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Terrorism and the Role of Security Studies

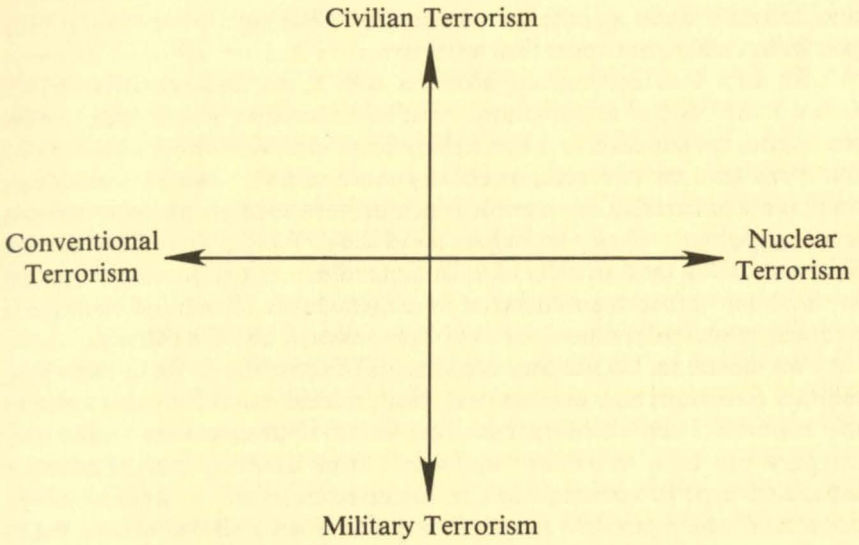
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The phenomenon of terrorism -international and national- is increasingly an important part of security studies at military service schools in the United States and abroad. The American war colleges today have courses taught by civilian and military experts for students who someday might be generals or admirals but now must have more knowledge about terrorism and its relationship to national security. Of some significance are at least two policy questions concerned with terrorism and security management: What policy tools are being applied effectively in managing terrorism? and, Given some basic understandings about terrorist phenomena, what lessons are useful toward contributing to American and Western security? These questions (and many others, of course) about terrorism are both academic and policy oriented in the schools which prepare military officers who will have assignments that could expose them to this type of political behavior. What American (and friendly - i.e., Allied and nonaligned) military officers know about terrorism and its associated phenomena of political violence is a relatively underdeveloped area of inquiry. When one considers the growing importance of US military assistance to many Third World friends in the form of knowledge involving all sorts of security problems, we should know more now about military education and its relationship to terrorism.

Consequently, this discussion will confine itself specifically to what aspects of terrorism is taught at the service schools, and to some prescriptions proffered to control terrorism (note, not necessarily "remedy" terrorism since that phenomenon requires long-lasting political rather than purely military treatment). While military specialists of terrorism are equally interested in theories of terrorism, they must concentrate their efforts on having instruments for controlling terrorism besides scrutinizing its associated properties stemming from human behavior.

To begin with, there are many aspects of terrorism which can engage military policy makers' and advisers' interest. For our purposes, let us establish a simple pattern that includes the most important aspects of terrorism for military involvement.

FIGURE ONE



Some Basic Types of Terrorism

By no means should this pattern be construed to mask the complexities of terrorism; rather it is a parsimonious representation of the basic types that terrorism assumes from a security point of view. The historical, psychological, and strategic factors surrounding the acts of political terrorism are half of the equation studied by the military (and taught to their pupils in security assistance programs); while the operational (diplomatic, economic, and military) elements comprise the other half of this equation (and equally taught to their pupils in security assistance programs). When the four types of terrorism are examined by these six factors involved in terrorism, one can see which direction this equation is emphasized more: the operational if we accept the notion that the military is a component of any political management regarding terrorism.

Security assistance means whatever advice, aid and activities the US military will proffer to designated recipients (domestic and foreign) under any guidelines imposed by some agency of government under authority of the President or his recognized deputies. Highly trained individuals (managers and executors) in terrorist problems include people from combat arms specialties, military intelligence and the military police. They are the products of Training and Doctrine Command and Force Command centers in this country, and their Allied or non-aligned (but friendly) counterparts overseas might be graduates of Fort Leavenworth and Fort Bragg.

We mentioned earlier four broad types of terrorism (civilian terrorism; military terrorism; conventional terrorism; nuclear terrorism) that concern the military. Each category contains within it diverse forms, and any category can be affected by "spillover" from another. For simplicity's sake, each type of terrorism will be discussed in terms of issues and concerns, and where possible linked with others when spillover effects might occur. Empirical evidence will be put forward in terms of actual cases or examples to move from the realm of hypothetical to practical as the situation in question permits.

Civilian Terrorism. Terrorism aimed at civilian personnel has often times been in the news. The 1972 Munich massacre of Israeli athletes by the "Black September" offshoot of Fatah, or the 1986 Rome-Vienna killings of travellers by suicide assassins belonging to Abu Nidal's faction of the PLO are but two examples of international terrorism really aimed at destroying the State of Israel politically. Europe and the Middle East are not the only theaters of violence. American nuns in El Salvador a few years ago were killed by right-wing terrorists some of whom used soldiers in the Army as triggermen. At times terrorism is directed at national figures who are political, religious or economic notables to achieve a psychological effect that terrorists want on their real target - the public. The IRA's attempt on Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of Great Britain in 1984, or M 19's destruction of the Colombian Supreme Court justices in 1985 are two examples.

While such acts of civilian terrorism are international from the American viewpoint (but domestic from that nation's public when occurring), urban and rural terrorism from MOVE or the Order do concern

military security specialists here. Of course, the FBI and local police ostensibly handle radical groups which use violence as a political means of expression. The US military however has access to FBI reports, and stores any information away for later use in studying possible case scenarios of urban and rural terrorism which military advisers may come into contact later.

Studies of terrorism naturally focus on insurgency operations and how to counter them. The terrorist organizations which specifically attack civilians as bystanders or targets are examined in terms of psychology, history and strategy. Knowing the ecology surrounding terrorism and terrorist organizations is the key to these studies by military experts in security assistance. Lessons derived from past behavior sometimes become rules and procedures codified in some field manual or briefing given to students. Whole psychological operations campaigns are devised by military and civilian specialists to deal with terrorism particularly in neutralizing the effects of terrorism (fear) on its real victims - a target population. Although these psychological operations campaigns can be defensive, they also have offensive capabilities too. Operation Phoenix in Vietnam and some Contra programs in Nicaragua today fall into this category.

Military Terrorism. Military terrorism involves professionally trained soldiers and amateur guerrilla fighters who apply terrorism to retain a regime's power or seize it. That is another aspect of insurgency - counterinsurgency terrorist theory; however, it is not the only one. The killing of 243 US Marines in Beirut during 1983 by a faction (or factions) using a suicide bomber driving a truck laden with explosives into the Marine barracks near the airport is one tragic example of military terrorism. The selective mutilation and killing of military prisoners in the early stages of the Soviet-Afghan war on both sides is another case in point. Both serve to teach that war is in the mind of its beholder; killing the symbols of oppression or resistance in order to dissuade others is terrorism too. Many low intensity conflicts (LICS) in the Third World are susceptible to acts of military terrorism, and some regimes employ this type as another instrument of politics. Military terrorism is also possible when a coup brings a new leadership to power and the army is sent to the streets to cow civilian opponents and bystanders alike (as in the 1985 coup in Monrovia, Liberia). Finally, military terrorism exists when forces of a country at war with another use deliberate and needless political violence against the enemy civilian populace such as the present Iran-Iraq war exhibits along their mutual borders, or Vietnam-Cambodia since 1978.

Conventional Terrorism. All of the above examples spill over into this category, plus more. But another distinction must be made about conventional terrorism, and that is in regards to weaponry more than anything else. In every case of terrorism until now, conventional weapons are the means of inflicting suffering, maiming and death. Guns, grenades, explosives are some of the weapons used by terrorists on their victims. (Nuclear weapons will be discussed as separate category.) Terrorist organizations themselves are "conventional" in terms of membership and leadership (unless a terrorist operates as an "organization of one" when

phoning the media to take credit or announce a threat concerning terrorism). Terrorist groups may be transnational organizations like the Palestine Liberation Organization, or domestic such as "Shining Path" in Peru. They may be outlawed in two countries as the IRA is in Great Britain and Ireland, or state-supported like Uruguay and Argentina until the mid 1980's when democratic governments put an end to these units at least for the time being. And this list could go on about terrorist strategies and tactics against governments, corporations or private individuals and groups terrorism seeks to harm. In all, terrorism is war by the few against another few in the midst of a many in the way. It can be systematic or sporadic, and always difficult to control - much less eradicate. Here intelligence is critical for saving lives and property (counterterrorism), or taking them (terrorism); the lessons and principles drawn from conventional terrorism are important to those applying political violence for specific purposes.

Nuclear Terrorism. This is a phenomenon whose appearance is yet to be made. Dramatizations such as *Special Bulletin* (1983) where terrorists fashion a nuclear weapon that eventually obliterates Charleston, South Carolina may be science fiction, but they are plausible and well within the realm of probability. Since the proliferation of nuclear technology abroad by the United States and the Soviet Union first during the 1950's, the numbers of nuclear states possessing weapons or convertible technology has grown substantially by the 1980's. It is no secret that Khaddafy of Libya wanted to buy or develop a nuclear weapon from any country (or countries) willing to assist him. The possibility of local terrorist groups stealing a nuclear weapon from an American installation in the United States may seem remote, it might be less so in countries where US warheads are stored in Europe and Asia. Again, the possibility exists although the probability is for now extremely low.

But nuclear terrorism is not only a bomb in unauthorized and dangerous hands. This type of terrorism can make a nuclear power plant into a radiological weapon. In every nation where nuclear reactors exist to make electricity, the potential for terrorism is there. Plant security is usually a civil matter in peace time, and the record so far is possibility "n," actuality "o." Only so far, however. Nor does nuclear terrorism require weaponry in the megatonnage or kilotonnage scale to be convincing. Scenarios by government agencies in the United States and other nuclear countries abound where terrorists somehow possess very small and dirty nuclear devices which can be placed and detonated anywhere in a target state. Any conveyance might be of use other than a missile; as *Special Bulletin* aptly showed, a tugboat can work. The prospect of nuclear terrorism coexisting with all other types of terrorism mentioned here is certainly appalling to many people, appealing to a few.

This essay sought to open another area of inquiry dealing with terrorism and national security. The role of the military to terrorism is not new, nor are the questions of the uses of military power to affect terrorism (or vice-versa) necessarily novel. But the role of terrorism to security studies ought not be surprising. Just as terrorism is a field of inquiry for univer-

sities and think tanks in America and elsewhere, so has it become for the war colleges particularly in recent times (just as the Vietnam war and the Middle East were stimuli for American military interest; the violent decolonization experiences for the British, French, Dutch and Portuguese after World War II accomplished the same interest; and terrorism always was of interest to the Soviet bloc in terms of its tactical usefulness than threat potential to bloc interests or survival).

The basic typology put forward is by no means a precursor to another formal model (it could be, naturally) as much as it serves as a teaching device upon which more elaborate research is encouraged. The four types of terrorism (civilian terrorism; military terrorism; conventional terrorism; nuclear terrorism) are security problems which do engage military interest. Three of these basic types occur in many ways at different places. The literature in books and journals on them is extensive and empirically valid. The nuclear terrorism type is, on the other hand, somewhat new and developing - but with problems affecting (afflicting?) this development. Much information is highly classified. Publishing data about nuclear devices and weapons also spreads information to those elements who might employ this knowledge to terrorism somehow. Reportage of incidents where sabotage really existed at a nuclear installation is not always available nor reliable. Despite these obstacles - both governmental and commercial - research on nuclear terrorism is continuing. Security studies has an advantage now where it is conducted by specialists at the war colleges: these researchers have access to classified information others in universities would like to have and cannot. Be that as it may, the problem of nuclear terrorism is a serious one which goes beyond classroom exercises or war games.

The phenomenon of terrorism is an important area that will absorb more energy and effort by those in security studies. As their research comes into the disciplines of history and political science, for example, the continuing exchange of ideas and information among the service schools and their university and think tank counterparts will contribute to our understanding of terrorism. In the meantime, terrorism will be an important factor in security studies and for those nations needing knowledge to manage this danger for their well-being.