

How Successful Is Terrorism?

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Abstract:

Observers have suggested that terrorism almost always fails to achieve any of its objectives. Others, however, have argued that terrorism has been more successful in achieving at least some important goals for the groups mounting the violent actions. Of course, since terrorism is a weapon of the weak, it will often fail to achieve any of the political objectives of the organization. Terrorist groups supported or tolerated by governments that target their own citizens have been something of an exception to this pattern of failure for obvious reasons. While dissident extremist groups resorting to terrorism usually fail, the question is how often do any of the groups actually accomplish at least some of their goals.

An analysis of some of the better known organizations relying on terrorism indicates that while success may be rare, groups have realized objectives through the use of this form of violence. Organizations rooted in ethnic or nationalist grievances—including colonial situations—have been among the more successful. There have been somewhat fewer apparent instances of obvious success for religious groups and for terrorist organizations primarily motivated by various ideologies. Perhaps the most important conclusion is that terrorism as a technique has been successful often enough to provide encouragement to other groups seeking to obtain political change. The chances of success may be small for weak groups facing powerful opponents, but there is at least the possibility that a reliance on terrorism can work.

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Terrorism has become a frightening phenomenon and a concern for many governments and citizens around the world. A great number of important debates about terrorism have appeared as a consequence. There are major related to the definition of terrorism, causes of terrorism, and evaluations of terrorism that attempt to determine whether terrorism has been successful or not. The present analysis will focus on how effective terrorism has been. Many have argued that terrorism inevitably fails to achieve its objective or that it only works in very special or exceptional circumstances. Others have argued that terrorism has been much more successful. These different views will be presented below as a backdrop to a consideration of a variety of circumstances in which terrorist organizations have been able to achieve at least some of their goals. Of course, whether or not terrorism succeeds or appears to succeed is important for governments, their publics, and for anyone analyzing the phenomenon. The cases will be subdivided for purposes of discussion into nationalist or ethnic struggles (including those with religious overtones), more clearly religious struggles, and then conflicts involving ideological terrorist organizations. Further, a more general consideration of cases where terrorist organizations have sought to achieve shorter-term or tactical goals with their attacks will be included. Finally, some concluding thoughts about the relative success of terrorism as a technique for achieving political goals will be offered. If terrorism is a successful technique for groups to use, it would also suggest that the success is a cause of terrorism.

Definitions

There has been much discussion about a working definition of terrorism, and many have been offered. While the debate over definition is important in many respects, a fairly common but comprehensive definition is used in the present study, and it is also consistent with many other definitions commonly used. It consists of the following six parts:

- (1) terrorism has political objectives;
- (2) it relies on violence or the threat of violence;
- (3) it has a target audience beyond the immediate victims;
- (4) it involves organization and is not just the actions of isolated individuals
- (5) it involves a non-state actor as the perpetrator or the target or both; and
- (6) it is a weapon of the weak designed to change the distribution of power (Claridge, 1996; Enders and Sandler, 2006, p. 5; Hoffman, 2006, Chap. 1; Lutz and Lutz, 2005, p. 7).

This definition would include actions such as bank robberies and kidnappings undertaken to finance an organization with political objectives, but would exclude similar actions by criminal groups that are designed to generate profits in what is basically an entrepreneurial activity. The need for a target audience is a key defining characteristic of terrorism since the violence is designed to strike fear into a broader group. Terrorism is ultimately a form of psychological warfare that is directed against this target audience (Chalk, 1996, p. 13; Wilkinson, 1977, p. 81). The violence involved is designed to break the spirit of some group or groups and the immediate victims are a means of sending a message to that audience (Gaucher, 1968, p. 298). Organization is also required in order for a group to attempt to achieve its political objectives. Isolated actions by individuals such as Theodore Kaczynski, the Unabomber, can be ambivalent cases. But his anti-modernization attacks failed when he was caught, thus ending the threat because individuals acting alone are almost inevitably doomed to failure. Individuals operating within the loosely organized networks or within the context of leaderless resistance structures, however, do qualify since they are acting within a broad framework. They share an effort to achieve common political objectives within the context of an at least tacit alliance based on shared political views (Hoffman, 2001, p. 418). Individual attacks within the global jihadist movement, for example, have become part of a broad, common struggle. With the above definition, a non-governmental actor has to be involved. Dissident attacks on the government or government supporters are included. Government toleration or support of terrorism against its own citizens by domestic groups qualifies. Also included would be attacks by non-governmental groups against other non-governmental groups as long as the violence was designed to achieve an objective with political goals such as the departure of an unpopular minority group from a given area. Terrorism is also a weapon of the weak (Kydd and Walter, 2006, p. 50). Groups with other options—winning elections, mounting coups d'état, removing those in power through a conspiracy, organizing massive public demonstrations—do not need to rely on terrorism. Even when governments support terrorism against their own citizens it is because they either cannot use security forces for repression or they cannot rely on those security forces; consequently, they are forced to rely on irregular means to deal with dissidents. The

possibility of governments supporting or condoning terrorism against their own citizens is the one area where this definition diverges from official definitions such as the one used by the US Department of State. Governments, of course, are loath to indict themselves, and they frequently avoid indicting other governments who may be potential allies or who may reciprocate with similar charges. Many definitions of terrorism include another component. They specify that the violence in question is also often directed against civilians or non-combatants. Inclusion of this element in a definition introduces a bit more uncertainty in terms of dealing with attacks against off-duty police, security, or military personnel. Whether or not government leaders are true non-combatants in a political struggle can also be called into question as well. While it is useful to note that terrorism usually does involve attacks against civilian or non-combatants, it will not be considered an essential part of a definition of terrorism for the present analysis.

There have been disagreements about actual definitions and about distinguishing between terrorists and freedom fighters—differences that are impossible to resolve, especially since terrorism is a technique available to groups with dissimilar and even contradictory goals. Many have argued that terrorists are usually rational in their choice of targets. What is very rare is the situation in which targets are chosen at random despite the common misperception that terrorists do not care who or what the targets are. Terrorist groups are very rational in their choice of targets, evaluating strengths and weaknesses, costs and benefits, and target choice is rarely indiscriminate (Drake, 1998, p. 53; Gupta, 2005, p. 20). The *appearance* of randomness, however, can increase the fear of violence in target audiences (Enders and Sandler, 2006, pp. 3, 11). Terrorists, however, do not randomly choose their targets, even if they randomly choose individuals within a target group. The targets that are chosen have at least some linkage with the goals and objectives of the terrorist groups. Terrorist groups respond in a sensible and predictable fashion to the risks that they face, and they are normally quite rational in terms of planning the actions and in the selections of targets.

Another key definition for the analysis is a definition of success. As difficult as a workable definition of terrorism is, the definition of success is even more problematic. Terrorist groups may have multiple objectives, and they may fail to achieve some but gain others. Their public statements and communiqués provide some insights, but it has to be remembered that some of these pronouncements are propaganda designed to mobilize support, and the stated goals may not be the actual or most important objectives of the leadership. Groups may claim to seek more than they hope to achieve in order to provide room for negotiations or compromise. Terrorist leaders are frequently politicians (even if not typical politicians); politicians should not always be taken at their word—a caution that should be applied to terrorist leaders.

It should be recognized, of course, that the vast majority of terrorist groups fail to achieve any of their goals. Most appear quickly and disappear just as quickly. The police or security forces immediately catch many of the groups when they attempt their first operations. It is also likely that many of the initial attempts at terrorist actions are fairly amateurish. Terrorists, when given the chance, no doubt get better over time if they survive their initial attempts at violence. While we have a historical record of the terrorist organizations that have mounted a series of

attacks and that have had some impact, the record for groups eliminated early in their existence is much less complete. The historical record is probably especially sketchy as failed groups would often not be recorded (Lutz and Lutz, 2005, pp. 2-3). Other factors may lead to groups going unnoticed as well. If the Symbionese Liberation Army had not kidnapped Patty Hearst, it is unlikely that it would be remembered at all outside of California law enforcement circles. Thus, when considering the overall record of terrorist groups vis-à-vis the government, a not surprising conclusion to reach is that most fail to achieve anything (Crenshaw, 1995b, p. 27).

Unfortunately, because of the above considerations and others it is difficult to construct any sort of random sample of terrorist groups or to choose terrorist groups to consider in an analysis of success or failure. Abrahms did undertake a study that analyzed 28 terrorist groups to determine how successful they were, and he used their public pronouncements to specify what their goals (Abrahms, 2006). His sample was derived from the list that the United States considers to be terrorists and is not very comprehensive (Rose and Murphy, 2007). Reflecting the failure of countries to agree on definitions, the US list and the British list are different. The British list contains only 21 groups, and there are only thirteen groups common to both lists (Silke, 2004, p. 5). The US list had major and minor groups. One obvious omission from the list was the IRA—although the Continuity IRA, a splinter group did make the list. The US failure to include the IRA obviously reflected the unwillingness of politicians to alienate Irish-American voters. No anti-Castro terrorist group ever made the list. Other groups were probably not included because they were small or operated in other countries and did not target US interests. While Abrahms' list had problems, it is not possible to provide a systematic sample or universe. As noted there is no reliable information on many groups, especially the majority of those that quickly fail. As a consequence, the discussion to follow will have to draw upon anecdotal information and focus more on the small minority of groups that appear to have been able to achieve some successes based on analysis of the consequences of their actions.

Previous Studies

While organizations relying on terrorism will usually fail to accomplish any of the goals they set for themselves, some have argued that terrorism will inevitably fail, which is a much broader argument than the one that they usually fail. Karl Marx felt that terrorism would generally be counterproductive as a tactic (Smith and Damphousse, 1998, p. 140). Carr (2002) has suggested that terrorism does not work, whether it is terrorism in wartime that attempts to induce terror in civilian populations or terrorism that targets governments in power. In fact, he suggests that targeting civilians and the general public ultimately hurts the causes that the violent group favors. Similarly, it has been suggested that Hizballah fared better in Lebanon once it abandoned its terrorist tactics (Blackburn, 2002, p. 28). Abrahms (2006) concluded that in most cases terrorist groups failed to achieve any of their objectives, and in only a few cases could they be credited with having achieved even minimal goals, and usually only in cases involving ethnic or nationalist groups. Pape (2005) in his analysis of suicide bombings concluded that such attacks were effective when they were linked to nationalist issues. In order to arrive at this conclusion,

however, he is forced to argue that the campaigns of Al Qaeda and others are essentially nationalist struggles and not religious ones. This approach would appear to be stretching the definition of nationalist too far. Hoffman (2006) has suggested that terrorism only succeeds in special circumstances, such as colonial situations, where national liberation movements struggling for independence have greater support (internally and even internationally) than is the case for most groups. Wilkinson (2000) essentially agreed with this conclusion. Although he noted there are a few additional potential examples of limited success for terrorist groups, he found the overall “track record in attaining major political objectives abysmal (p. 22).” He felt that political groups have been drawn to this form of violence in part because it utilizes few resources and in part because their mistaken view that it is successful (p. 22). Others have suggested that terrorism actually is quite successful in a variety of contexts (Harmon, 2001; Kydd and Walter, 2006). Thus, the question is somewhat open as to the extent to which terrorism actually does work.

Government Support of Domestic Terrorism

There has been one important exception to the idea that terrorism does not work. While some analysts only consider anti-government dissident groups or subnational groups to be eligible to be considered terrorists, if one accepts the fact that governments can be involved in terrorism by tolerating or actively supporting violent domestic groups that attack citizens in the state, then the evaluation of success will be different. Governments can become involved in such attacks through the use of death squads, support for paramilitary or vigilante groups, or by failing to pursue or prosecute groups that target opponents of the government in power or other groups that are unpopular or seen to be dangerous (Claridge, 1996; Lutz and Lutz, 2008, Chap. 10; Sproat, 1991). Such government involvement can be very effective. The military junta that came to power in Argentina in the 1970s effectively used such measures to end the leftist threat in that country (Gillespie, 1995, p. 242). White settlers in the United State were able to practice ethnic cleansing against the Cherokees, Creeks, Chickasaws, Choctaws, and Seminoles (and other Indian groups)—sometimes with the active support of government and sometimes with the tolerant passivity of the authorities (Lutz and Lutz, 2007, pp. 27-31). Attacks by “war veterans” and party militias in Zimbabwe were quite successful in undercutting the opposition to Robert Mugabe and have been very helpful in keeping him in power (McGregor, 2002; Meredith, 2002; Taylor and Williams, 2002). More recently, the activities of the janjaweed militias in Darfur have demonstrated how a government can have local paramilitaries terrorize a portion of its own population and engage in ethnic cleansing. Government officials and military officers in Indonesia have assisted the Muslim militants involved in fighting between Christians and Muslims in parts of the Moloccus and Sulawesi (Desker, 2002; Hefner, 2002). In the Philippines the government at times has provided support for Christian vigilantes who have used violence against the Muslim rebels and Muslims in general in the southern part of the country, while at other times they have simply tolerated the attacks (Tan, 2003). In Nigeria in recent years, some government officials encouraged mob attacks in the Muslim north against southerners and local

police failed to intervene to stop the violence (Harnischfeger, 2004; Suberu, 2005). Similarly, local Hindu officials in India stood aside when mobs attacked Muslim communities in Mumbai in 2002. Relatively few arrests were made, and no one was ever brought to trial for participation in the attacks Bhatt, 2001, pp. 197-201; Mann, 2005, p. 484). India has also used death squads and other extralegal procedures to help defeat the Sikh uprising in Punjab in the 1980s and early 1990s (Gossman, 2000; Pettigrew, 2000). The success of these tactics has led Indian officials to use similar techniques in fighting insurgents and terrorists in Kashmir and in dealing with dissidents in other parts of the country (Gossman, 2000, pp. 262-3). These efforts, however, have not been as effective in Kashmir as they were in the Punjab, indicating that not even government support for terrorist groups or death squads always works. In the case of East Timor, the Indonesian government relied on death squads and paramilitaries when the regular military was unable to defeat the independence movement in that country (Aditjondro, 2000; Claridge, 1996; Schulze, 2001). Ultimately, these efforts failed, and Indonesia was forced to concede independence to East Timor.

Government supported terrorism often works because the resources of the state are linked with the groups practicing the violence. While the resort to supporting terrorist groups and paramilitaries is a sign of weakness on the part of governments, governments have more resources than dissident terrorist groups; thus, only governments can support the use of terrorism on a mass scale (Wilkinson, 2006, p. 3). At the very least groups supported or tolerated by governments do not normally have to worry about being arrested or held accountable for their activities. Their resources, whether supplemented by the government or not, can be devoted to the use of violence (Lutz and Lutz, 2006a). One consequence of these circumstances is that the resulting terrorism is more lethal and effective. While such government-supported terrorism against its own citizens will often contribute to achieving objectives, the previous studies that concluded that terrorism does not work only focused on terrorism by dissident groups opposed to governments in power. While government terrorism against its own citizens is indeed important, the discussions to follow will focus on dissidents groups that may have achieved some successes, thus contradicting the broader generalization about dissident terrorism. For ease of presentation, first ethnic and nationalist terrorist organizations will be considered, then by religious groups, then by ideological groups, and finally situations in which groups have achieved more short-term or tactical objectives.

Ethnic/Nationalist Terrorist Groups

National liberation groups have been credited with the successful use of terrorism in a number of cases as noted above. The decolonialization of Cyprus, Palestine, Aden, and Algeria are seen as successful uses of terrorism that helped to contribute to the departure of the colonial power. In Palestine the attacks by Jewish terrorist groups such as the Irgun and the Stern Gang were an important factor in helping to convince the British to pull out of the colony (Beckett, 2001, pp. 88-9; Gaucher, 1968, p. 220; Hoffman, 2006, pp. 50-1). The British decided that the benefits from remaining in Palestine were outweighed by the increasing costs. In the case of Cyprus, the

British came to a similar conclusion in the face of mounting violence from terrorists and guerrillas and the lack of support with the Greek Cypriot population (Enders and Sandler, 2006, p. 17; Hoffman, 2006, pp. 58-9). The dissidents in this case were not totally successful, however, since the island became independent but was not allowed to unify with Greece, which was one of the key objectives of the dissidents. In the case of Aden, the terrorist action led to the British departure sooner than initially anticipated, and the British did not have sufficient time to set up a friendly regime. The dissidents were also successful in establishing a much more radical regime in what was to become the Peoples Democratic Republic of Yemen. The creation of this radical state was a direct consequence of the violence. In the case of Algeria, the French eventually decided to grant independence rather than face the continuing costs of defeating the guerrilla and terrorist campaigns. Although the French had actually won the military conflict, it came at a high cost in terms of finances and in terms of the techniques required to succeed (Beckett, 2001, p. 165; Crenshaw, 1995a, p. 499). The French had defeated the rebels in military terms, but the Algerian rebels had won the psychological battle that helped to influence the French to leave.

These colonial/national liberation struggles are often considered to be special cases of terrorist success, especially since the colonial powers had open avenues for retreat or departure to the home country. In other circumstances, however, ethnic groups such as the ETA, IRA, and PLO have had some partial successes. The Basque nationalists have failed to achieve independence, but the Basque region has received significant grants of autonomy as a series of Spanish governments have sought to weaken the local support for the ETA through concessions to nationalist feelings. If the ETA had not launched violent attacks in an effort to gain independence, it is unlikely that these concessions providing greater autonomy to the region would have been forthcoming (Shabad and Ramo, 1995, p. 468). The IRA has been somewhat less successful to date, but the future of Northern Ireland has now become a subject for negotiations. The most recent efforts have included the idea of power-sharing, and the Sinn Fein as the political branch of the IRA has become an important—and accepted—actor on the local political scene. Without the years of IRA violence it is extremely unlikely that the British would even have considered negotiations or that the local Protestant majority in Northern Ireland would have consented to any reduction in its control (Alonso, 2001, p. 142). In fact, prior to the violence the Protestant majority used a variety of mechanisms to limit Catholic gains and even gerrymandered voting districts to maintain an overwhelming share of resources (Clutterbuck, 1974, pp. 51-2; O'Day, 1979, p. 126). These kinds of arrangements are no longer accepted. Similarly, although the PLO and related Palestinian groups have not yet achieved an independent state, these groups are closer to that possibility than when the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were occupied by Israel in 1967. While it is possible that Israel might have eventually made concessions, it is more likely that Israel would not have made the concessions or made them when it did without the resort to terrorism by PLO and other groups (Gal-Or, 1994, p. 44). Without the violence, Israel would have been reluctant to grant any power to the Palestinian Authority, to have evacuated the Gaza Strip, and or to have considered the possibility of an

independent Palestinian entity on the other side of a security barrier. The PLO, in fact, has been considered successful enough to be a model for other ethnic and nationalist organizations (Hoffman, 1998, pp. 68-9).

Other nationalist or ethnic groups have been able to use terrorism to achieve at least some successes in their struggles with governments. An earlier era provides another positive example. It has been suggested that the Sons of Liberty and similar organizations were successful in using terrorist types of violence to challenge the British government. Assaults, intimidation, and attacks on property were effective in negating the implementation of the Stamp Act in 1765 (Bobrick, 1977, p. 62; Davis, 1996, p. 224; Gilje, 1987, p. 48). “So effective was the campaign of intimidation that the Stamp Act was already completely meaningless by the time Parliament repealed it (Hollon, 1974, p. 10).” In the years prior to the outbreak of the American Revolution similar kinds of attacks undermined support among the Loyalists and helped to precipitate a reaction from the British government that mobilized support for the battle for independence (Lutz and Lutz, 2007, pp. 19-20). The opposition to the Stamp Act and the later events preceding the outbreak of fighting were quite significant in one regard—the dissidents did not kill their opponents. They were assaulted and their property was destroyed, but nobody was killed in this controlled “mob” violence (Schlesinger, 1955, p. 246).

The Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka had forced the government into negotiations through its lengthy guerrilla and terrorist campaigns. There is every indication that the government would have ignored the political wishes of the Tamil minority without the violence. For a time many in the majority Sinhalese population accepted (or are at least resigned to) a more autonomous Tamil area in the country (Kaarthikeyan, 2005). While there are some elements within the Tamil Tigers that still desire total independence, others appear willing to accept autonomy instead (Pluchinsky, 2006, p. 52). In Aceh in Indonesia the independence movement has brought the Indonesian government to the negotiating table, and that province now has a chance to achieve the increased autonomy that many have long desired (Askandar, 2007; Tan, 2007, p. 55). The Chechens have been involved in a lengthy and violent conflict with the Russian government since the breakup of the Soviet Union. The Chechen dissidents have used guerrilla warfare, especially when the Russian forces were weak, and terrorism when the Russians were stronger. In the first confrontations with the central government, the Chechens were able to achieve a significant amount of autonomy for the province, but many of these gains have been lost in later conflicts (Kramer, 2004/2005, pp. 61-3; Williams, 2001). There still remains the possibility that the province will gain autonomy or even independence. There seems to be little doubt that the terrorism by these nationalist/ethnic groups accomplished at least some objectives for the dissidents. Negotiations, autonomy, or greater unity in a later rebellion (in the case of the Sons of Liberty) occurred as a direct consequence of the violence and terrorism.

There are two additional cases of nationalist terrorism that are worth considering as potential examples of the successful use of terrorism. After World War I, the new state of Yugoslavia faced terrorist attacks from Macedonians and Croats (and others). Initially enthusiastic about the idea of Yugoslavia, many Croats became disillusioned and began to agitate

for their own independent state, and it was a Croatian nationalist group that was responsible for organizing the assassination of King Alexander I while he was on a state visit to France (Havens *et al.*, 1975, pp. 80-90). The Croat nationalists launched other attacks as well. During World War II, the more extreme Croat nationalists represented by the Ustashe were granted a state by Germany and Italy, and Croatia became an Axis ally. This state, of course, disappeared with the end of World War II and the defeat of the Axis. Émigré Croat groups, however, continued the struggle, and they launched a number of attacks outside of Yugoslavia after the war to keep up the pressure for an independent Croatia, but these efforts also failed. The Macedonian nationalists were led by the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO). IMRO first appeared when Macedonia was still part of the Ottoman Empire, using guerrilla warfare and terrorism in its struggle to create an independent Macedonia by driving out the Turks (Gaucher, 1968, pp. 164-6; Perry, 1988, pp. 125-8). This effort failed when most of Macedonia was annexed by Serbia following the Balkan Wars. After World War I, IMRO, supported by Bulgaria, used a terror campaign in efforts to create an independent Macedonia or to unite Macedonia with Bulgaria (Banac, 1984, p. 323; Poulton, 2000, p. 93). Much of Macedonia was occupied by and incorporated into Bulgaria during World War II, but after the Allied victory the territory was returned to Yugoslavia. By the normal criteria of “success” it was obvious as of 1945 that both the Croatians and Macedonians had failed. Yet, if one looks at a map of Europe today, there is indeed an independent Croatia and an independent Macedonia. Did the terrorists actually fail or were they ultimately successful? The terrorist activities of the 1920s and 1930s may have kept the ideas of an independent Croatia and independent Macedonia alive for their supporters, thus providing some impetus for their creation fifty years later. Similarly, the efforts of the Croat nationalists after World War II may also have contributed to the continuing idea of an independent national state.

Religious Groups

Groups whose motivations are principally rooted in religious beliefs have also had some successes with terrorism. Two early examples were the Zealots in Roman Judea and the Assassins. The Jewish Zealots and the related anti-Roman groups in the Judea and neighboring provinces used terrorism to silence supporters of Rome. These groups were essentially “religious patriots” seeking the liberation of their country (Applebaum, 1971, p. 69). The anti-Roman groups used the assassination of prominent Jewish collaborators with the Roman Empire (Sheldon, 1994, p. 3). The attacks were very effective in silencing the opponents and in creating a relatively unified population when the revolt occurred (Josephus, 1981). Unlike the Sons of Liberty, the Zealots were not ultimately successful in driving out the imperial power, but like the Sons of Liberty they were successful in one of their primary goals—that of neutralizing imperial supporters and unifying the population behind the rebellion. The initial revolt in 66 C.E. failed, but the initial effort set a pattern for later revolts in 115 in Cyrene that spread to Egypt and Cyprus and one in 132 that was centered in Judea. These revolts, especially the one of 132, required the mobilization of significant forces by the Romans (Eck, 1999). The Assassins were

members of the unorthodox Shia Nizari sect that operated ten centuries after the Zealots. The Assassins used selective terrorism to defend themselves from the Sunni rulers that surrounded them and who threatened the very survival of the Nizari sect. The Assassins proved to be quite successful in protecting the sect in what was essentially a defensive response to the more powerful states (Rapoport, 1990, p. 150). They protected the members from persecution or attack by threatening to kill the rulers and key officials of states that might target them. Their campaigns of assassinations were frequently effective in protecting the sect from the majority Sunni majority for a number of centuries (Lutz and Lutz, 2005, pp. 29, 31-2). It should be noted that some scholars have suggested that the Assassins were not especially effective since the power base of the sect was eventually destroyed (Laqueur, 1977 p. 9; Lewis, 1968, p. 139). The Assassins were only destroyed, however, by the invading Mongol armies that also destroyed the much more powerful states in the region. The fact that the Nizari sect not only survived at the time but that it continues to exist today would suggest that the Assassins were actually more successful than some of the more conventional neighboring states.

Among currently active groups, Hizballah in Lebanon has proven to be quite effective in using terrorism to advance its political agenda. Hizballah has come to be the political representative of the Shia population in Lebanon. The Shia have been the largest single identifiable group in the country but the poorest as well. Hizballah has been at least somewhat successful in gaining a better political position for the Shia. The group has also successfully used terrorism to attack foreign forces in Lebanon, including the US marines and French paratroopers that were serving as peacekeepers as well as units of the Israeli Defense Force. The American, French, and other forces left the country in response to the attacks, and continuing pressure against the Israelis eventually led to the evacuation of their foothold in southern Lebanon (Crenshaw, 2003b, p. 172; Hoffman, 2002, p. 310; Kydd and Walter, 2006). These tactical victories were perhaps more dramatic since they resulted in the withdrawal of foreign forces from Lebanese soil. The domestic gains from terrorism for Hizballah were perhaps more important for the organization since it helped the group to become one of the major political forces in the country and an important party in the Lebanese parliament (Esposito, 2006, p. 153). Hamas is another current group that has had some successes, although not on the same level as Hizballah. Hamas won the most recent legislative elections for the Palestinian Authority and displaced the PLO/Fatah as the most popular political force in the occupied territories. There seems to be little doubt that the attacks by Hamas against Israel were a very effective way of mobilizing support among voters. The attacks by Hamas have also led to the modification of Israeli policies in terms of the timetables of withdrawals from areas of the West Bank or the Gaza Strip, providing some additional tactical gains as well (Dolnik and Bhattacharjee, 2002, pp. 111-3). While Hamas has not been able to achieve its ultimate goal of creating an Islamic Palestinian state (including at least in theory all of present-day Israel), it is difficult to disagree that it has been partially successful. If a Palestinian state is ever created, the activities of Hamas, like the earlier activities of the PLO, will have played a role.

Al Qaeda has clearly been an active terrorist organization based on religion. It has obviously not achieved its basic goals of driving the US troops from Saudi Arabian soil, or limiting or excluding US and Western influences from the Middle East, or the destruction of Israel. Further, these broad goals are not likely to be achieved in the immediate future. Even so, al Qaeda and bin Laden have achieved some successes. Al Qaeda has demonstrated that the United States and the West are vulnerable, and it has been a key factor in the organization of parts of the global jihad movement and served as the inspiration for many of the other groups that have undertaken attacks in support of the global jihad. It has been a one of the forces behind the insurgent and terrorist attacks in Afghanistan and Iraq that have been designed to force the withdrawal of US and coalition forces from these countries. While there is no immediate indication that troops will be withdrawn from Afghanistan, there is increasing sentiment in the United States for a withdrawal of troops from Iraq. Such a withdrawal would have to be counted a success for the global jihad movements, especially if religious leaders were to govern Iraq directly or indirectly. Such a state would be more in keeping with the goals of Islamic groups than the very secular Baathist regime of Saddam Hussein. Attacks by global jihadists against Spain in 2004 were a factor in the change of government in power in that country and played a role in the withdrawal of Spanish forces. The attacks on the Madrid commuter trains were apparently designed to punish Spain for its role as a US ally in Iraq. There is less evidence that the attacks were actually intentionally designed to influence the outcome of the election that occurred shortly afterwards and which put a government in power that did withdraw the Spanish troops (Alonso and Reinares, 2006, p. 181). The election results appear to have been changed by the attack and by the clumsy efforts of the governments to blame the attacks on the Basque nationalists rather than global jihadists. The efforts to punish Spain were successful, and the subsequent withdrawal of the troops has to be counted as a success, even if a somewhat unintentional one.

Most of the above examples involved Islamic groups. There have been, of course, other terrorist groups identified with other religions. While they have not achieved their ultimate objectives, they have managed to achieve some intermediate or short-term goals as will be noted below. One exception is the anti-abortion movement in the United States. While most members of these groups are active because of religious convictions, they are drawn from a variety of religious groups that do not otherwise share a common theology. While most anti-abortion protesters have been peaceful, some elements have been willing to resort to violence. There have been property attacks on abortion clinics and vandalism that have convinced landlords to avoid renewing leases and that have caused increases in insurances costs (Perlstein, 1997; Wilson and Lynxwiler, 1988, p. 266). In other cases violence has been directed against workers in the clinics. Attacks and threats have led to some doctors and nurses quitting (Baird-Windle and Bader, 2001, pp. 142-4; Wilson and Lynxwiler, 1988, pp. 266-7). In a handful of cases doctors have been murdered for providing abortions. In at least some cases the deaths have been justified not as punishment but as means of deterring others from working in the field (Juergensmeyer, 2000, pp. 21-4). No doubt other doctors and medical workers have been

deterred from providing abortions as a consequence of the attacks. In the final analysis, abortions have become more difficult to obtain in the United States as a consequence of the violence against property and people (Laqueur, 1999, p. 229). Thus, these activities have been at least partially successful in affecting the target audience in the desired fashion and have encouraged others to continue with the attacks on abortion clinics.

Ideological Groups

Left-wing groups have used terrorism, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, while right-wing groups have a long pedigree as well. Most of the leftist groups that appeared in Europe had virtually no successes in terms of achieving their goals. Even the Red Brigades, clearly the most threatening and most active of these movements, failed to achieve their goals. In Latin America some leftist groups had greater impacts on political events in their countries. The terrorism of leftists in Argentina played a role in the downfall of the military junta in power and the return of Juan Peron to power in 1973 (Holmes, 2001). While the terrorism from the left was by no means the only factor that led to the change in regime, it was not an inconsequential factor in a period of general unrest. Later campaigns by the left in Argentina, and in Uruguay to a lesser extent, were successful in forcing the government to adopt more repressive measures. One of the stated intentions of the European and Latin American leftists was forcing governments to adopt such repressive policies to defend the local capitalist interests. They further expected that there would be increasing popular discontent and that this popular discontent would eventually lead to an uprising that would overthrow the government—and put the leftists in power, of course (Anderson and Sloan, 2003, pp. 8-9; Hofstadter, 1970, p. 40). Unfortunately for the left in both Argentina and Uruguay, the military that took over was able to deal with the violence of the dissidents, and the left suffered a series of defeats. In Argentina the new military government unleashed death squads that left as many as 30,000 dead (Fagen, 1992, p. 64). In Uruguay the military government that replaced the weak democratic government was able to defeat the leftist Tupameros with much less violence (Lutz and Lutz, 2005, p. 121). While the public in these countries may have disapproved of the politics of the military, the uprising anticipated by the left never occurred. Although the left actually achieved one of their stated goals, somewhat ironically and tragically, the situation did not result in the outcome that they predicted.

Other leftist groups have had some successes as well in terms of achieving their intended goals. Leftist dissidents in Turkey were an important factor in a change of government. Like leftists elsewhere they hoped that the violence would force the government to show its true colors and that a socialist regime would be the eventual result. The violence from the left resulted in Turkish right-wing groups mobilizing to combat them, and thousands died in the resulting violence (Sayari and Hoffman, 1994, p. 162). The struggle between left and right eventually led to a military coup in 1980. The new regime, like the military governments in Argentina and Uruguay used the state apparatus to repress the left while generally leaving the right-wing groups alone (Bal and Laciner, 2001). There has been a leftist guerrilla and terrorist campaign in Nepal that has led to changes in the government (Tan, 2006, p.p. 142-3). Groups

using terrorist techniques in Colombia have also been at least partially successful. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN) has used guerrilla and terrorist attacks to set up areas of control in the countryside where they have become the *de facto* government (Kline, 2003, p. 177; Ortiz, 2002, p. 134). Of course, FARC has been successful in part because of the links that it has developed with the Colombian drug cartels (Manwaring, 2002). This alliance has provided the Colombian leftists with a continuing source of funds for their campaign against the government and political system (Ortiz, 2002, p. 137). In addition to gaining control of rural areas, the terrorism has been successful in influencing the population. Citizens are so intimidated that they often do not report activities or crimes by the dissident groups due to the fear of reprisals (Brauer *et al*, 2004, p. 447).

A final type of generally leftist group that has had some successes would be animal rights groups. Groups such as the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) and the Animal Rights Militia (ARM), which may be composed of the more radical members of ALF, have largely limited their attacks to businesses and groups in the private sector. The resulting attacks by these and other groups have had at least some successes with property attacks and even some attacks against people involved in targeted areas. Their actions have led some companies to stop using animals for tests, others from supplying animals for such tests, and have made life quite difficult for the fur industry (Liddick, 2006, pp. 39-48; Taylor, 1998, p. 27). Because of their past activities in the past the groups have also been successful in using tampering hoaxes to cause expensive recalls of some products (Dodge, 1997). These groups can regard the recent ban on fox hunting in the United Kingdom as a major victory for their cause. Perhaps one reason why these animal rights groups have been as successful as they have is because they have targeted the economic interests of the firms; thus, they have struck at a key component of business activity—the profit margin (Lutz and Lutz, 2006b).

There are a greater number of examples of successful terrorist campaign by right-wing extremists. Wilkinson (1977, p. 22) notes that the street violence of the Fascists in Italy and the Nazis in Germany contributed to their rise to power and could qualify as rare examples of successful terrorism. The street violence of these groups, especially the confrontations with the left, created fear and provided for the successful intimidation that helped them gain power (Lyttelton, 1982, p. 259). The terrorism was a form of violent propaganda and combined with more conventional propaganda and other political activities aided them in their rise to power (Bessel, 1986; Laqueur, 1996, p. 56). In Rumania, similar street violence combined with a wave of assassinations to propel the fascist Iron Guard into power, although unlike its Italian and German counterparts, it was unable to maintain itself in power (Gaucher, 1968, p. 145; Weber, 1966, p. 103). In addition to the direct victories, fascist groups were successful in other ways. They were opposed to parliamentary democracy and especially to parties of the left having any influence. In many countries their activities led to the establishment of conservative authoritarian regimes that dismantled the parliamentary systems and that repressed the left (Berend, 1998, p. 301; Lutz and Lutz, 2005, p. 72). While the violence did not lead to the establishment of fascist governments as desired, the values and policies of the conservative

authoritarian regimes were much more acceptable to the fascist groups and represented a partial political victory. In Japan a wave of assassinations by extreme Japanese nationalists in the 1930s undermined the democratic system in that country and paved the way for the militarist government that came to power and that then followed expansionist policies that contributed to the outbreak of World War II in the Pacific (Ford, 1985, pp. 256, 266-7; Havens *et al*, p. 31).

The Ku Klux Klan provides another example of a successful right-wing terrorist group. The first Ku Klux Klan and similar organizations that went under a variety of names, which appeared after the Civil War, were almost completely successful in their collective efforts to help the old white elite to regain control of local and state governments in the old Confederacy. By the use of terror and intimidation, Republicans and freed slaves were progressively disenfranchised and effectively relegated to the political margins of society (Chalmers, 1965, p. 10; Release, 1978, p. 213). Efforts to preserve equal rights through the use of the criminal justice system failed because convictions were impossible to obtain. Witnesses were intimidated, and jurors refused to serve because of the dangers involved (Chalmers, 1965, p. 10; Cresswell, 1991, p. 33). This campaign of terror permitted the KKK to reverse the decisions of the Civil War as far as political control of local and state governments. Once the old elite was back in power, the KKK largely disappeared since it was no longer needed. State authorities could be relied upon to maintain control over the black population. When state authority failed, lynchings could and did serve as a warning to blacks not to overstep the imposed social boundaries (Gurr, 1989, p. 206; Hollon, 1974, p. 51). The campaign of terrorism started by the KKK was continued by less formal groups and structures, but just as effectively for many years.

The KKK re-appeared in 1915 and after World War II. The 1915 version of the organization remained anti-black, as had its predecessor, but it was much more of an anti-foreign group. It was opposed to Catholics, Jews, Chinese, immigrants in general, foreign ideas—especially ones perceived to be radical, and anyone else unwilling to adhere to the basically Protestant religious beliefs and morals that dominated the views of the membership Chalmers, 1965, p. 33; Higham, 1955, p. 288; Murphy, 1964, p. 69). This KKK was not restricted to the southern states even though it was strongest in this region, and in many areas it was effective in using terror and violence to enforce its point of view and to maintain social control over the target populations—blacks, foreigners, and radicals (Bennett, 1988, p. 219; de la Roche 1996, p. 115; Higham, 1955, pp. 294-5). The KKK was also part of the structure in the South (and elsewhere) that quite successfully maintained social control over the black population. Lynchings as a form of social control had public support among the white population, and officials condoned the violence much as had been the case in earlier periods (Hofstadter, 1970, p. 20; Toy, 1989, p. 134). This version of the KKK largely disappeared by the time the United States entered World War II. The last version of the KKK that re-appeared after World War II in response to the civil rights struggle, and it practiced terrorism, but it cannot be considered an example of a successful group since it failed to achieve any of its objectives of continued racial discrimination and social control.

Extreme right wing groups in Europe in the last part of the twentieth century have had some limited successes. These groups have opposed the migration of individuals from non-European cultural areas such as the Middle East, Africa, and Asia into European countries. Their cultural, racial, and linguistic distinctiveness have made the migrants targets of violence that has been designed to drive them out. The campaigns to drive out these foreigners have not been especially successful in their primary task, but the violence has led to policy changes by many governments that have made immigration or the attainment of refugee or asylum status much more difficult. The governments that have made these changes have not necessarily been seeking the votes of right wing groups or their sympathizers; they have sought instead to minimize outbreaks of violence by limiting the potential targets in their countries in general or by placing the migrants in areas where they are less likely to be attacked and thereby rewarding the attackers in some areas (Bjorgo, 1997, pp. 127-32; Leiken, 2005). Regardless of the reasons behind the changes in policies, the migration of individuals from these culturally different areas has become more difficult, and the right wing groups have thus gained some of their objectives as a consequence of their use of violence.

There is another example of successful terrorism rooted in ideological beliefs that does not conveniently fit into a left-right continuum. In the 1850s in the United States, Kansas witnessed battles between groups favoring slavery and those opposed to permitting slavery into the territory. Groups on both sides used violence and terrorism in efforts to win control of the political system. The violence included beatings, tarring and feathering, and eventually murders (Abels, 1971, p. 219; Nichols, 1954, p. 102; Oates, 1984, p. 114). The violence by the opposing sides then become more organized and included increased efforts to spread terror on the opposing sides. The violence escalated from occasional deadly attacks to ones where the intent was to kill the partisans of the other side; as a consequence, individuals on both sides of the conflict fled the territory because of their fear of attacks (Nichols, 1954, p. 233; Oates, 1984, p. 146). One of those fighting on the free-soil side was John Brown, who was particularly effective in spreading fear among the pro-slavery forces in the territory (Abels, 1971, p. 76; Oettel, 2002, p. 187). His attacks successfully stirred the pot and kept the conflict going and contributed to the eventual victory of the anti-slavery forces that prevented slavery from being established in Kansas. While both sides in the conflict relied on the same types of tactics, Brown was one of the most successful of the practitioners, which may help to explain why Kansas became a free territory rather than a slave territory.

Success with Short Term or Intermediate Objectives

At times, terrorist groups may have more limited objectives that guide their actions or which they seek to achieve. These shorter term goals, of course, could aid the group in terms of achieving longer term objectives, but they have a value in their own right. In some cases a group may consider itself to be successful if they simply survive to continue to pursue their long term goals (Hoffman, 2002, p. 311). Abrahms (2008) in a later work has suggested that the real objectives of dissident terrorist groups are not their political objectives but such goals as survival,

recruitment, and fund-raising. In some situations terrorist groups have been in competition with each other, and the attacks are designed to gain popular support for a specific movement at the expense of its competitors (Abrahms, 2008; Kydd and Walter, 2006). Competition with Hamas would apparently explain the adoption of suicide attacks by secular groups in Palestine (Bloom, 2004; Moghadam, 2008/2009, pp. 56-8). In other cases, actions are designed to gain financial support or to attract recruits to the organization (Dolnik, p. 21; O'Day, 1979, p. 131). Hamas in Israel/Palestine has also used violence to achieve intermediate goals. It stepped up its attacks just prior to the elections in 1996 and 2001 to encourage election victories for the Likud Party since that party was much less likely to implement the Oslo Peace Accords or reach a negotiated settlement that was contrary to the interests of Hamas (Kydd and Walter, 2006, p. 74). Groups can also use terrorism to even more directly sabotage peace talks or negotiations that threaten the long-term objectives. Successful peace talks would result in some changes in the political situation, but they might not meet some of the goals of the organization. Attacks launched by Basque nationalists in 2006 sabotaged talks between the Spanish government and the ETA that might have led to compromises short of independence. In the case of Israel and the Palestinians, extremists on both sides have used attacks to increase tensions and to exacerbate the conflict. Palestinian attacks, including suicide attacks, have clearly been intended to disrupt peace talks (Laqueur, 1999, p. 139; Moghadam, 2003, p. 77). Bombing attacks have been undertaken by hardliners in Northern Ireland with the goal of preventing any settlement that did not provide for the reunification of Ulster with the rest of Ireland (Kydd and Walter, 2006). Whenever peace talks or negotiations break down because of such violence, an important intermediate objective of the responsible terrorist group has been attained.

Terrorist violence can be successful in the eyes of the practitioners for additional reasons, some of which may be essentially tactical. Groups may attempt to get governments to overreact and alienate a portion of the population (Harmon, 2001, p. 40; Kydd and Walter, 2006, p. 51; Neumann and Smith, 2005, pp. 580-1). The Kosovo Liberation Army was effective in creating this situation in Kosovo by launching attacks against Serbian police and other officials (Chalk, 1999, p. 152). Terrorism can also be used to enhance group solidarity, not only within the dissident organization but with a larger population such as a particular religious or ethnic group in a society. It is possible that there could be an increase in communal identification as a consequence of the violence. In fact, terrorists may seek to polarize communities as one means for making non-violent agreements more difficult to achieve (Gurr and Cole, 2000, p. 89). The KLA was able to increase solidarity among the Albanians in Kosovo. The same pattern can be observed in Bosnia among all the groups. Attacks by Kurdish dissidents against Turkish targets have undoubtedly been successful in slowing down the process of the assimilation of the Kurdish population into Turkish culture, an obviously acceptable intermediate goal for the dissident Kurdish organizations. The suicide attacks by the Kurdish dissidents and the Tamil Tigers have furthered group solidarity and improved morale within the groups (Dolnik, 2003, p. 21). Hindu nationalist groups have also been able to use terrorism to unify the Hindus and to drive a wedge between them and the Muslim population of the country (Bannerjee, 2000, p. 120). Perhaps the

most extreme case of such an effort has been ascribed to Osama bin Laden. It has been suggested that one of the goals of the attacks by Al Qaida, including those of 9/11, was the generation of a rift between Muslims and the West and the mobilization of Islamic extremists in the Middle East and elsewhere (Chipman, 2003, p. 165; Howell, 2003, p. 160). It is also quite possible that he hoped to provoke an excessively violent reaction from the United States with this attack (Kydd and Walter, 2006, pp. 50, 71). It can now be seen that one consequence of the attack and the US reactions, of course, has been the activation of the global jihadist movement and independent terrorist attacks by groups that identify with it. Of course, if groups are successful in dividing a population or alienating a group against the government, they have enhanced their chances of achieving their long-term political objectives.

Conclusions

As the above indicates, the goals and objectives of terrorist groups are often complex. There are combinations of short-term and long-term goals that many groups pursue. While most terrorist groups still fail to achieve any of their objectives, the above discussion indicates that some groups have been effective and that terrorism has worked more often than is generally conceded. The Sons of Liberty successfully set the stage for the American Revolution just as the Zealots helped to set the state for the Jewish Revolt. They both achieved their goals of mobilized populations as did the independence movements in Algeria, Cyprus, and Palestine. Other groups such as the ETA and the IRA have attained major objectives in the form of concessions from the governing powers, and other groups have seen significant changes in local situations as a consequence of the terrorist violence. Some of the successful groups combined terrorism and guerilla activity in these movements, but in at least some case terrorism preceded the guerrilla activity as was generally the case with the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka. Others, moreover, like the ETA and IRA have relied almost exclusively on terrorism. The PLO began as an organization relying on guerilla tactics and conventional warfare that then shifted to terrorism as an alternative. Terrorism reversed the political emancipation of the slaves in the American South. ALF has been effective in at least some circumstances, while Hamas and Hizballah have achieved some of their goals. Right-wing terrorism has resulted in parties taking power directly in Germany and Italy before World War II, as well as leading to the establishment of conservative authoritarian regimes. More modern right-wing terrorism has resulted in limited immigration in Europe. Other successes have included the sabotage of peace talks and creating divisions between groups, which if not insurmountable, are much more difficult to overcome. While not all these successes are modern examples, they all demonstrate the potential for the successful use of terrorism.

What was always important for future outbreaks of terrorism is not only that it can logically be argued that terrorism works but the perception that terrorism works. It is an “*image* of success that recommends terrorism to groups who identify with the innovator (Crenshaw, 2003a, p. 98, emphasis added).” As long as groups believe that such violence can work—even if they are wrong—they will be tempted to adopt the technique in pursuance of their goals.

Terrorist groups do appear to exaggerate their chances of success (Abrahms, 2008, p. 77). What is perhaps more important is the fact that the perception does have a basis in fact than many are willing to concede. While some of the above examples of successful terrorism are historical, others have been more recent. But even the historical examples demonstrate the extent to which terrorism can be effective. Thus, political groups can indeed be rational actors when they choose this technique. In order to combat terrorism, it is consequently important for governments to recognize that terrorism can work to at least some extent and to realize that the phenomenon is not going to disappear any time in the immediate future.

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