

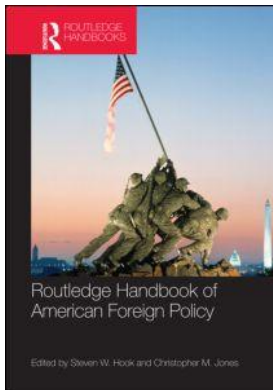
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Counterterrorism

Bradley A. Thayer

Unlike most aspects of foreign and defense policy studies, counterterrorism as an academic discipline and an important component of foreign and defense policy is a relatively new development, and one highly dependent on the terrorist threat confronted and the actions of the terrorists.¹ A reflection on the intellectual development of the discipline of counterterrorism allows the recognition that it has varied considerably by country. As one would suspect, countries confronting a major terrorist group place more focus on the problem than those not facing the danger. Accordingly, counterterrorist studies were particularly well developed in the United Kingdom, Turkey, and Israel. The United Kingdom has confronted the Irish Republican Army (IRA) since the modern “Troubles,” violence between the IRA and British and Unionist forces that began in 1969 (Moloney 2002). Another important U.S. ally, Turkey, has struggled against the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) since 1984. Thirty thousand people are estimated to have been killed in one of the most vicious terror-counterterror campaigns fought (Barkey 2007: 344). The struggle has implications beyond Turkey’s borders. Syria and Iran are affected by the struggle, which additionally has important implications for the United States’ presence in Iraq and the stability of that country. Israel has confronted numerous Palestinian terrorists groups, the most of important of which in the past were the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and its splinter organization Black September. It currently confronts the challenges imposed by a new generation of terrorist groups, the most formidable of which is the Islamic Resistance Movement, better known as Hamas.

Now that the United States is regularly challenged by Al Qaeda and Associated Movements (AQAM), especially since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, it is at the forefront of counterterrorism studies and counterterrorism occupies a central place in the foreign and defense policy of the United States. From an academic perspective, it is not an exaggeration to state that in one day, September 11, 2001, counterterrorism studies went from an intellectual backwater to the central security priority of the U.S. government, and became an issue of great concern to state and local governments, the media, and, within the academy, international security studies and related academic disciplines.

This chapter identifies the major schools of thought concerning counterterrorism. These schools of thought are “old” versus “new” terrorism, core-directed versus autonomous terrorism, and critical terrorism studies. In order to understand the discipline of counterterrorism, an understanding of the major motivations of terrorism is of singular importance. What has

been true historically is the case today. Terrorism is motivated by one of three major reasons: nationalism, religious belief, or millenarian goals.

Second, the chapter addresses how these schools of thought are reflected in American foreign and defense policy. It focuses largely on the United States due to the potency of the threat posed by AQAM. While this is the focus, it is important to note that many countries face terrorist threats in circumstances that differ significantly from those facing the United States. The circumstances differ due to the motivation of the terrorists as well as the scope and type of counterterrorist policies adopted.

Third, the chapter advances an agenda for future research. Despite the intellectual energy devoted to counterterrorism in recent years, the field is not as well developed as most of the topics covered elsewhere in this volume. My objective in this section is to illuminate some of the major research questions stemming from the previous sections. The bottom-line is that there are many topics of importance that must be researched by the academic and policy communities.

The Three Major Schools of Thought in Terrorism Studies

Counterterrorism as an analytic concept is divided into three major schools of thought: new versus old terrorism; core-direct terrorism versus autonomous terrorism; and Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS). This is not to suggest that other approaches or alternative methodologies are not valuable to the study of terrorism and counterterrorism (e.g., Wilkinson 1976; Wardlaw 1989; Reich and Laqueur 1998; Arce and Sandler 2005; Abadie 2006; Blakely 2007; Cronin 2002; Posen 2002; Horgan 2005; Victoroff 2005). Indeed, they are, and a full consideration of the large and growing counterterrorism literature would require including both major and minor schools of thought in this field. My immediate objective in this discussion is to provide a conceptual framework that identifies the major schools of thought for those interested in this discipline and that also helps to place arguments made frequently about the causes of terrorism in a broader context.

“Old” Versus “New” Terrorism

The first school of thought has had a large impact on the counterterrorism literature. It is the distinction made between “old” and “new” terrorism. This school of thought is closely identified with Martha Crenshaw and Bruce Hoffman (Crenshaw 1981, 2000, and 2007b; Hoffman 1998; also see Laqueur 1999; Benjamin and Simon 2003). “Old” terrorism refers to traditional motivations for terrorist acts, such as nationalism, the ideology that each nation should have its own state, and ideological struggle motivated by Marxism-Leninism-Maoism (Crenshaw 1995; Harmon 2000: 13–17). “New” terrorism refers to religious or millenarian motivations for terrorism, with particular attention to Islamic fundamentalist terrorism and the willingness of those terrorists to commit terror attacks that result in mass casualties (Crenshaw 2000: 411–415; Juergensmeyer 2000).

At the outset of this discussion of the contrast between “old” and “new” terrorism, it is important to note that “old” versus “new” terrorism refers to the contemporary context. When one adopts a historical perspective, it is clear that the terminology is not precise, since religion is one of the oldest motivations for terrorism. For example, the word “assassin” is derived from a radical offshoot of the Muslim Shi’a Ismaili sect active between A.D. 1090 and 1272 that used assassination to expel the Crusaders from present-day Syria (Hoffman 1998: 89). Echoing contemporary Islamic fundamentalist terrorists, assassins believed that they

were agents of Allah, and acting for him. Likewise, the word “zealot” comes from a Jewish millenarian sect that fought against the Romans in modern day Israel in the first century A.D. (Hoffman 1998: 88).

Thus, the religious motivation for terrorism was present over 2,000 years ago. Bruce Rapoport (1984) is clear that “holy terror,” the religious motivation for terrorism, remained for most of history as the only justification for terrorism in the Jewish, Hindu, and Muslim traditions. With that caveat in mind, the distinction between “old” and “new” terrorism remains a useful distinction to contrast the terrorist motivations of the past, including the Cold War period, with the increasing frequency of religious terrorism.

“Old” terrorism has served as the motivation for most terrorism in the contemporary period in international politics. Groups like the Basque terrorist organization ETA (Euzkadi Ta Askatasun or Freedom for the Basque Homeland), or the Irish Republican Army (IRA), and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) are fighting for nationalist objectives: To expel what the terrorist organization identifies as an occupier—the Spanish, the British government, or the Sinhalese majority in Sri Lanka, respectively.

Also in the category of “old” terrorism is ideology as the prime motivator for terrorist organizations. Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, in particular, was a major ideological motivator for many terror groups, particularly—although not exclusively—during the Cold War. Indeed, the “People’s Will” (*Narodnaya Volya*) terrorist organization in pre-Bolshevik Russia was motivated by Marxism, and was significant because Lenin’s brother, Alexander Ulyanov, was a member and was executed by the Tsar’s government for his participation in an attempt to assassinate Tsar Alexander. His execution helped to launch Lenin on his revolutionary career (Tucker 1973: 12–13).

During the Cold War, Marxism-Leninism-Maoism was the ideology of the Baader-Meinhof Gang—later Red Army Faction—in West Germany, the Red Brigades in Italy, the Japanese Red Army, and the Weathermen—later Weather Underground—in the United States.

The terrorism tactics of these groups are best encapsulated by terrorism expert Brian Jenkins, who wrote that “terrorists want a lot of people watching, not a lot of people dead” (Jenkins 1975: 4). What this means in practice is that the traditional weapons of the “old” terrorists were assassination, hostage-taking, and bombings of a narrow set of targets, such as government buildings.

With the end of the Cold War, ideology faded as a major motivator of terrorism, while religion, particularly Islamic fundamentalist terrorism, was on the rise (Laqueur 1996). Accordingly, terrorism scholars began to recognize the rise of terrorist groups motivated largely by new objectives, rather than by nationalism or ideology. This development marks the birth of “new” terrorism.

“New” terrorism refers to millenarian or religious motivations for terrorism and the target selection tactics used. The target selections tactics are similar—“new” terrorist groups seek to conduct mass casualty attacks (Laqueur 1999). Killing a large number of people typically serves the objectives of both categories of terrorists, who have an interest in acquiring Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)—nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons—to conduct mass casualty attacks and in utilizing novel mechanisms of attack, such as the use of airliners—as the world witnessed on 9/11—to bring about a large number of casualties (Hoffman 1997; Falkenrath, Newman, and Thayer 1998; Stern 1999).

While the desire to cause mass casualties is an important characteristic of the “new” terrorists, it is important to note that most of the terror attacks actually conducted by “new” terrorists share a similar target set with “old” terrorists. For example, if we consider the attacks conducted by AQAM, we find that the overwhelming majority are assassinations and bombings of public areas, as happened in the December 2002 attack in Bali, the March 2004 attacks in Madrid, the July 2005 attacks in London, and the November 2008 attacks in Mumbai.

Accordingly, while many people have been killed by AQAM in attacks in Bangladesh, Egypt, Great Britain, India, Iraq, Kenya, Pakistan, Turkey, Tunisia, and elsewhere, the great majority of these attacks are conducted with weapons that are familiar to “old” terrorists.

The consideration of millenarian terrorism begins with the recognition that most millenarian cults are peaceful. If they are violent, they are usually self-destructive. The Heaven’s Gate cult in San Diego is an example. Thirty-nine members of that cult committed suicide in March 1997. The rationale for the mass suicide was the return of the Hale-Bopp comet, which the cult members believe hid a spaceship that would take them to heaven once they were dead. The 1978 mass suicide of over 900 members of the Jim Jones cult (People’s Temple Agricultural Project) in Jonestown, Guyana, is another example of a cult’s self-destruction.

In contrast, the example of Aum Shinrikyo (Aum Supreme Truth) is a great cause for concern. In this case, the 40,000-member (in 1995) cult possessed millenarian objectives that sought to influence events by conducting mass casualty attacks using WMD as well as conventional weapons (Kaplan and Marshall 1996; Kaplan 2000: 209). Its leader, Shoko Asahara, ordered the cult to acquire nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons. They were able to acquire biological (anthrax and botulinum toxin) and chemical (hydrogen cyanide, sarin, VX) weapons and to use them against Japanese and American targets in Japan from 1990 through 1995, with their most effective attack being the March 1995 sarin attack against the Tokyo subway in an effort to avert an investigation into the cult (Kaplan 2000: 218). The cult also considered attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C. before being suppressed by the governments of Australia, Germany, Japan, Russia, and the United States (Kaplan 2000: 220, 224–226).

Of the “new” terrorism motivators, religion is the more important. Religion has become a major motivator for terrorism for two reasons. The first is the rebirth of fundamentalist Islam marked by the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the 1979 Iranian revolution, which brought an explicitly Islamic fundamentalist government—and state-supporter of terrorism—to power for the first time (Laqueur 2003: 30–48). The second is the equally significant impact that the end of the Cold War had on terrorism (Hoffman 1998: 92). The collapse of the Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies removed the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideological motivation for terrorism, eliminated the Warsaw Pact’s support for terrorist groups, and led to the collapse of most of the Marxist terrorist groups in the Muslim world, such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The PKK is the most significant exception to this trend.

The religious motivation for terrorism is far more dangerous than millenarian motivation. This is the case for three major reasons. First, for these terrorists, violence is motivated by divine sanction and justified by God, and earthly limitations or inhibitions are reduced. As Bruce Hoffman explains, “violence is first and foremost a sacramental act or divine duty executed in direct response to some theological demand or imperative” (1998: 94; also see Lesser 1995; Laqueur 1999). Consequently, conflicts and political complexities are more likely to be Manichaeic and assume “a transcendental dimension, and its perpetrators are consequently unconstrained by the political, moral or practical constraints that” affect “old” terrorists (Hoffman 1998: 94). Religious terrorists will attempt indiscriminate killing because “religious terrorists often seek the elimination of broadly defined categories of enemies and accordingly regard such large-scale violence not only as morally justified but as a necessary expedient for the attainment of their goals” (Hoffman 1998: 94).

Second, religious terrorists differ in their constituencies. “Old” terrorists seek to defend a minority or the purported interests of a class. For example, the IRA perceived itself to be defending Northern Irish Republican community, and the Red Army Faction saw itself as the vanguard of a communist revolution in West Germany. Religious terrorists seek to appeal to no other constituency than themselves. As Hoffman argues, the absence of a constituency

grounded in a broader community means religious terrorists are not seeking support from or influence over an uncommitted constituency (1998: 95). So there is little incentive for them not to use maximal and indiscriminate violence against opponents they identify as “infidels” or inferiors to co-religionists. As Abdullah Ahmed Ali, one of the August 2006 airline bomb plotters, said: “There are no innocents” (quoted in Hoffman 2009: 1105). Equally important, the absence of a traditional terrorist constituency “leads to a sanctioning of almost limitless violence against a virtually open-ended category of targets: that is, anyone who is not a member of the terrorists’ religion or religious sect” (Hoffman 1998: 95; Crenshaw 2007b).

Third, religious terrorists are more likely to be more radical in their selection of targets. In addition to their willingness to conduct attacks against all those who are not co-religionists or of the same sect, religious terrorists are more willing to conduct indiscriminate, mass casualty attacks as occurred on September 11, 2001. In contrast, “old” terrorists usually seek limited change, for example, to force the Spanish government from a Basque homeland, and so are unlikely to select their targets indiscriminately or conduct a mass casualty attack.

Empirically, Islamic fundamentalist terrorism is of particular concern. Islamic fundamentalist terrorists are far more likely to conduct suicide attacks (Crenshaw 2007a). According to Hoffman, “of the 35 terrorist organizations that have employed suicide tactics, 86 percent (31 of 35) are Islamic” (2009: 1101). Islamic fundamentalist terrorists have been responsible “for 81 percent of all suicide attacks” between 2001 and 2009 (Hoffman 2009: 1101). Suicide attacks come close to being the weapon of choice for Islamic fundamentalist terrorists. This is in stark contrast to the recent past. Hoffman (2009: 1101) notes “at the dawn of the modern era of religious terrorism some 25 years ago, this was a phenomenon confined exclusively to two countries: Lebanon and Kuwait” whereas now it affects “at least” two dozen countries (also see Benjamin and Simon 2003).

Groups that are sometimes identified as “amateur” terrorists, such as the four men who conducted the suicide bombing attacks against London transportation targets on July 7, 2005, and those planning the August 2006 airline bombings, are not “self-radicalized” individuals working independently from AQAM. Indeed, Hoffman submits that they are rather a greater threat than they may appear because they do have ties to AQAM—in fact to al Qaeda agents in Britain and to senior al Qaeda commanders in northwest Pakistan (Hoffman 2009: 1102).

Core-directed Versus Autonomous Terrorism

The second school of thought is core-directed terrorism, advanced by Bruce Hoffman, versus autonomous terrorism by Marc Sageman. This school of thought has application to many terrorist groups, but is particularly relevant for the study of AQAM in the wake of 9/11 since al Qaeda has both fragmented and inspired the creation or alignment of Islamic fundamentalist terrorist groups.

Hoffman’s argument is straightforward: historically, al Qaeda was a centrally directed terrorist organization, as most terrorist organizations have been, and as AQAM remains. “Al Qaeda is a remarkably agile and flexible organization that exercises both top-down and bottom-up planning and operational capabilities” (Hoffman 2008: 134; also see Kilcullen 2005). He acknowledges that the core al Qaeda has either generated new terror organizations or caused established ones to join forces with it, but submits that AQAM is centrally directed. Indeed, Hoffman argues al Qaeda made “strategic organizational decisions ... at least a decade ago” to subvert Muslim communities in the West, particularly the United Kingdom’s Muslim community (Hoffman 2008: 138). Part of this decision was to “identify, indoctrinate, and exploit new recruits who had not previously come under the scrutiny of local or national law

enforcement agencies” (Hoffman 2008: 138). These individuals would be significant al Qaeda assets waiting to be activated as directed from the al Qaeda leadership.

In contrast, Sageman argues that AQAM are now fluid and independent terrorist organizations and that these qualities make them more unpredictable than “their more structured forebears, who carried out the atrocities of 9/11” (2008: vii). Sageman submits that the core al Qaeda leadership—what he terms “al Qaeda Central”—still maintain important functions, but for all practical purposes are cut off from the rest of the organization due to the great pressure the United States and its allies have placed on it since 9/11 (2004, 2008). The impact of such tremendous pressure has been to force al Qaeda to decentralize in favor of terror networks. Sageman conceives of al Qaeda as a social network that cannot be killed but only disrupted. As he notes, “Al Qaeda Central is of course not dead, but it is still contained operationally. It puts out inspirational guidance on the Internet, but does not have the means to exert command and control over the al Qaeda social movement” (2008: 132). He continues, “the surviving members of al Qaeda are undoubtedly still plotting to do harm to various countries in the world and have the expertise to do so, but they are hampered by the global security measure that have been put in place” (2008: 132). The “long-term trend does not favor al Qaeda. The number of the trained global Islamist terrorists continues to dwindle along the Afghan-Pakistani border, and there is no sign that they are being replenished with competent new recruits” (Sageman 2008: 132).

For Sageman, the danger stems from a de-centralized and self-organized al Qaeda who has created terror networks, often in Western countries. They are the “homegrown” Islamic fundamentalist terrorists, who conspire in small groups to conduct attacks without guidance from al Qaeda Central. Sageman submits that al Qaeda Central “does not know who its followers are, and is reduced to accepting them after the adherents declare themselves in an act of terrorism. Their official acceptance into al Qaeda comes after the fact” (2008: 136). Most of the major post-9/11 al Qaeda attacks have followed this template: Istanbul in 2003, Madrid in 2004, London in 2005, the foiled Heathrow airliner attacks in 2006, and the plot to bomb a London nightclub and Glasgow airport in 2007. The de-centralized, self-organized, and self-contained terrorist networks Sageman identifies pose a great problem for counterterrorism authorities, who are less likely to know of the terrorist cell until it strikes.

Critical Terrorism Studies

Critical terrorism studies, standing in marked contrast and intellectual opposition to the previous schools of thought, is the third major school. CTS is a critic of contemporary studies of terrorism and provides an alternative path to its study (Jackson, Smyth, and Gunning 2009; Jarvis 2009a,b). It is important to review the critiques of traditional terrorism studies by critical terrorism studies in order to possess an ability to assess the value of these critiques, as well as the broader contribution made by critical terrorism studies.

According to Richard Jackson, one of its major proponents, there are four significant criticisms of contemporary terrorist studies. The first of these criticisms are “methodological and analytical weaknesses” (Jackson 2007b: 244). These methodological and analytical weaknesses may be categorized into seven areas. First, traditional studies have used “poor research methods and procedures,” while depending heavily on “secondary information and a general failure to undertake primary research” (Zulaika and Douglass 1996: 149–150; Jackson 2007b: 244). Second, scholars in the other schools of thought have failed “to develop an accepted definition of terrorism and to formulate rigorous theories and concepts” (Jackson 2007b: 244; also see Schmid and Jongman 1988). Third, much of the research published by scholars in the competing camps is of a “descriptive, narrative and condemnatory character”

(Jackson 2007b: 244). Fourth, there is a “dominance” of “orthodox international relations ... approaches and a lack of interdisciplinarity” (Jackson 2007b: 244). Fifth, there is a “tendency,” in the other approaches “to treat contemporary terrorism as a ‘new’ phenomenon that started on September 11, 2001 and a persistent lack of historicity” (Jackson 2007b: 244). Sixth, the research agenda is focused “on a few topical issues and a subsequent failure fully to engage with a range of other important subjects, not the least the issue of state terrorism” (Jackson 2007b: 245). Finally, there is “an overly policy prescriptive focus” that can affect the academic quality of the scholarship (Jackson 2007b: 245).

The second criticism is that the other schools of thought have their “theoretical and institutional origins in orthodox security studies and counterinsurgency studies” (Jackson 2007b: 245). Accordingly, these approaches use “state-centric priority and perspectives,” and tend “to reproduce a limited set of assumptions and narratives about the nature, causes and responses to terrorism” (Jackson 2007b: 245).

The third criticism concerns the affiliation of terrorism scholars—many terrorism scholars are “directly linked to state institutions and sources of power in ways that make it difficult to distinguish between the state and academic spheres” (Jackson 2007b: 245). The result of this is that “state, military, think-tank and public intellectuals” create an “influential and exclusive ‘epistemic community’” which shares assumptions about the causes and solutions to terrorism (Jackson 2007b: 245).

Fourth, the knowledge created by the other schools is categorized as “problem-solving theory” (Jackson 2007b: 245). Problem-solving theory, as defined by critical international relations theorist Robert Cox (1981: 128–129), “takes the world as it finds it, with the prevailing social and power relationships and the institutions into which they are organized, as the given framework for action (cited in Jackson 2007b: 245). The consequence is that the status quo, and its contribution to the causes of terrorism, is not questioned (Jackson 2007b: 245).

For critical terrorism studies, the results of these criticisms reveal key weakness in the other approaches. “Analytically, the state-centric orientation of the field functions to narrow the potential range of research subjects, encourage conformity in outlook and method and obstruct vigorous, wide-ranging debate, particularly regarding the causes of non-state terrorism and the use of terrorism by liberal democratic states and their allies (Jackson 2007b: 245–246). Equally importantly, Jackson (2007b: 246) notes, “a normative perspective suggests that terrorism studies is a largely co-opted field of research that is deeply enmeshed with the actual practices of counter-terrorism and the exercise of state power.”

As is evident, critical terrorism studies adopts a different approach than the other two schools. Jackson (2007b: 246) perceives the essence of the approach as “more of an orientation or critical perspective that seeks to maintain a certain distance from prevailing ideologies and orthodoxies.” In addition to the philosophy of study identified, there is a core set of “epistemological, ontological and ethical-normative commitments,” made by theorists of critical terrorism studies to the study of terrorism.

Epistemologically, CTS “begins with an acceptance of the basic insecurity of all knowledge and the impossibility of neutral or objective knowledge about terrorism. It also evinces an acute sensitivity to the ways in which terrorism knowledge can be deployed.... CTS starts by asking: who is terrorism knowledge for, and what functions does it serve in supporting their interests?” (Jackson 2007b: 246).

Ontologically, CTS is reluctant to label political violence as terrorism since to do so implies a political judgment concerning legitimacy (Jackson 2007a; Jackson 2007b, Jarvis 2009). For scholars working in the CTS school of thought, “terrorism” does not exist since they are unwilling to classify political violence as such. To do so would delegitimize some political actors while privileging others who use force and violence “legitimately,” especially states (Jackson, Murphy, and Poynting 2010). CTS theorists prefer to use the term political violence, and to

recognize it comes in many forms, with reference always to the cultural and political context in which it occurs (Schmid and Jongman 1988: 101; Sluka 2002: 23; Jackson 2007b: 247).

The essence of the problem identified by CTS theorists is encapsulated in the dictum: “One man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter.” For example, Jackson (2007b: 248) notes that four “recognized ‘terrorists’” have won “the Nobel Peace Prize: Menachim Begin, Sean McBride, Nelson Mandela and Yassir Arafat.” To these examples we could add Eamon de Valera, Michael Collins, Jerry Adams from Irish history, Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Stalin from the Soviet past, and from American history, the “Sons of Liberty” in the American Revolution. These examples demonstrate the fluidity of the definition of terrorist. Each of the statesmen mentioned had a period in his life when he could have been considered a terrorist by the state. Now, often they are considered preeminent statesmen in their countries or have again fallen from an exalted position, as is the case with Stalin.

The value of CTS stems from its sensitivity to the importance of power in the definition of “terrorist,” and its appreciation for how legitimacy can be an aspect of power when terrorism and terrorist are considered. In sum, for CTS, terrorists who succeed are no longer terrorists, but become recognized members of the international community.

Of course, as one would expect from a novel and distinctive school of thought, CTS is not without its critics. General themes in the critique of this school of thought are that it exaggerates the degree to which mainstream counterterrorism studies are not cognizant of the limitations of their field, particularly with respect to creating theoretical knowledge (Horgan and Boyle 2008: 58). Second, CTS does not appreciate the diversity of and approaches to the disciplines of terrorism and counterterrorism studies over the last fifty years that mark the development of these fields (Horgan and Boyle 2008: 57–59). Scholars and practitioners from many diverse fields and backgrounds have made significant contributions to the terrorism literature, while a review of the two major journals in the field, *Terrorism and Political Violence* and *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, actually reveals that they publish scholarship that reflects this broad diversity in approach. Finally, CTS assumes that it is wrong for academics to generate policy-relevant knowledge or to work with governmental agencies or policy centers like the RAND Corporation (Horgan and Boyle 2008: 59–60). In essence, there is a blanket assumption of bad faith on the part of academics in the traditional approaches to counterterrorism that is not warranted.

Counterterrorism and American Foreign Policy: Coercion and Defense

Understanding the causes of terrorism greatly aids the evaluation of counterterrorist policies. Knowing the motivation of terrorists and possessing theories to identify and comprehend their actions are necessary first steps for counterterrorism policy. In the case of the United States, counterterrorism is perhaps the most important objective of U.S. foreign and defense policies, and is likely to remain so over the next decade due to the resilience of AQAM, the continued military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the high levels of U.S. and allied covert activity in the Horn of Africa, Yemen, and elsewhere.

Conceptually, counterterrorism is a response to terrorists’ decision to use violence to achieve their objectives (Crelinsten 1998, 2009; Wilkinson 2000; Davis and Jenkins 2002; Ganor 2005; Jackson 2005; Morral and Jackson 2009). This is what deterrence theorist Thomas Schelling (1960) identifies as the “diplomacy of violence,” the use by terrorists of force or violence and threat of more force or violence to come to negotiate with the state. As a concept, counterterrorism is a function of two variables: coercion and defense. The foregoing discussion will consider each, emphasizing the application to AQAM.

Counterterrorism Policy: Coercion

The essence of coercion is to cause an actor, in this instance a terrorist group, to stop an action, terrorism. Accordingly, in counterterrorism policy, coercion takes a variety of forms. It may take the form of violence or the threat of violence or enticement. First, and most obviously, coercion can entail killing terrorists, with a particular emphasis on terrorist leadership. The objective is to nullify the terrorist organization through attrition, reducing the numbers of effective leaders at high- and mid-levels, as well as reducing the numbers of lower level “foot soldiers” in the organization. Over time, an attritional counterterrorism policy will grind down the terrorist organization as its members are killed and replaced by other, less experienced individuals. Yet, enticement is just as important for attrition. An individual may be dissuaded from joining a terrorist organization, instead choosing to pursue alternative paths, resulting over time in the desiccation of the terrorist group.

The U.S. military and intelligence community have wielded the coercive tool of killing terrorists frequently in the struggle against al Qaeda since 1998 when President Bill Clinton authorized cruise missile attacks against Sudan and Afghanistan (Scheuer 2002, 2004; Pillar 2004). While killing AQAM members takes many forms in multiple circumstances, both the Bush and Obama administrations have placed particular importance on conducting strikes against terrorists using Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs)—notably the Predator UAV armed with Hellfire missile—which may loiter over suspected terrorist targets gathering information before attacking. These attacks have been successful in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, and Yemen. Yet traditional airstrikes remain important as well. Perhaps the most significant airstrike was the attack on al Qaeda in Iraq leader Abu Musab Zarqawi in June 2006.

Regrettably, at times targets were attacked by mistake and innocent civilians were killed, resulting in greater sympathy and support for al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan. These tragic mistakes have led to considerable debate over whether the Predator attacks should continue (Exum et al. 2009). Nonetheless, the intelligence community and military have emphasized the value of these attacks for wearing down AQAM. The preference of AQAM and the Taliban is to conduct meetings in person, due to the risk that communicating electronically via e-mail, cell phone, or Short Message System (SMS), will be intercepted by the U.S. and allied intelligence community. Yet the risk of a personal gathering is a potential UAV strike or capture, resulting in the continued attrition of AQAM.

A related tool from the counterterrorism toolkit is assassination or “targeted killing.” The 2010 assassination of Hamas military commander Mahmoud al-Mabhouh in Dubai or Russia’s assassination of Chechen terrorist leader Zelimkhan Yankarbiyev in Qatar in 2004 demonstrates that states find assassination an effective counterterrorism tool, although for the United States, the UAV strike remains preferable and has been, at least to this date, discrete from the legal questions surrounding assassination (DeYoung and Warrick 2010: A1).

A third mechanism is for the United States to work with regional or local allies to place pressure on AQAM and draw away its support. In this instance, the United States would not directly confront AQAM but do so indirectly, by supporting local allies or parties with a common interest in defeating AQAM. In his careful study of the defeat of al Qaeda in Iraq, Austin Long (2008: 77) notes how tribal leaders in Iraq’s Anbar province united behind an effort to drive al Qaeda out. They did so because al Qaeda’s fundamentalist goals “were at odds with the local or regional goals of the tribes.” Due to that variance, the tribes threw their support behind Iraq’s government and aided U.S. military operations in Anbar, completely defeating the terrorists by 2007. This tactic was also employed in 2006, when the United States supported the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia to drive the Islamic Courts Union from power. Similar tactics are currently in use in Afghanistan.

The fourth tool is to deprive terrorist organizations and their supporters of funds. This option receives less attention in counterterrorist studies than it should. Financing of terror operations is a *sine qua non*. Although the amounts of money may not be large in relative terms, all of AQAM's operations require funding. Realistically, some sources of funding cannot be stopped, such as money contributed in small amounts by sympathetic individuals. However, for larger operations especially, the amounts of money are relatively larger and depend upon the transfer of funds through financial institutions. This is an activity that is susceptible to detection and prevention through seizure if it is detected in time.

A fifth instrument is to entice terrorists away from joining the terrorist organization in the first place. These counterterrorism strategies are centered on reducing the individual motivations for terrorist recruitment. The ways in which individuals may be dissuaded from becoming terrorists are multifaceted, but five are identified here.

This goal may be achieved, first, through economic means, by improving general economic conditions in states of concern: for AQAM, this is Afghanistan, Egypt, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen. The consequence of an improved standard of living may reduce the attractiveness of joining a terrorist organization. Second, it may be done by promoting political modernization in the developing world to reduce the likelihood of failed states like Afghanistan in the 1990s, broaden political participation, and orient such participation in an anti-fundamentalist direction by assisting secular or moderate political parties (Benard 2003). Third, it may take the form of confronting the Islamic fundamentalist terrorist message directly by engaging in the "war of ideas." This can be accomplished through advancing alternative religious ideas to counter the religious authority of clerics who support AQAM, and by using media to further countervailing messages. Fourth, it may take non-traditional forms of counterterrorism like clearing marriage markets and reducing the practice of polygyny so poorer individuals may have the opportunity to marry, thereby reducing their susceptibility to recruitment by terrorists (Thayer and Hudson 2010). Fifth, it may also be accomplished by improving women's rights in certain areas of the developing world. This should include reducing gender inequalities and providing women with the right to control their own reproduction, which will result in smaller families, and thus reduce the "youth bulges" present in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Palestinian Authority, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen, where there is an abundant population of young, unmarried men who are prime candidates for radicalization (Thayer 2009: 3088–3090; Thayer and Hudson 2010: 57–58).

Counterterrorism Policy: Defense

Defense is the equal of coercion for counterterrorism strategy and, like coercion, takes many forms. Defense against terrorist attacks is a singularly difficult responsibility since those tasked with defense must be right 100 percent of the time, while the terrorists need only be right once. In 2006, Dame Eliza Manningham-Buller, then head of the United Kingdom's Security Service (MI-5) said: "We will continue to stop most of them, but we will not stop all of them" (quoted in Hoffman 2009: 1111). Thus, almost by definition, and certainly against an adversary as adaptive as AQAM, defense against terror attacks will not be perfect. Nonetheless, defense does work. Two major defensive policies are considered in this discussion: the intelligence community and homeland defense. This discussion is inevitably truncated. Clearly, other actors not considered in this chapter contribute significantly to defensive counterterrorism policies, including local, state and federal law enforcement, and the law enforcement agencies of other countries (Dershowitz 2002).

The first is the defense provided by the intelligence community. The intelligence community provides the most effective counterterrorism tool available to states in their struggles against terrorism, and the present war between the United States and AQAM is no exception. The ability to know of a plot beforehand, and foil it, is the first line of defense provided by the major counterterrorism actors in the U.S. intelligence community: the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Equally, it is the most difficult to evaluate since intelligence successes are not public and may only become so years afterward, if at all.

Although there have been several prominent terrorist attacks on American soil since 9/11, including two episodes in 2009—U.S. Army Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan's attack against his fellow soldiers at Ft. Hood and Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab's attempt to blow up an airliner over Detroit on Christmas Day 2009—the absence of a successful terrorist attack in the United States on the scale of 9/11 is a testament to the effectiveness of the U.S. and allied intelligence community in penetrating AQAM and foiling their plots. Examples of successful intelligence efforts in support of counterterrorism include the disruption of Najibullah Zazi's plot to bomb the New York City subway system, which was stopped in September 2009 and the August 2006 planned bombings of airliners departing London Heathrow for the United States and Canada.

The second and the most visible counterterrorism defense for most Americans is homeland defense. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is the principal department tasked with defending the United States from terror attacks, although it cooperates closely with law enforcement agencies such as the Department of Justice and FBI, as well as the with the Department of Defense, Department of Energy, and intelligence community.

Some of its most important responsibilities include guarding ports, airports, and the U.S. border, defending against chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear (CBRN) weapons attacks, as well as addressing the aftermath of a CBRN attack. The vulnerability of the United States to nuclear or radiological attack has been reduced for several reasons, including great detection capabilities, although the risk can never be eliminated (Allison 2004). This is because AQAM is transparent in its desire to acquire these weapons and use them against the United States and because of the risk that states, like North Korea or Iran, might share fissile material or nuclear weapons themselves with AQAM (Allison 2004; Lawrence 2005: 72).

But perhaps the most worrisome of the CBRN weapons is biological weapons (BW) due to relative ease in acquisition and weaponization in comparison with nuclear weapons. DHS has greatly improved the ability of the United States to detect, defend, and respond to a BW attack in the aftermath of the "Amerithrax" attacks of October and November 2001 that killed five and injured seventeen (Gerstein 2009). A U.S. scientist, Dr. Bruce Ivins, probably conducted these attacks although we will never know definitively. There are strong reasons to suspect him because Ivins had the knowledge; he worked at the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases on anthrax, as well as other agents; and he committed suicide in 2008 shortly before the FBI filed charges against him.

While progress has been made in BW defense, it remains the greatest vulnerability for the United States due to the ease of acquisition and weaponization, the ability of BW to result in mass casualties, and the lack of an effective defense for most of the U.S. population. If one were to predict the type of mass casualty attack AQAM were most likely to conduct against the United States, a biological weapons attack would be at the top of the list.

While defensive counterterrorism policies are essential and have been effective to date, it is clear that AQAM is a robust and adaptive terrorist organization. What Hoffman (2009: 1112) calls al Qaeda's "operation durability," is significant, and is likely to remain so. Hoffman (2009: 1112) submits that al Qaeda's ability to survive in adverse circumstances is "a direct reflection of both the movement's resiliency and the continued resonance of its ideology." Al

Qaeda's resilience and resonance will continue to pose a considerable problem for the United States and other countries confronting the Islamic fundamentalist terrorism threat.

Indeed, the victory for any counterterrorism strategy, and particularly for the United States in its confrontation with Islamic fundamentalist terrorism, begins by recognizing that terrorist organizations, whether secular or religious, not only can be defeated but often are (Thayer 2008). Almost all of the left-wing terrorist organizations of the Cold War were soundly defeated—from the Weather Underground in the United States to the Japanese Red Army, the Red Army Faction in Germany, and the Red Brigades in Italy. The British fought the IRA to a standstill. The Russians have not yielded to Chechen terrorists. The Egyptians have broken the back of the Islamic Group and of Egyptian Islamic Jihad. Turkey has fought the PKK to a standstill. The Philippines destroyed Abu Sayyaf, and states throughout Southeast Asia have neutralized Jamaah Islamiyah. The Israelis have fought Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad to a stalemate. They also defeated the PLO, as did the Jordanians.

So while it is true that AQAM and other Islamic fundamentalist terrorist groups should not be underestimated—they are motivated, competent, and resilient—they have real vulnerabilities and can be defeated. Three significant conditions are salient: first, the identification of these vulnerabilities; second, counterterrorism policy must be pursued broadly with the successful union of coercive and defensive instruments; and third, given the considerable amount of time it will take to defeat AQAM, the sustained cooperation and success of these instruments. Former U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld often spoke of a war lasting as long as the Cold War—fifty years or more—to defeat AQAM, and while it cannot be known with precision how long the struggle will last, it is certain that it will be a long war.

Conclusion: An Agenda for Future Research in Counterterrorism

The attacks of 9/11 generated a renaissance in counterterrorism studies. While the research agenda of counterterrorism studies has been very active, there are three major questions that are fecund for future research. First, it is transparent that each of the major schools of thought captures elements of the causes of terrorism, but scholars of terrorism need to advance a research agenda that determines the motivation possessed by the peripheral organizations and new recruits to AQAM. There is, however, no question about the solid and consistent motivation for core members of AQAM. There is doubt about the commitment of newer members. Studying this issue is essential for counterterrorism studies.

Second, as emphasized here, there is no single solution to the terrorism of AQAM, but counterterrorism studies must determine, first, the cause of recruitment and the degree of motivation possessed by AQAM precisely because that movement is both core and peripheral; and second, how to retard recruitment and remove motivation of its newer members. These topics are prominent items on counterterrorism's research agenda.

Third, counterterrorism studies must improve its understanding of AQAM's motivation and operation. While the picture possessed by the intelligence community might be significantly better, in the academic literature, little is known about al Qaeda's terrorist doctrine and the internal strife and fights al Qaeda has had within its own organization. It is important to determine the disputes among its senior leadership and examine how they have plagued the organization. Once cleavages are identified, they may be exploited. Equally important, it is necessary to identify the tensions and debates AQAM have had between leadership and mid-echelon forces precisely for the same counterterrorist objective of exploiting these divisions to weaken AQAM.

Finally, there is an issue that receives too little attention from scholars in terrorism/counterterrorism studies. It is the willpower of the American people to continue fighting the

long war against AQAM. There will be additional attacks and setbacks in this long war, and the willingness of the American people to support a long-term counterterrorism campaign will be tested. Scholars in the field must move beyond traditional aspects of the discipline to determine the relationship between public support and counterterrorism in a long struggle. Popular support was high in the wake of 9/11 and has waned in recent years. An inescapable lesson of effective counterterrorism is the need to educate the public in order to maintain support for counterterrorist policies. In the American context, education means explaining to the American people the causes of terror attacks, how the struggle is being conducted by the United States, and how it will end. If the country's political leadership fails to accomplish this task, then scholars must.

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