www.nytimes.com/2015/01/14/world/europe/europe-focuses-on-emerging-threats-from-smaller-crews-of-terrorists.html.

> **Case Sudy 3.2. The Attack on Mumbai by Lashkar-e-Taiba, November 2008.**[24]
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> In November 2008, 10 Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorists mounted a 'commando-style' attack on the Indian city of Mumbai, assaulting eight different high profile 'soft' targets including the Taj Mahal and Oberoi hotels, a railway terminus, restaurants and a Jewish community center. The attack lasted 60 hours and claimed the lives of 165 civilians and security personnel, as well as nine of the terrorists. Among the dead were 28 foreign nationals from 10 countries.
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> The Mumbai attack was by no means the first seaborne terrorist assault, nor was it the first to feature indiscriminate shooting of civilians. However, it was arguably the most sophisticated urban assault by terrorists to date. The attack was carefully planned and extensive reconnaissance had been conducted at the target sites. The terrorists were well trained, motivated and equipped for their assault, knowing their assigned targets well and easily outgunning the local police. Attacks were mounted on a variety of soft targets, initially convincing the Indian authorities and media that a much larger assault force was involved. The situation was also greatly complicated and prolonged by the fact that the terrorists took control of two exceptionally large hotels, each with hundreds of rooms, and further proceeded to take hostages.
>
> The iconic Taj Mahal, in particular, provided a spectacular propaganda opportunity and once the terrorists set it on fire the images of the blazing hotel were broadcast around the world. Using mobile phones, the terrorists' handlers back in Pakistan were able to exercise remote command and control. By monitoring live international media coverage of events, they could pass information and direction to the terrorists on the ground, including the position of security forces and the location of potential hostages. Later, when the attackers came under pressure and began to tire, their handlers kept them motivated, encouraging them to kill the remaining hostages and fight to the death.
>
> The Mumbai attack was a 'wake up call' to security services around the world as it demonstrated just how vulnerable modern cities can be to ruthless and determined attackers armed just with assault rifles, grenades and improvised explosives. The Mumbai police were taken by surprise, inadequately armed and unable to mount a coordinated response for several hours. The local anti-terrorist squad at least had adequate armament, but had not trained for such a scenario. The National Security Guard (NSG), India's elite CT unit, eventually neutralized the attackers but did not arrive until nearly 10 hours after the attacks began. India's lack of preparedness provides a stark warning to other countries facing similar potential threats.

tack in Paris are examples of relatively unsophisticated, low cost, difficult to detect assaults which generated tremendous publicity.[25]

Group assaults on infrastructure such as the January 2013 attack on the In Aminas gas plant in Algeria can also be an effective tactic for terrorists. While

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[24] See, for example, Adam Dolnik, "Fighting to the Death: Mumbai and the Future Fidayeen Threat," *RUSI Journal* 155, no. 2 (2010): 60–68.

[25] Note that this is despite the fact that both Mehdi Nemmouche (the alleged shooter in Brussels) and the Kouachi brothers (who attacked Charlie Hebdo) had all trained with terrorists overseas.

assaults like this need to be well planned and coordinated, the majority of the operational team would not need to possess sophisticated skills beyond how to handle an automatic weapon. The large work force and employee turnover in such facilities also provide opportunities for infiltration and acquisition of intelligence on vulnerabilities in security systems and potential hostages. Once an attack is underway, the size of these facilities makes them difficult to defend and secure. The resultant chaos is likely to gain significant media coverage.

Attacks on tourist infrastructure, especially in countries which are dependent on revenues generated by international visitors, can have an especially acute debilitating impact on both the short- and long-term economic health of a country. This was certainly the case following the attacks at Luxor in Egypt in 1997. Western travel warnings concerning Kenya in 2014 also had a catastrophic effect on an economy heavily reliant on the tourism industry, which in turn appears to have undermined efforts to address marginalization and joblessness and complicated measures to counter violent extremism.[26] The March 2015 attack on tourists visiting the Bardo National Museum in Tunis caused major cruise lines to indefinitely cancel visits to Tunisia, resulting in the loss of badly needed income for the struggling economy. The resultant increase in visible and intrusive security measures meant to reassure tourists can also magnify the impact of the initial attack, months or years after it takes place.

Assassination

Terrorists have used assassinations throughout history. The Sicarii killed fellow Jews who supported the Roman occupation in the first century AD. The assassination of Archduke Ferdinand by a Serbian terrorist in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914 was the trigger that led to the First World War. Assassination is often used against symbolic targets or the leadership of a state. The PIRA assassination of Lord Mountbatten in 1979 and the subsequent attempt on the life of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in Brighton in 1984 are illustrative examples, as is the assassination of Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1989 and former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in 2007. The targeted killing of senior leaders such as these not only attracts intense interest from international media, but also demonstrates the power and ability of the group to strike successfully even against the most senior and well-protected members of a government.

Hostage-Taking

Hostage-taking represents yet another opportunity to gain media attention and influence public opinion. The seizure of Israeli athletes by Palestinian terrorists at the 1972 Olympic Games was not just a defining moment in modern terrorism. It also brought the political agenda of the PLO to the forefront of the world's attention. Hostage dramas can play out over days, weeks or even months, adding to their political impact. Such incidents present a significant

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[26] Jeffrey Gentleman, "A Catch-22 in Kenya: Western Terrorism Alerts May Fuel Terrorism," *New York Times,* February 24, 2015, A1.

dilemma. Governments can be accused of appeasement if they choose to nego-
tiate, and yet the alternative—armed intervention—is exceptionally difficult to
conduct successfully and often ends in tragedy. A notable example is the Beslan
school siege of 2004 which ended in the death of more than 380 hostages
(most of them children) after Russian forces stormed the building. However,
barricade hostage taking can also be a high-risk tactic for terrorists. In 1997,
the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) seized the Japanese am-
bassador's residence in Lima, Peru and held dozens of high-ranking hostages
for four months. This attracted global media attention for what was previously
a little-known group. But it also led to the complete destruction of the MRTA
when commandos stormed the embassy and killed all of the hostage takers.[27]

The potential impact of hostage scenarios has become even greater in recent
years, thanks to advances in video and online technology. The beheading of
American, British and Japanese hostages by IS and the associated threats
against their respective governments captivated a global audience and created
immense political pressure to act. The revulsion that a single beheading can
generate is far greater than most other terrorist tactics, and yet it simultane-
ously inspires additional support.[28] Nevertheless, excessive violence can also
backfire. When IS burned alive a caged Jordanian pilot they attracted signifi-
cant criticism, even from other jihadists, and subsequently struggled to offer
ideological justification for such a depraved act.

Of course, hostages are also an important source of revenue. The leader of
AQAP, Nasser al-Wuhayshi, declared that "kidnapping hostages is an easy spoil,
which I may describe as a profitable trade and a precious treasure."[29] A 2014
New York Times investigation reported that AQ and its affiliates had taken in at
least $125 million in revenue from kidnappings since 2008, $66 million of
which was paid in 2013 alone.[30] Contrary to guidance issued by the UN, many
governments continue to pay ransoms to terrorists, despite the fact that this
only encourages the continued capture of their citizens. A senior US official re-
portedly told the family of James Foley (who was beheaded by IS in August
2014), that they would be prosecuted if they paid a ransom.[31] Along similar
lines, the Counter Terrorism and Security Bill, which was introduced in British
Parliament in November 2014, banned insurance companies from reimbursing

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[27] Christopher C. Harmon, "Illustrations of Discrete Uses of Force," in *Toward a Grand
Strategy Against Terrorism*, ed. Christopher C. Harmon, Andrew Nichols Pratt, and
Sebastian L.V. Gorka (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2010), 114-115.

[28] M.J. Gohel and Sajjan M. Gohel, "The Legacy and Agenda of Hostage Taking," *Asia
Pacific Foundation, International Policy Assessment Group*, January 28, 2015.

[29] Rukmini Callimachi, "Paying Ransoms, Europe Bankrolls Qaeda Terror," *New York
Times*, July 30, 2014, A1.

[30] Callimachi, "Paying Ransoms, Europe Bankrolls Qaeda Terror."

[31] Adam Dolnik, "Four Myths About Ransoms," *Foreign Affairs,* January 13, 2015,
accessed February 3, 2015, http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/142773/adam-
dolnik/four-myths-about-ransoms.

payments made to terrorists.[32] In contrast to these policies, many nations have paid for hostages directly, or else have allowed the victims' families or employers to pay the ransom instead. In other cases, states have been willing to release terrorists from prison in exchange for hostages. In 2011, Israel exchanged a thousand Palestinian prisoners for a single soldier, Gilad Shalit, who had been kidnapped by Hamas five years earlier.[33]

Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) [34]

Terrorist use of so-called 'WMDs,' whether chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN), would certainly have a significant psychological impact, even if the attack itself was not especially destructive. In reality, however, very few terrorist organizations have been able to effectively weaponize CBRN materials. The most successful effort to date was the attack on the Tokyo subway in 1995 by the Japanese cult, Aum Shinrikyo. Yet it is important to realize that it required highly specialized expertise, took years of effort, cost tens of millions of dollars and resulted in only a dozen deaths. In comparison, the London bombings of 2005, which used 'conventional' IEDs, killed 52 people at a fraction of the cost.

Nevertheless, terrorists are nothing if not persistent. It is therefore vital to closely guard CBRN technology, to remain vigilant for signs that a group might be trying to obtain and use these weapons, and to continue to invest in consequence management capabilities should such an attack take place.

Conclusion

Groups such as the Taliban and AQ have proved remarkably resilient in the face of sustained efforts by the world's most powerful countries to eliminate them. It is not clear whether their survival is down to effective strategy or, as is often the case in warfare, the mistakes and inadequacies of their opponents. Certainly, contemporary terrorist organizations have proved more adept than governments at exploiting the opportunities presented by globalization and technology to publicize their cause, broadcast their narratives and influence potential supporters and recruits. Armed propaganda, which remains the essence of terrorist strategy, has never been easier.

Bombings and shootings remain the tactics of choice as they have been for over a century, although the lethality of individual terrorists has increased exponentially over time. The ruthlessness of today's religiously motivated terrorists all but guarantees the continuation of spectacular, mass casualty at-

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[32] Matthew Holehouse, "Counter-Terrorism Bill: What It Contains," *Telegraph*, November 26, 2014, accessed February 3, 2015, www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/11254950/Counter-terrorism-Bill-What-it-contains.html.

[33] Laura Smith-Spark and Deborah Feyerich, "How ISIS New Hostage Strategy is Shifting the Goalposts," *CNN*, January 30, 2015, accessed February 4, 2015, http://edition.cnn.com/2015/01/30/middleeast/isis-hostage-strategy/.

[34] This subject is addressed at length in Chapter 7.

tacks. Another 9/11 would be hard to achieve, but another 'Mumbai' is entirely feasible. Major recent incidents suggest a trend towards attacks on critical infrastructure combined with barricade hostage incidents involving citizens of Western states. These incidents attract media attention, humiliate governments and exploit the inherent opportunities and vulnerabilities of modern urban landscapes. The sheer viciousness of contemporary groups like IS and Boko Haram is also an important part of their recruitment strategy. Yet at the same time, this limits the number of their supporters to a tiny minority of co-religionists. Excessive violence and a fixation on tactical successes at the expense of strategy are ultimately self-defeating.

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