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What is Terrorism and Can Psychology Do Anything to Prevent It?

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Terrorism has a long history, which continues to unfold, and takes many forms. Notwithstanding these facts, there is no generally accepted definition of terrorism. I set forth the definitional issues that underlie the current debate about terrorism. By comparing terrorism with various forms of violence, I argue that it is plausible to construe terrorism as crime and, in support of this, I demonstrate why terrorism cannot be morally justified. Next, I cluster various immediate and long-term approaches intended to prevent terrorism, highlighting psychologically based strategies, such as behavioral profiling, teaching tolerance and citizenship, modifying media images of terrorism, and building peace. In order to understand and respond more effectively to 21st-century terrorism, I advocate adoption of a multidisciplinary, contextually sensitive approach. Copyright © 2005 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Emerging ethnic and religious sensibilities, the widening gap between the rich and poor, the status of the U.S. as an unchallenged superpower, links to organized crime, access to the Internet, and the growing availability of weapons of mass destruction will likely expand the reach and impact of terrorism (Crenshaw, 1997; Hoffman, 1998; Jensen, 2001; Laquer, 1999; Medd & Goldstein, 1997; Merari, 2000). Given this forecast, it is urgent to understand terrorism as behavior that is contextually embedded in order to respond comprehensively yet with precision to the causes of and threats posed by terrorism.

In this article, I aim to bring terrorism and counterterrorism into better focus. First, I offer an overview of terrorism today and identify its major variants: ethnic, ideological, and state based. Second, I attempt to differentiate terrorism from other forms of violence, such as revolutionary movements and guerilla action, and to distinguish terrorists from soldiers and criminals. Third, I analyze the morality of terrorism from the standpoint of just war theory. Finally, I describe immediate and long-range efforts intended to prevent terrorism, including those grounded in law enforcement, education, the media, and efforts to redress injustice. Of these, I emphasize behavioral science's potential contribution to profiling terrorists,

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fostering tolerance and civic responsibility, consulting with the media to alter the images of terrorism, and building peace through international policy and conflict resolution. I conclude with a call for a multidisciplinary, contextually sensitive approach to understanding, studying, and preventing terrorism.

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY TERRORISM

The 21st century inaugurated a new era of terrorism, featuring the interlaced elements of religious zealotry, globalization, and the U.S.'s superpower status (Hoffman, 1998; Jensen, 2001; Merari, 2000). First, 21st-century terrorism is predicated on a struggle to transform the world, with accountability only to a deity or a transcendental idea and a desire for martyrdom (Crenshaw, 1997; Hoffman, 1997; Jensen, 2001; Laquer, 1999; Merari, 2000). Data on terrorism point to the Muslim world as especially inclined toward violent confrontation with other civilizations, most notably the West (Barber, 2001; Merari, 2000). Framing economic, political, and cultural grievances within religious doctrine produces a volatile formula that can be exploited to mobilize support, not for national sovereignty or pan-Arabism, but for a worldwide Islamic hegemony.

Second, globalization has weakened national boundaries (Barber, 2001; Jensen, 2001; Merari, 2000). Globalization is characterized by worldwide integration through the movement of capital and goods, expansion of individual rights, dissemination of information, and relocation of large numbers of people. It follows that nations may be weakened, particularly those whose regulated economies, political stature and authority, and demographic balance are challenged. Weakened nations often face a crises of national identity that awaken dormant ethnic and religious identities, which may become transformed into xenophobic and fundamentalist violence directed at the West due to its perceived role in diminishing national self-esteem. In addition, relative economic disparity may fuel individual and civil discontent. Although globalization has raised the absolute standard of living worldwide (Barber, 2001), it has widened the gap between the rich and poor (Jensen, 2001). Anti-globalization rhetoric motivates violence because it rests on envy and indignation, whereas terrorism offers the promise of relief from exploitation and deprivation (Barber, 2001; Laquer, 1999; Stevens, 2002).

Finally, as an unchallenged superpower, the U.S. has increasingly intervened internationally, whether through peace keeping efforts, influencing both democracies and dictatorships seen as friendly to American interests, or establishing partnerships to access markets and cheap labor (Jensen, 2001). As a consequence, terrorists target U.S. interests, hoping to precipitate a forceful response that will intimidate or radicalize moderates who comprise the main obstacle to terrorists' political ambitions.

FORMS OF TERRORISM

There are three rationally derived forms of terrorism, all of which seek to force or enforce change by undermining civilian morale and/or government resolve (Crenshaw, 1997; Hoffman, 1998; Laquer, 1999). These include ethnic terrorism, ideological terrorism, and state-based terrorism. I consider each of these variants of terrorism and their distinct objectives, drawing on examples worldwide. I should note that there is growing overlap between different types of terrorism. Prior to 1967, for example, Palestinians and Arab pan-nationalists regarded Israel's existence as an ethnic challenge. The 1967 Six-Day War, in which Israel preemptively attacked Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, and whose territorial gains foretold decades of Middle East politics, radicalized antipathy toward Jews and Zionism, especially among Muslim fundamentalists. Affronted by the capture of Islamic territory and Jerusalem, Muslim fundamentalists recast the ethnic conflict as an existential struggle between Islam and the Jews. Militant Islam became the solution for overcoming a modern, Western power such as Israel, thereby reasserting its religious and cultural pre-eminence.

Ethnic Terrorism

Ethnic terrorism stems from grievances long held by ethnic minorities, including those engendered by economic, political, and cultural oppression. Ethnic terrorism strives to defend or forge a distinct communal identity, homogenize the population by forcing the emigration of rival ethnic groups, polarize society in order to limit the need for compromise, and, ultimately, realize aspirations for national liberation (Crenshaw, 1997; Hoffman, 1998; Laquer, 1999). For example, since 1972, Sri Lanka has endured unrelenting terrorism perpetrated by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, which seeks independence for the Tamil minority in the northern and eastern parts of the country. Hamas, or the Islamic Resistance Movement, was founded in 1987 and dedicated to fighting Israel's occupation of Palestine, which Hamas defines as all of Israel and the occupied West Bank and Gaza. Hamas is notorious for using homicide bombing against Israeli civilians in urban areas. The movement's popularity stems from its violent methods and charitable services to the Palestinian poor.

Ideological Terrorism

Ideological terrorism encompasses violent struggle against economic, political, and social systems based on political principles, religious doctrine, or natural law. It requires the perception of an unjust authority, disillusionment with the established order, and access to external role models (Crenshaw, 1997; Jensen, 2001). Ideological terrorism is less nationalistic than ethnic terrorism (Laquer, 1999); in fact, national identity is artificial and needlessly divisive from the viewpoint of ideological terrorists. This form of terrorism is also more receptive to converts.

Political Terrorism

Since the 19th century, European anarchists and communists have terrorized capitalist countries, particularly when they perceived workers there to suffer economic and social deprivation (Crenshaw, 1997; Hoffman, 1998). The Cuban revolution of 1959 captured the imagination of leaders such as Che Guevara. To them, terrorism was a weapon that, coupled with guerrilla warfare, could destabilize oligarchic governments. The *Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru* (MRTA) offers another example of left-wing terrorism. MRTA was a Peruvian Marxist movement named after the anti-colonialist leader, Tupac Amaru. Founded in 1983 by intellectuals and university students, MRTA specialized in terrorist attacks on U.S. representatives and corporations, and extorted money from businesses.

The 1980s saw a rise in right-wing movements in the U.S. that embrace cultural and racial identity (Crenshaw, 1997; Hoffman, 1998; Laquer, 1999). Such movements champion cultural and racial purity and segregation, particularly when economic and political conditions (e.g., the influx of immigrants and ratification of the North American Free Trade Agreement, respectively) threaten to lower the social status of a dominant group or weaken the social boundaries between groups. In the U.S., The Order is a white supremacist, neo-Nazi organization with the declared goal of overthrowing the U.S. government, which it claimed is controlled by Zionist forces. It seeks to establish an independent, white homeland in the northwestern U.S. The Order has claimed responsibility for the assassination of a Jewish media celebrity and the bombings of a Seattle theater and a synagogue in Idaho.

Religious Terrorism

Terrorism motivated by religious zealotry is more pervasive and deadly than conventional left–right forms of ideological terrorism (Crenshaw, 1997; Hoffman, 1998; Jensen, 2001; Laquer, 1999; Merari, 2000). Religious terrorism is prompted by theological imperatives. Because religious terrorists are engaged in a cosmic struggle to transform the world, they are less invested in communicating their message to a particular audience. Rather, they aim to purify the world through apocalyptic means. Finally, religious terrorists are decentralized, relying more on shared experience and faith than on direct contact with leaders or the interaction among members. Terrorism has surfaced episodically in various religions, including Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and the Sikh faith.

In 1979, the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini established the first Islamic republic in Iran. Emphasizing a relatively minor aspect of Islam, *jihad* or holy war, Iranians and other Muslim fundamentalists attacked Israel and the U.S., whose culture of consumerism, individualism, and rationalism were seen as threats to the purity of their faith (Barber, 2001; Stevens, 2002). Currently, fundamentalists set their sights on overthrowing moderate Islamic and secular governments and replacing them with a system founded on Islamic law. Hezbollah, for example, is a radical Shi'ite organization founded in 1978 and dedicated to establishing Islamic states in Lebanon and elsewhere. Drawing inspiration and backing from Iran and Syria, Hezbollah targets U.S. and Israeli interests. Hezbollah terrorists bombed the U.S. embassy and Marine barracks in Lebanon in 1983 and the U.S. embassy annex in Lebanon in 1984. By 2000, Hezbollah was training Palestinians in terrorist methods.

In 1987, the Japanese religious cult Aum Shinrikyo embarked on its plan to take over the world. When the plan failed, the cult turned to an apocalyptic vision that would be triggered by the U.S. With its financial resources and technologically sophisticated members, the cult developed various weapons of mass destruction. In 1995, members released sarin gas into the Tokyo subway, killing 12 and injuring over 5,000. Notwithstanding the arrest of its leader, the cult continued to recruit members and maintain a web site.

Eco-Terrorism

Eco-terrorists are among the most violent terrorists native to the U.S. (Hoffman, 1998; Laquer, 1999). They aim to cause financial hardship through the massive destruction of property in the hope of discouraging exploitation of the environment (Hoffman, 1998). Recently, they engaged in violent anti-globalization protests in Seattle, WA, and Genoa, Italy. The Animal Liberation Front, for example, is a radical animal-rights organization founded in 1978 that has attacked genetic research and food-preparation facilities in the U.S. and U.K. In 1987, this group destroyed a livestock-disease research laboratory at the University of California, and in 1999, under the name of the Earth Liberation Front, torched a Colorado ski resort, causing more than $12 million in damage.

State-Based Terrorism

There are two variants of state-based terrorism: state terrorism and state-sponsored terrorism. Although their foci and purposes differ, they both involve the participation or contribution by proxy of governments to terrorist activities. Regardless of whether the targets of state-based terrorism are within or beyond the jurisdiction of these governments (Crenshaw, 1997; Hoffman, 1998), they are capable of bringing the full force of law and law enforcement, policy and diplomacy, and economic and military might to bear.

State Terrorism

State terrorism is the use of terror by a government against its own citizens. The most devastating form of state terror occurs when an ideological faction controls a totalitarian state and seeks to exterminate its political enemies (Crenshaw, 1997; Hoffman, 1998). In the 20th century, the number of victims of state terrorism in Nazi Germany, the former Soviet Union, and Communist China was immense compared with the loss of life attributed to groups typically thought of as terrorist.

The Tonton Macoutes was an unofficial state militia used by Haitian dictator François Duvalier to silence dissent and eliminate enemies. After Duvalier was overthrown in 1985, the Tonton Macoutes offered its services to the next president. In 1988, the Tonton Macoutes attacked a church service in Port-au-Prince that included dissenters, killing nine and wounding 77. The church's minister, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, survived and rallied supporters to resist the Tonton Macoutes.

State-Sponsored Terrorism

State-sponsored terrorism is the support of terrorism by a government as a way of conducting its foreign policy. States sponsor terrorism through the provision of money, weapons, advisers, training, safe havens, and political alliances. The struggle between South Africa's apartheid regime and insurgents, represented by the African National Congress (ANC), was conducted by proxy in Mozambique (Crenshaw, 1997; Hoffman, 1998). *Resistência Nacional Moçambicana* (MNR/RENAMO) was formed in the 1970s after Mozambique gained independence and a left-wing government sympathetic to the ANC assumed power. The anti-communist MNR/RENAMO was sponsored by South Africa, and sought to undermine the Mozambican government and defeat the guerrilla movement that was abetting the ANC. During the 1980s, MNR/RENAMO terrorists kidnapped or assassinated government officials and relief workers, and massacred civilians.

TERRORISM DEFINED

In spite of its enduring presence and many forms, a comprehensive definition of terrorism has not yet been universally accepted. The problems that emanate from the absence of a consensus definition of terrorism are manifold. Scholars continue to investigate a phenomenon about whose parameters they disagree, adding to a scattered literature. Meaningful responses to terrorism, particularly normative ones, cannot be formulated due to the lack of agreement on what constitutes prohibited action. Even pragmatic responses to terrorism, invoked because unresolved definitional issues linger, demand a certain level of consensus, at least in terms of shared perceptions of the unacceptable behavior in question.

Definitions

Acknowledging that no one definition of terrorism has gained universal acceptance, the U.S. Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism has endorsed the following definition, found in the United States Code (Title 22, Section 2656f[d]) and adopted by the Department of State, Department of Defense, and Central Intelligence Agency:

> The term 'terrorism' means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience. The term 'international terrorism' means terrorism involving citizens or territory of more than one country. The term 'terrorist' group means any group practicing, or that has any significant subgroups that practice, international terrorism.

In 2002, the Counterterrorism Committee of the U.N. General Assembly drafted a definition of terrorism, which awaits further deliberation:

> The act of destroying or injuring civilian lives or the act of destroying or damaging civilian or government property without the expressly chartered permission of a specific government, thus, by individuals or groups independently or governments on their own accord and belief, in the attempt to effect some political change (United Nations General Assembly, 2002b).

According to these definitions, terrorism consists of deliberate violence of a political and symbolic nature, perpetrated directly or by proxy, with the intent of causing harm or damage in order to intimidate civilians and, in some circumstances, influence a country's policies and actions.

Neither of the above definitions has been widely adopted (Cooper, 2001; Hoffman, 1998; Medd & Goldstein, 1997) mainly due to conflicting interests and worldviews rather than serious omissions and ambiguities. Thus far, the debate has revolved around the identification of the actors, victims, and motives associated with terrorism (Cooper, 2001; Crenshaw, 1997; Higgins, 1997). First, scholars and policy-makers have issued formal statements about who should be classified as a terrorist. For example, the definition endorsed by the U.S. government appears to exclude state-based actors, and has been criticized for overlooking governments as possible perpetrators of terrorism (Higgins, 1997; Valls, 2000). Second, although it is widely considered unacceptable to target civilians for violence, the distinction between combatants and noncombatants is not without debate. Because Hamas views all Israelis as participants in the illegal occupation of Palestine and because Israel's policy of universal conscription implies that most adults will serve in the military, Hamas claims that civilian and military targets should not be differentiated. To confuse matters, actors and victims are not always distinguishable. Most ethnic conflict occurs in countries with weak governments, and between militias whose members are marginally equipped and trained (Laquer, 1999). Should peasants who murder nearby villagers and then return to their fields be considered combatants or civilians? Are these same peasants combatants or civilians when targeted by their adversaries? Finally, definitions of terrorism often neglect to incorporate its motives. Few would disagree that the purpose of terrorism is to intimidate civilians and sometimes influence a country's policies and actions, but what of the motives of apocalyptic terrorist groups?

The inability to establish common conceptual ground has netted minimalist definitions that focus narrowly on the constituent elements of terrorism and tend to be adopted by like-minded countries (Higgins, 1997; Valls, 2000). Although their lack of comprehensiveness is problematic, minimalist definitions have some value in that they tend to operationalize acts of terrorism and are less prone to polemics. Perhaps it is not possible to agree upon a unifying definition of terrorism due to ongoing disagreement at various levels. There may even be benefits to preserving different definitions of terrorism, as when definitions that emphasize certain elements enrich context-specific understanding (e.g. terrorism as crime, terrorism as politics, terrorism as religion) (Schmid, 2004). However, an alternative to defining terrorism as a discrete phenomenon is to establish whether it can be construed as a form of violence already defined, such as political violence, revolution, guerrilla warfare, conventional warfare, and crime.

Terrorism Versus Other Forms of Violence

Some have recommended substituting the broader and less controversial term "political violence" for that of terrorism. In so doing, terrorism would become a special case of political violence, enacted against persons or property to achieve certain political ends (Valls, 2000). Viewing terrorism as political violence creates several dilemmas. First, violence against economic and religious targets would qualify as terrorism only if politically motivated (Laquer, 1999). Islamist terrorism has obvious religious underpinnings. Focusing solely on political violence also overlooks how integral organized crime has become to terrorism. Meaningful policies and strategies designed to anticipate and curtail terrorism must address multiple ideological objectives, not just political ones (Crenshaw, 1997; Hoffman, 1998).

Terrorists and revolutionaries both seek radical economic, political, and social transformation (Crenshaw, 1997; Laquer, 1999). Some revolutions target a government and its institutions; others are less discriminating. In fact, some revolutionary doctrines advocate terror as necessary to the success of the movement (e.g., Leninism). However, there are key differences between terrorism and revolution (Crenshaw, 1997; Laquer, 1999). Revolution involves more systematic and pervasive activity, and implies a wider base of support and capacity to establish an alternative government. Although terrorists attempt to articulate their actions through manifestos and communiqués, they seldom have a coherent vision of the future.

Guerrilla warfare entails military or paramilitary operations within enemy-controlled or politically contested territory. Although guerrilla warfare is not always coupled with terrorism, guerrillas frequently adopt terrorist methods. Guerrilla organizations differ from terrorist groups in several respects (Crenshaw, 1997; Laquer, 1999). They number in the hundreds or thousands, identify themselves as soldiers, are outfitted as light military units, conduct raids, and are supplied and concealed by an indigenous community. At times, guerrillas observe the conventions of warfare (e.g., exchanging prisoners). In contrast, terrorists are fewer in number and organized in small cells; prefer assassination, hijacking, and kidnapping; operate apart from an indigenous populace; and rarely observe the conventions of warfare. Guerillas also seek to convert to their cause those whom they claim to represent, whereas terrorists' tactics may be so extreme that they jeopardize their base of support.

Contrary to some claims that terrorism is a variant of conventional warfare, terrorism does not have the characteristics of warfare, nor do terrorists possess the qualities of warriors. Of the four conditions set forth by the Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field (1950), the terrorist meets one at most: the terrorist might be commanded by a person responsible for his or her subordinates. Unlike soldiers, terrorists do not display a distinctive and recognizable sign, do not carry arms openly, and do not operate according to the laws and customs of warfare.

Terrorism can also be viewed as crime, and terrorists as criminals (Hallett, 2004). Terrorists commit arson, kidnapping, and murder, for which they can be prosecuted under criminal statutes and international conventions. For example, the U.S. Crimes and Criminal Procedures Act (1998) punishes acts of terrorism, and covers attempts, threats, and conspiracies related to terrorism. In 1989, the U.N. General Assembly unequivocally condemned terrorism as unlawful, irrespective of circumstances, with the General Assembly reaffirming its position as recently as 2004. At present, there are 19 international legal instruments governing the prevention and suppression of terrorism (e.g. the 1997 U.N. Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings) (United Nations General Assembly, 2002a). These measures follow the *aut punier aut* *dedere* principle, which requires that terrorists either be tried in the country in which they are arrested, regardless of nationality or where the attack occurred, or extradited (Higgins, 1997). However, unlike crime, which is intentionally hidden, terrorism is deliberately spectacular, and unlike criminals, who seek personal gain and satisfaction, terrorists ascribe their actions to selfless goals (Hallett, 2004).

What is most problematic about construing terrorism as political violence, revolution, guerilla warfare, or conventional warfare is that the act of terrorism and its outcomes are de-emphasized relative to the motives for terrorism, the organization of terrorist groups, and the methods that terrorists favor. These constitute the more debatable features of terrorism and have contributed to the impasse on establishing a universal definition. However, of the forms of violence described above, terrorism bears the greatest resemblance to crime. When viewed as crime, terrorism can be operationalized as a discrete act with clear outcomes that does not incorporate the more controversial elements found in comprehensive definitions of terrorism (e.g., the identity of perpetrators and victims and the specification of motives and methods). Moreover, linking terrorism to crime facilitates time-sensitive efforts by law enforcement to prosecute and prevent terrorism as it makes available legal statutes and binding agreements.

JUSTIFICATION OF TERRORISM

If terrorism approximates crime, it follows that terrorist acts lack a moral foundation. Therefore, it is necessary to examine whether terrorism can be justified morally. Although any analysis will suffer from certain historical and cultural biases (Gergen, 2001), determining the morality of terrorism has value. First, it avoids a condemnatory or sympathetic response to terrorism based on the subjective connotation of the term (Stevens, 2002, 2003). Second, it permits a systematic rather than impressionistic evaluation of the legitimacy of a terrorist act.

Just War Theory

Just war theory is a widely used paradigm for analyzing the morality of international relations, specifically warfare (Higgins, 1997; Valls, 2000). Just war theory maintains that warfare must meet certain criteria to be legitimate. Just war theory can be used to gauge the morality of violence other than warfare, enacted by entities other than states (Merari, 2000; Valls, 2000). Like warfare, terrorism can be a strategic decision, following a deliberate cost–benefit analysis, to engage in violent struggle.

Just war theory has two sets of criteria: *jus ad bellum*, six criteria that justify going to war, and *jus in bello*, two criteria that govern the conduct of warfare (Valls, 2000). The moral requirements for embarking on war include the following:

(1) A just cause (e.g., national self-defense, self-determination).
(2) A country or other entity must be the legitimate representative of its members.
(3) Good intentions (i.e., acting in accordance with the cause that prompted war).
(4) War as a last resort (i.e., all reasonable nonviolent options have been reasonably attempted without success).

(5) The probability of victory is sufficiently high to make going to war worthwhile.
(6) Proportionality (i.e., the predicted costs of going to war must not surpass the anticipated benefits).

We turn to the requirements for the conduct of a just war:

(7) Proportionality (i.e., the methods of winning a war must minimize the loss of life).
(8) Discrimination (i.e., warfare must specify legitimate targets, including combatants).

Each of the eight criteria for entering and engaging in war must be satisfied if that war is indeed just. The criteria for a just war are often ambiguous, however. Some criteria permit substantial variation in their application, such as determining when a threat becomes clear and imminent (e.g., weapons of mass destruction), or discriminating between legitimate and illegitimate targets. Likewise, the evidence required to evaluate whether criteria have been met are often unavailable, such as the many stated and unstated intentions that frame a decision to intervene and their mutation once intervention is underway.

Applying Just War Theory to Terrorism

As noted before, just war theory can be extended to other forms of violence, including terrorism. In the abstract, terrorists may claim or be presented as morally choosing violence and violent means in keeping with just war theory. They may assert that their cause is righteous, that they have a constituency, that their intentions are noble, that their use of terror comes after exhausting nonviolent options, that terrorism will bring about needed change, and that the cost of terrorism is outweighed by the benefits that will accrue in victory. Terrorists may also allege that their methods minimize death and destruction relative to other forms of violence, and that their targets include legitimate, albeit nontraditional, adversaries.

Nevertheless, the moral justification of terrorism tends to be wrapped in rationalization (Hallett, 2004). The decision to wage an asymmetric war against oppression with weapons of the weak is a generic explanation, often staged with rhetorical flair and emotion. An examination of specific acts of terrorism reveals that the causes involved and instruments used typically fail to meet the criteria for a just war. Of the six requirements needed to legitimize terrorism, only one, a just cause, comes close to being met, primarily in cases of ethnic terrorism in which a people seeks self-determination. However, even ethnic terrorists have not succeeded in cloaking their violence in the mantle of self-determination (e.g., the Provisional Irish Republican Army) (Valls, 2000). Moreover, the fact that many peoples are denied their right of self-determination, yet do not pursue terrorism, suggests that self-determination does not justify such violence. Finally, the legitimacy of the causes espoused by ideological and state-based terrorists are not compelling. Religious terrorists, especially those with an apocalyptic vision (e.g., the *Aum Shinrikyo* cult), argue that the venality of the world justifies its destruction–does it?

As for the remaining criteria needed to justify terrorism, terrorists are hard pressed to show that they represent a particular constituency (e.g., *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna Basque* separatists), even terrorists who have achieved a measure of popularity (e.g., Hamas). Examples of the ignoble intentions of terrorists abound (e.g., *Fuerzas Armadas Revolutionarias de Colombia*, originally a communist insurgent group now tied to narcotic trafficking). Terrorists seldom fulfill the aims set forth in their platforms; few have envisioned a better future or have the capacity to effect change beyond obliterating the present or punishing their foes (e.g., Black September). In most cases, terrorism is undertaken before reasonable efforts to find nonviolent solutions have been exhausted; terrorists tend to be ambivalent at best toward peaceful approaches to transformative justice (e.g., al-Qaeda). It is highly unlikely that terrorism will fulfill its objectives; although some terrorist campaigns have led to national liberation, as in Algeria (*Algerian Front de Liberation Nationale*) and Kenya (Mau-Mau), the vast majority will never reach their aims. Finally, the notion that the physical, economic, and psychological toll exacted by terrorism is justified by prospective gains is fiction (e.g., the Khmer Rouge); it is virtually axiomatic that terrorists believe that their ends justify any means they adopt.

The two criteria by which the morality of terrorist methods is evaluated also tend to go unmet. Although the physical consequences of most terrorist acts are relatively minor, it is well documented that the trauma precipitated by terrorism can be debilitating, widespread, and even more intractable than that of conventional war (Stevens, 2003; Wagner & Long, 2004). Furthermore, terrorism is calculated to evoke the maximum, not minimum, levels of horror and fear. Terrorists also tend to be indiscriminate, not merely because the instruments of terror are crude, but because wholesale murder and destruction command attention. To choose a target after careful deliberation is not equivalent to moral discrimination. Al-Qaeda deliberately attacked symbols of American economic and military power, viewing the innocent victims as necessary collateral (i.e., indiscriminate) damage, rather than as targets (Hallett, 2004). Such reasoning does not alter the fact that innocents and symbolic objects are inseparable, and therefore constitute intended targets.

Although just war theory is compromised by ambiguities and the lack of evidentiary rules, its application to terrorism reveals that terrorist acts generally do not fulfill the criteria of the theory. Hence, terrorism cannot be construed as a morally acceptable choice or strategy. That the arguments set forth by terrorists do not provide moral justification for their acts or methods further supports the notion that terrorism may be plausibly construed as crime.

COUNTERTERRORISM

Matters of form, definition, and legitimacy aside, the methods of 21st-century terrorism will include lethal biological, chemical, and nuclear material and may be used to blackmail countries into making concessions or to repel foreign influence. Terrorism will also reflect the growing dependency on information technology. Terrorists will soon have the resources to inflict unprecedented fear, havoc, and death (Crenshaw, 1997; Hoffman, 1998; Jensen, 2001; Laquer, 1999; Medd & Goldstein, 1997; Merari, 2000).

Counterterrorism comprises a broad array of approaches designed by experts from various disciplines to prevent terrorism or limit its scope and severity (Crenshaw, 1997; Hoffman, 1998; Medd & Goldstein, 1997). Effective counterterrorism requires a collaborative, multidisciplinary approach that balances responding to imminent local threats with far-reaching efforts to address perceived and real injustices. Of the many domains subsumed by contemporary counterterrorism, the following deserve special mention: law enforcement, education, the media, and efforts to redress injustice. Within each of these domains, behavioral science is germane to the effort to profile terrorists, teach tolerance and citizenship, modify media images of terrorism, and build peace through international policy and conflict resolution.

Before surveying various approaches to counterterrorism, I should note that there is a dearth of psychological research on counterterrorism. Although the field of terrorism studies was launched in the 1970s, psychologists have become involved only recently. Like scholars from other disciplines, they have encountered difficulties stemming from the lack of a unifying definition of terrorism and a sufficiently developed canon of knowledge, the latter due in part to a reliance on secondary sources for data (Brannan, Esler, & Strindberg, 2001). In addition, psychologists' relationship with grant-funding agencies has compromised their study of counterterrorism (Brannan et al., 2001; Winerman, 2004). Because models of counterterrorism often obtain from a hermeneutic of crisis management (Brannan et al., 2001), psychological studies have tended to perpetuate a received view of counterterrorism rather than charting new models and methods that would lead to better prediction and long-term prevention. Professional rivalry between psychology and both law enforcement and government has also stymied the systematic evaluation of existing approaches to counterterrorism (Winerman, 2004). Finally, research on counterterrorism is hindered because terrorism is constantly evolving (Crenshaw, 1997; Medd & Goldstein, 1997; Merari, 2000). It is uncertain whether valid generalizations can be drawn from earlier analyses of conventional forms of terrorism. For example, if terrorist organizations have become more decentralized and scattered due to their exploitation of the Internet, what is the role, if any, of a charismatic leader?

Law Enforcement

Law enforcement employs many different methods to prevent the immediate threats posed by terrorism. Behavioral science has a potential connection to three of these: intelligence gathering, target hardening, and behavioral profiling. The main defense against terrorism is high quality intelligence, and there is a need to expand and improve the acquisition of good intelligence worldwide. If intelligence cannot uncover terrorist plots, law enforcement can harden targets, making them more impenetrable to attack. Behavioral profiling is related to target hardening, has been used by law enforcement to deter crime, and, though controversial, is being examined as a means of identifying terrorists before they strike.

Intelligence

Although high-tech methods of gathering intelligence (e.g., satellite imaging) yield a rich understanding of terrorists and their practices, experts maintain that they should complement human intelligence gathering (e.g., interrogation of detainees, document exploitation) (Medd & Goldstein, 1997). There are concerns as to whether intelligence personnel are sufficiently qualified to extract and analyze intelligence and whether security services can coordinate their activities effectively. Psychologists can contribute to efforts at improving intelligence gathering, analysis, and sharing. First, psychologists have assisted in the development of and training in effective interrogation strategies. Second, psychologists have helped to isolate patterns and anticipate changes in terrorists' modus operandi from available archival data. Third, psychologists have collaborated with law enforcement on ways to improve intra- and inter-agency communication and cooperation. For example, the American Psychological Association's (APA) Subcommittee on Psychology's Response to Terrorism has networked with psychologists at the FBI and Department of Defense, organized a conference at the FBI on integrating behavioral science with counterterrorism strategies, and briefed the science committees of both houses of Congress on the relevance of behavioral science to counterterrorism.

Target Hardening

Target hardening includes the use of screening systems as well as behavioral profiling to deter a terrorist attack (Crenshaw, 1997; Medd & Goldstein, 1997). Many airports deploy the CTX 5000, which uses three-dimensional imaging to identify weapons and other potentially dangerous objects. Regardless of the technological sophistication of screening systems, the selection, training, and motivation of security personnel are key to successful target hardening. Poole and Butler (2001) argue that the superiority of airport security in Europe relative to the U.S. is due in part to the greater education, higher salary, and, most importantly, more systematic training of European security personnel. Psychology has demonstrated the effectiveness of such procedures as participant modeling and social reinforcement in the acquisition and maintenance of new behavior, and has recently documented that motivational enhancement can strengthen the commitment to initiate and sustain new behavior. Personnel psychologists also have a role to play in identifying variables that predict successful target hardening, and in developing tools with which to measure these variables when selecting security personnel.

Profiling

Although behavioral profiling has not received much empirical scrutiny and has become even more controversial since passage of the Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act (2001; see section 215), the technique remains a tool of law enforcement. Profiling has also garnered the attention of forensic psychologists, whose knowledge of human behavior and methodological expertise lend themselves to collaboration with law enforcement (Kocsis, 2003; Winerman, 2004; Woodworth & Porter, 2002). Profiling involves the construction of a demographic and psychological template of an individual who has committed or might commit a crime, such as terrorism. For example, the political ideology of American terrorists has been linked to their demographic and tactical characteristics; right-wing terrorists tend to be relatively uneducated and underemployed white males, who reside in rural areas and are networked nationally (Smith & Morgan, 1994). The scant empirical literature on profiling, however, ranges from highly accurate to inconclusive (Scott, Lambie, Henwood, & Lamb, 2003). Furthermore, most published studies have been analogue in design and have examined the accuracy of predications about serial crimes, such as arson, homicide, and rape (Kocsis, 2003), rather than about terrorism.

Nevertheless, researchers have discovered a positive relationship between profile accuracy and analytical thinking, and a weak association between accuracy and investigative experience (Kocsis, 2003). Next to professional profilers, psychologists are the most accurate in predicting crime (Kocsis, 2003). Given their knowledge of human behavior and training to think analytically, it is not surprising that psychologists have the capacity to execute profiling tasks accurately. Beyond their potential as profilers, psychologists are advancing the scientific rigor of profiling. First, they are testing models of criminal behavior developed by law enforcement by statistically analyzing crime-scene data in order to confirm profiles of different offender groups (Winerman, 2004). Second, they are investigating the cognitive processes involved in profile construction and the fit between different profiling approaches (e.g., empirical–inductive vs. rational–deductive) to certain data sets and situational contexts (Woodworth & Porter, 2002). Clearly, the results of this research, along with future studies that make use of archival and new data on actual terrorists and terrorist acts, will tell whether profiling can be employed to prevent terrorism.

Education

Some sociocultural milieus favor the development of terrorism more than others. Cultures of intolerance and vengeance nurture terrorism by instilling violence as an instrument with which to achieve desired ends. To prevent terrorism at its source, children must be socialized to become positive contributors to their community. Affection and guidance lower the chances that violent ideologies and charismatic leaders will seduce children. Furthermore, inclusive caring that extends beyond the immediate group humanizes others, reduces inter-group violence, and may prevent terrorism (Staub, 2002). The prevention of terrorism through positive socialization also involves teaching tolerance and civic education. Clearly, teaching tolerance and civic education are long-range investments that can succeed only where they are welcomed, or at least seen as pursuant to a country's self-interest. Authoritarian regimes are likely to view this type of education as a threat to their grip on power. Thus, I would caution that teaching tolerance and civic education may not be suited to countries whose leaders engage in or support terrorism and whose educational curricula intentionally promote hostile, uncompromising attitudes and behaviors in its citizens.

Teaching Tolerance

To prevent the emergence of terrorism, educators teach children how to manage anger and resolve conflict peacefully, enhance metacognitive awareness and the critical thinking needed to disconfirm stereotypes and create inter-group understanding, provide exposure to models and mentors for socially constructive behavior, and offer cooperative learning experiences with diverse children (Wessells, 2002). The Global Psychology Project, inaugurated in 1996 under the aegis of the APA's Psychology Partnership Project: Academic Partnerships to Meet the Teaching and Learning Needs of the 21st Century, uses a psychology-based curriculum to teach critical thinking skills and strengthen accepting attitudes toward diversity in order to improve global understanding.

Recent developments in behavior therapy offer pedagogical tools for lessening the prejudice that can underlie terrorism (Hays, Niccolls, Masuda, & Rye, 2002). Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) rests on evidence that language causes people to associate events arbitrarily rather than on their formal properties. The tendency toward arbitrary association can result in overlooking the distinctive as well as contextually based qualities of individuals in favor of convenient and often inaccurate generalizations. Thus, the demonization of others may reflect arbitrary associations that have been activated situationally. Rather than confront arbitrary associations directly, ACT calls for their dispassionate examination. In this way, ACT defuses prejudice by encouraging alternative modes of thinking to emerge. Ideally, this process should be coupled with strategies to increase exposure to and interaction with diverse people.

Civic Education

Democratization can forestall terrorism in the long run by supporting political pluralism and empowering citizens to address pressing social issues through legitimate political institutions. Democracies require citizens to tolerate the political participation of those who advocate unpopular views. Such tolerance is influenced by a commitment to democratic values (Sullivan & Transue, 1999). Democratization is especially beneficial when terrorist groups are ideologically driven or affiliated with organized crime as such groups gradually lose their constituents' support (Medd & Goldstein, 1997; Merari, 2000). As the terrorist Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi wrote last year, "How can we fight their [Iraqi] cousins and their sons and under what pretext after the Americans, who hold the reins of power from their rear bases, pull back? The real sons of this land will decide the matter through experience. Democracy is coming, and there will be no excuse thereafter" (Coalition Provisional Authority, 2004).

Educating youth in the structure and process of self-governance is essential to the development of civic consciousness and participation. The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement conducted a study of how effectively educational programs had promoted civic attitudes, knowledge, and participation among students in developing democracies. Students with the greatest civic knowledge were most likely to participate in civic activities, and schools and youth organizations that modeled democratic practices were most effective in promoting civic knowledge and participation (Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schulz, 2001). Given these results, and teachers' support worldwide for civic education, psychologists have begun to design curricula and pedagogies that deepen the values of responsible citizenship. For example, Learning Good Governance: Local and Municipal Self-Government for High School Students is a Russian–Canadian project designed to develop a curriculum and textbook that imparts knowledge and skills which are fundamental to civil society. Although based on Western democratic principles, the materials are presented in a culturally relevant fashion, embracing uniquely Russian values and needs.

The Media

Over the past four decades, psychologists have documented the role of the media in shaping attitudes and behavior. Historically, terrorists have exploited the media to publicize and justify their cause, and with good reason: exposure to media coverage of terrorism enhances opinions about the status and motives of terrorists, particularly among those who are mildly opposed to terrorism (Bandura, 2004; Merari, 2000; Stevens, 2003). Through the media, terrorists widen their support, gain credibility and sympathy, convey their capacity for violence, and degrade governmental authority, all of which aid their cause. Terrorists have become sophisticated at marketing their message through radio and television (e.g., Al-Jazeera). Now, terrorists have even more powerful platforms from which to manipulate public opinion, as millions are connected via the Internet to alternative information sources (Laquer, 1999). How can psychologists offset the extent to which the media enables terrorism without curbing freedom of the press? They can consult with the media, particularly broadcast outlets, on responsible reportage (Merari, 2000). For example, media psychologists can circulate research that underscores the link between repeated exposure to sensationalized images of terrorism and psychosocial maladjustment among vulnerable viewers (Stevens, 2003). They can explain how the euphemistic labels conferred upon terrorists (e.g., "freedom fighter") and terrorists' predilection to displace responsibility (e.g., holding governments accountable for the murder of hostages) not only recast terrorism as legitimate (Bandura, 2004), but also can cognitively prime some predisposed viewers to replicate terrorist acts (Pech, 2003). Depictions of diverse individuals behaving humanely, even when circumstances tempt transgressive action, provide models of empathic and ethical moral agency (Bandura, 2004) that might be attractive to the media from a human-interest angle. Presenting terrorist attacks impartially, thoughtfully, and less often; describing terrorism in unflattering, yet accurate terms; and airing programs about peaceful social change would diminish terrorists' capacity to persuade (Merari, 2000). It is doubtful whether psychologists can dissuade the media from sensationalizing terrorism solely with arguments grounded in behavioral science. Psychologists, particularly those with expertise in public health, may need to collaborate with government agencies and advocacy groups to bring enough pressure to bear for the media to adjust its practices.

Redressing Injustice

In the 1989 resolution in which it unequivocally condemned terrorism as unlawful, the U.N. General Assembly urged elimination of the causes underlying terrorism that endanger international peace and security. This resolution does not give moral legitimacy to terrorism; like modern crime prevention, efforts to root out the sources of crime do not override the illegal status of criminal acts. The U.N. resolution points to a confluence of historical and contemporary conditions that may increase the likelihood that certain forms of terrorism will occur, particularly ethnic and political terrorism. Clearly, not all forms terrorism can be linked to injustice, as in the case of Islamist terrorists, who seek the obliteration of the corrupting influence of the West and its perceived proxy, Israel. Nevertheless, psychologists have become especially interested in how real and perceived injustices can create grievances that inspire and sustain certain forms of terrorism (Stevens, 2002; Wessells, 2002). Injustices often revolve around economic, political, and social conditions that create despair, such as racism, poverty, political oppression, and limited opportunities to improve the quality of life (Barber, 2001; Wessells, 2002). To achieve an enduring solution to terrorism, the roots of despair must be ameliorated through systematic efforts to meet the physical and psychosocial needs of individuals and communities (Staub, 2002; Stevens, 2002; Wessells, 2002). Some have advocated global distributive justice wherein multinational corporations fulfill their moral obligations to the developing countries from which they profit (Valls, 2000). Others have demanded an end to support for repressive regimes, including alliances of convenience with abusive governments in the war against terrorism (Bandura, 2004; Wessells, 2002). Still others have advised the West to invite genuine partnership with the developing world, show respect for cultural differences, nurture indigenous political institutions, and offer sensitive methods for the inevitable realization of a globalized world (Barber, 2001; Gaddis, 2001; Stevens, 2002).

Responding to criticisms that large-scale efforts to redress injustice are naïve and impractical in preventing terrorism, Gaddis (2001) points to cold-war precedents, describing how the West succeeded in fashioning a more congenial second half of the 20th century through multilateralism, pursuing regional justice in a consistent manner while preserving geopolitical order, and balancing free-market forces against a social safety net. The formulation and implementation of a grand strategic vision for remedying the grievances that provide a context for terrorism require the interface of psychology with policy-making entities and grant-funding agencies, as well as peace-building efforts.

Psychology and Policy

Approximately 12 psychological associations assist U.N. policy makers as accredited non-governmental organizations (NGOs). NGOs fulfill the U.N. Charter (United Nations, 1945) by working for peace and security, economic and social advancement, and human rights. With the assistance of the U.N.'s Department of Public Information, NGOs draw attention to global concerns, suggest interventions, monitor international agreements, and mobilize public support for U.N. initiatives. The shared goals of the U.N. and psychological NGOs include raising global consciousness and nurturing cooperative networks. Representatives from psychological NGOs attend U.N. briefings and consult with committees, units, and divisions that might benefit from their expertise. The APA became an accredited U.N. NGO in 2001, and its six-member team brings a psychological perspective to such U.N. policies and programs as child welfare, education, gender equality, HIV/AIDS, human rights, racism, social justice, and violence. It has initiated, coordinated, or contributed to U.N. caucuses, committees, forums, and task forces, and has begun to examine the impact of the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights on economic development, environmental protection, and human rights.

The International Union of Psychological Sciences (IUPsyS) has affiliations with 12 regional and international psychological organizations, which facilitate coordinated responses to various global concerns. Member organizations of the IUPsyS also work on UNESCO-sponsored projects, including the identification of psychological dimensions of global change. The IUPsyS belongs to two prestigious international scientific organizations: the International Social Science Council and International Council of Scientific Unions. Through membership in these organizations, the IUPsyS contributes to research of global significance. Member organizations of the IUPsyS can apply for collaborative grants that involve scientists across disciplines and national borders. Priority areas include economic, environmental, and social dimensions of sustainable development, capacity building in developing countries, and the interface of scientific knowledge and policy formulation.

Peace Building

A special case of redressing injustice is peace building. Peace building is a process of establishing realistic empathy, or the capacity to understand the perspective of an adversary (Wagner & Long, 2004). Several avenues exist for fostering realistic empathy. Reconciliation commissions, such as those in Chile and South Africa, strengthen good will and trust via a climate of justice, acknowledgement of the brutality of the past, and restoration of respect for the sociocultural identity of survivors of oppression. Psychologists for Social Responsibility, an international network of psychologists who apply behavioral science to promote peace, have developed a workshop entitled "Us & Them: Moderating Group Conflict" to assist antagonistic groups, whether local or international, to understand their prejudices and resolve their conflict. Experiential activities comprise the workshop's core, and aim to increase self-awareness, awareness of the other, and ties between groups. Unlike communication workshops that seek mutual understanding, Us & Them includes ongoing dialogue groups that move from understanding to constructive engagement, and conclude with joint community action projects, which are carried out by participants (e.g., neighborhood watches, political advocacy).

CONCLUSION

Twenty-first century terrorism is characterized by religious zealotry, globalization, and the U.S.'s unchallenged superpower status. Although inter-related, there are several forms of terrorism that, while overlapping somewhat, can be demarcated by their goals: ethnic terrorism; ideological terrorism found in radical political, religious, and environmental movements; and state terrorism and state-sponsored terrorism. There is little movement toward acceptance of a unifying definition of terrorism, which has led to unsystematic research and counterterrorism efforts. Moreover, although it has distinctive features, terrorism is not easily distinguished from political violence, revolution, guerrilla warfare, and conventional warfare; in fact, it bears a close relationship to crime. When evaluated rationally, terrorism does not appear to be congruent with the tenets of just war theory, and, like crime, cannot be condoned morally. There are several immediate and long-range approaches to preventing terrorism that have potential relevance for behavioral science. These include intelligence gathering, analysis, and coordination, selecting and training security personnel, and behavioral profiling; developing curricula and pedagogies to promote tolerance and civic responsibility; working with the media to reduce the impact of terrorism and to present models of peaceful engagement; and redressing injustices that inspire certain forms of terrorism through consultation with policy-making entities, multidisciplinary research, and conflict-resolution programs.

Awareness that the world is becoming more globally interdependent has led to a transformation in psychology. Theories of the person and about unusual events are more sensitive to the contexts in which people function and events occur (Gergen, 2001). Within this postmodern paradigm, the individual is construed as relational and situated in his or her sociocultural milieu (Gergen, 2001). This reformulation has only recently been applied to terrorism (Cooper, 2001; Stevens, 2002). Traditional psychology has yielded useful, but incomplete accounts of terrorism, focusing mainly on intra- and interpersonal causal factors (Stevens, 2002). Psychological approaches to understanding, studying, and preventing terrorism must also draw on paradigms that link the individual to economics, history, law, politics, religion, and culture. Such a multidisciplinary approach will also facilitate much-needed cooperation between psychologists, law enforcement, educators, journalists, and policy makers in addressing 21st-century terrorism.

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