

Causes and Contexts

A structural analysis of terrorism past and present

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to provide a theoretical framework that can be applied to both religious and secular terrorism. It is suggested that terrorism can be divided into two categories; practical and ideological. The first category, terrorists with practical objectives like sovereignty or end to repression, are generated by local conflicts. These local conflicts can also have a global impact, thus inspiring others sharing that ideology or religion to take up terrorism. For this second type of terrorists, ideology comes after the cause as a means to achieve an end. Ideology becomes both the means and the end. The theory is applied to two empirical cases, one being the West German terrorism of 1968-1993, the other being Islamic terrorism 1998-2005. The two cases are compared and the similarities between the two cases despite differences between religious and secular terrorism are used to support the validity of the theory. The findings indicate that secular and religious terrorism share some characteristics which could be used to analyse the emergence of terrorism past and present.

Key words: terrorism, Islamic terrorism, West Germany, urban guerilla, Al-Qaeda

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1 Introduction

Today, the issue of global terrorism is present in many aspects of modern life, ranging from the “global war on terror” to increased security measures on airports and other public facilities. Ever since September 11th 2001, the whole world has been made aware of the presence and impact of global terrorism. It is, however, easy to forget that the world experienced a period in 1968-1993 that was not entirely different. Then, scholars attempted to analyse the particulars of Latin American society, of Italian politics and of West German middle-class students. This type of contextualising of terrorism is again seen today. Many scholars and experts today focus to no small extent on the particulars of Islamic terrorism in terms of religious doctrine and cultural heritage in their pursuit of answers that can help explain this surge of violence. The frightening aspects of terrorism and the polarisation it aims to produce further reinforce this tendency, just as it did in 1968-1993.

When I read contemporary literature on terrorism from the past, it struck me just how similar it is to the material being written today about Islamic terrorism. It also struck me that terrorism then is not that different from terrorism now, regardless of all the claims to the contrary. This made me question the contextualisation of terrorism, i.e. the tendency to try to understand terrorism based on a close study of its immediate context rather than by looking for recurring traits inherent in terrorism.

My ambition with this thesis is to take a different approach and instead focus on looking at terrorism from a wider and more abstract perspective. My aim is to further an understanding based on research where the lessons from both the past and present are taken into account and where terrorism is understood as a recurring phenomenon, not something that's unique to particular contexts. This approach could then yield results that could provide some instruments for understanding terrorism beyond the case-specific explanations so often heard today.

I will not attempt to write a “general theory on terrorism”, that would be too presumptuous and hopelessly optimistic. I will, however, attempt to uncover some of the similarities between terrorism past and present in my own pursuit of answers devoid of particularities. I have developed a theoretical framework which I argue can provide a more detailed understanding of how different types of terrorism can interact indirectly with each other, creating “terrorism waves” such as the one in Western Europe in 1968-1993 as well as the one we see today.

1.1 The study

There is a tendency among analysts, especially contemporary ones, to pay considerable attention to the specific context of various types of terrorism. I argue that this approach prevents the establishment of generally applicable theories which could help us understand terrorism as a general phenomenon. The contextualised approach also puts the objectivity of the researcher at risk by forcing the researcher to take a stern stand against that which is being studied lest he or she is to be considered an apologist or sympathiser. The purpose of this thesis is to break that pattern by taking a cumulative approach through the study of the past and present, both in terms of theories and empirical material. The objective is to search for similarities rather than differences.

One of the recurring patterns in scholarly analysis of contemporary terrorism both in the past and present is the tendency to dismiss contemporary terrorism (but seldom historical terrorism) as nothing more than hate-driven campaigns of destruction. To me that sounds like a simplification. I do not find it likely that so many would risk or even sacrifice their lives out of nothing more than sheer love of carnage. Some scholars argue that there is a rationality to terrorism¹, that for all its destructiveness and brutality, the perpetrators of terror are nevertheless rational actors seeking specific outcomes beyond that of destruction for destruction's sake. I find this explanation to be more plausible and have used it as the foundation for my study.

I will attempt to provide a more detailed understanding of the mechanisms that make terrorists appear, and disappear. Can generally applicable theories be used to explain the recurring appearance and disappearance of terrorism? Do different types of terrorism have similar traits that transcend differences in religion, doctrine and era? What makes homegrown terrorists appear and deliver lethal blows against their fellow citizens, claiming solidarity with some far-away cause to such an extent that they are willing to attack the very society they grew up in?

In order to find answers to these questions I will describe what I consider to be a causal feedback mechanism between various contexts that can help explain how structural factors may lead to a significant increase in some types of terrorist activities. Furthermore, I argue that these factors are relevant across time, doctrine and culture.

I argue that the main distinction between different types of terrorism should not be made along the lines of religion versus ideology but rather that the major difference lies between *practical* and *ideological* terrorism. The former has an easily defined objective outside the realm of ideology, such as sovereignty for a specific territory or the toppling of a government in favour of a specific alternative. The latter is built on an abstract basis, the objective of the terrorist activities comes from the chosen ideology. In the case practical terrorism, the cause pre-dates the ideology. In the case of ideological terrorism, the situation is the exact opposite; the ideology comes first and provides in itself the reason for violent action.

¹ For example Telhami (2005)

Once this distinction has been made, I argue that the ability to recruit among the various practical terrorist organisations is simply a result of the stability of their cause. The conflicts over the Basque region and Northern Ireland, for example, have persisted for quite some time. This has provided a stable foundation for the ETA and IRA. Recent de-escalations of these two conflicts have reduced terrorist activities related to these causes. The level of terrorist activities is linked to the nature of the conflict but the common trait is that as long as the conflict over something of such a practical nature persists, terrorist organisations involved in such struggles will have stability. Ideological terrorism on the other hand is highly susceptible to fluctuations since it does not have this type of stable foundation. Just as ideas can change and develop, the ideological terrorist organisations can emerge and disappear following global trends, media coverage, etc.

I argue that this distinction should be applicable to terrorism of both the past and present. Thus stripped of context, the theory can be applied to both religiously motivated and secular terrorism in the past, present and hopefully also the future. One of the limits of the theory is that I have focused on the type of ideological terrorists which claim solidarity with other groups. This excludes the isolationist groups, such as Aum Shinrikyo. These groups are difficult to explain using my theoretical framework, they most likely need a category of their own.

1.2 Methodology

I intend to develop a theoretical framework by de-contextualising existing theories on terrorism as well as adding my own theories. This de-contextualising is done by removing what I consider to be superfluous contextual angles concerning specific characteristics linked to the specific religions or ideologies. By combining different theories on different types of terrorism as well as adding my own theories to the mix, I aim to create a more generally applicable model. I will then test this model on two empirical cases, being the Red Army Faction (RAF) in West Germany 1968-1993 and contemporary Islamic terrorism 1998-2005. In addition, I will also compare these two cases to emphasise similarities. Although this design is not within the parameters of a strictly performed comparative study along the lines of Mill's *method of agreement*, as for example defined by Landman (2004, pp. 29-30), it nevertheless has similar dimensions.

My two cases have been deliberately chosen because of the differences between them. The West German terrorism is a case of secular left-wing terrorism perpetrated by Europeans against Europeans in the past and is well-documented, including material that shows the views of the perpetrators themselves. The Islamic terrorism is a case of contemporary terrorism with religious and clearly global dimensions, still surrounded by much speculation due to the difficulties involved in obtaining accurate data on events of this type that are still unfolding. By applying my theoretical framework to these two cases and comparing the results I intend to lend some methodological weight to the similarities.

The main reason I chose not to conduct a pure comparative study is also the most important difference between the two cases; we do not yet know how the Islamic terrorism case will develop in the future whereas the West German case ended decades ago.

1.3 The material

I will make use of theoretical literature on terrorism of both the religious and political kinds, for example Peste (2003), Laqueur (1987), Griset & Mahan (2003) and Sprinzak (1999). In addition, I will use some of the recently published books on the left-wing terrorism of the 1970s which make use of information not previously available, such as recent testimonies from former members of the RAF, for example the detailed description of the events surrounding the Stockholm embassy siege of 1975 written by Hansén & Nordqvist (2005). I hope that these new sources of empirical data can be used to develop the existing theories on political violence since they can paint a more detailed picture of a particular era and breed of terrorism which is limited in time and space.

Due to the previously mentioned tendency to over-contextualise research on terrorism, I will treat conclusions presented in research on contemporary terrorism with caution. This applies both to the research on the terrorism of the 1960s-1980s written during that same period and to the research we see today.

1.4 Definitions

Defining “terrorism” is difficult. There is no single broadly accepted definition. Laqueur (1987, p. 11) states that “[...] recently, the term 'terrorism' (like 'guerilla') has been used in so many different senses as to become almost meaningless, covering almost any, and not necessarily political, act of violence”. However, Whittaker mentions one definition which will suffice for this thesis, being; “terrorism is the premeditated threat or use of violence by subnational groups or clandestine individuals intended to intimidate and coerce governments, to promote political, religious or ideological outcomes, and to inculcate fear among the public at large” (Whittaker 2007, p. 10). With the concept of terrorism thus defined, I will also define some of the factors used to explain it. There are many different ways of explaining the root causes behind terrorism. Sprinzak (1999, p. 312) mentions violence, repression and arbitrariness. Whittaker (2007, p. 84) brings up oppression and hostility towards minorities on behalf of the majority. Yet others frequently mention deprivation, such as in the shape of poverty and disenfranchisement (Crayton 1985, p. 34) or more abstract forms of social and economic deprivation (Borum 2005, p. 19)

In this thesis, I will not focus on the specifics related to these factors. In order to facilitate my theorising, I will frequently use the expression *grievances* as a wide

definition including, but not limited to, the above mentioned examples. Some additional grievances could for example be purely ideological, such as the sheer existence of a transnational capitalist system or the presence of troops of a specific nationality in a specific area.

2 A new perspective on terrorism

In this chapter, I argue first that theories on, and perceptions of, terrorism have a tendency to be too contextualised and present examples of how this can negatively affect the accuracy of the research at hand. Secondly, I argue that a distinction should be made between the local and global contexts in order to understand what I consider to be the main distinction between different types of terrorism; that between practical and ideological. I present more detailed explanations of my theoretical concepts in the chapters below. In order to make the theoretical framework more comprehensible, I have included anecdotal empirical examples throughout the chapter.

2.1 The necessity of de-contextualisation

The contemporary debate on terrorism is more often than not focused on specific traits of the organisations that are most active today, the religious component being one such characteristic. Some previous periods of terrorism, such as 1968-1993, the 1920s-1930s and 1890s-1900s, have also been analysed with a focus on uniqueness rather than similarities, for example by Laqueur (1987, pp. 85-87) and Amon (1985).

I argue that in order to develop a more cumulative and objective study of terrorism, the contextualisation of terrorism must be treated with more caution than it has generally been so far. There is a tendency among many scholars to let their own context colour their theories and judgement to such an extent that it can jeopardise their ability to objectively study the phenomenon of terrorism. In 2002, Whittaker (2007, p. 94) wrote the following;

Outside the group nobody can see the sense of the Basque ETA, and the Tamil Tigers, pursuing their campaign of violence when much of what they are wanting has been given them through compromise, agreement or grant of more autonomy. Their subsidiary motives of targeting people and places become subsumed in a narrow, ultimate motive of ensuring survival. Whatever the degree of risk (and the irritated bewilderment of everybody else) the terrorists continue to terrorize.

Whittaker's acidic condemnation of the contemporary ETA and his utter conviction that it fights only for the sake of fighting itself and ultimately its own survival makes him conclude that "the terrorists will continue to terrorize". However, in March of 2006, according to a Basque news source the ETA declared a "permanent

cease-fire” in favour of more peaceful negotiations (*ETA cease-fire*). Thus, the ETA proved itself capable of responding to changes in the local context, albeit slowly. A more objective review of the ETA could have shown that the organisation has become less active over the years and that their decision to cease using terrorism was not entirely unpredictable.

In the late 1970s, Amon (1985) linked the wave of terrorism in Western Europe with development. His explanation was that because Western civilisation had reached a certain stage, it had turned to self-destruction, stating that “[t]errorism is just the last stage in the age of revolutions” (Amon 1985, p. 17). His explanation was heavily contextualised and looked to the Western cultural heritage for answers. At the time of writing, during the late 1970s, the most prominent type of terrorism was the homegrown Western European type. It is quite understandable that someone analysing the phenomenon there and then would be tempted to seek for specific explanations to what was then perceived by many to be Western problem with Western perpetrators and Western victims. The large wave of Middle Eastern terror that started in Lebanon was yet to come. Today Amon's theories seem outlandish and outdated. Today terrorism is thought by many to be a phenomenon carried out by Middle Eastern perpetrators and thus many explanations instead focus on the specifics appropriate to the Middle East.

One of my basic arguments is that the study of terrorism must be de-contextualised in order to achieve a wider understanding. The two above examples show the dangers of letting one's context influence the analysis to an extent where it can damage the accuracy of one's research. An objective review of terrorism which aims to achieve understanding rather than delivering redundant condemnation is still a sensitive issue when it comes to contemporary terrorism. Nicholson (2005, p. 2) states that “[w]e reflexively condemn terrorism after each new outrage [...] without a real attempt to understand and dissect it. Dissection is clinical, stripped of emotion, and does not imply approval: I emphasize the point lest any be tempted to view this essay as an apologia. It is not.” The fact that Nicholson felt that it was necessary to include such a disclaimer illustrates how delicate a matter contemporary terrorism is and how this can have a negative impact on research.

2.2 Distinguishing the local from the global

Analyses of terrorism past and present more often than not distinguish between politically motivated and religiously motivated terrorism or revolve around similar doctrinal concepts, for example the distinctions along the lines of crime, politics, warfare, communication and religious fundamentalism suggested by Schmid (2004).

Whittaker (2007, p. 84) describes motives for terrorism in general by mentioning “circumstances that make the road to violence the only way out of despair”. He states that “The root of that dissatisfaction may be oppression by a military regime, as in Argentina, or the prejudice and hostility of a majority who are making living by a minority insufferable[...]”. Sprinzak (1999, p. 312) makes a

similar argument when he states that “[v]iolence from below is often triggered by previous violence from *above* (and if not violence, at least repression and arbitrariness)” [original italics]. Whittaker's and Sprinzak's explanations are quite relevant for what I define as the local context but can hardly explain the emergence of terrorist organisations neither in Western Europe nor the US. The governments in France, West Germany, Belgium, Italy and the other democratic West European nations plagued by terrorism in 1968-1993 were not military regimes. Although some of them can be said to have had tensions between the majority and some minority groups, this was hardly more than is common in many parts of the world and in no more than a few very small organisations did the terrorism in Western Europe have a majority/minority dimension. There were violent confrontations between police and demonstrators in 1967-1968 which in some cases led to casualties but the governments were nevertheless not significantly more violent than they are today when faced with such situations. Still, despite the similar approach taken by the authorities, we see no left-leaning radical terrorists neither in Europe nor the US today.

This is why I argue that the main distinction between different types of terrorism should be one between largely *practical* and largely *ideological* terrorism. The former has an easily defined objective outside the realm of ideology, such as sovereignty for a specific territory or the toppling of a government in favour of a specific alternative. These objectives are not linked to any specific political orientation. Ideology, to the extent it is present, thus becomes the means to achieve a practical end.

The opposite is largely ideological terrorism. The goal is then ideological, in the case of left-wing terrorists usually revolution for the sake of revolution itself. Rarely do the terrorists then have ambitions to become the government themselves and neither do they advocate a specific group of people or any specific party as an alternative to the existing regime. Revolution becomes a goal in itself, ideology becomes both the means and the end.

Whereas practical terrorists are mainly inspired by local factors, which I call *the local context*, usually manifested by a specific territory or government, the ideological terrorists have a more abstract foundation which is far more susceptible to influences from the worldwide contemporary political climate, which I call *the global context*.

These two types of terrorism have re-emerged countless times in history and the former has also influenced the latter. They are nevertheless two separate types of terrorism, one relies on a largely stable factor while the latter relies on a largely fluctuating factor. This is why the former tends to persist whereas the latter tends to dissolve eventually, following changes in the global trends. West European terrorism, for example, featured circa 10 years of peak activity.

2.3 The local context

The local context is essentially the sum of objective grievances present in the country in which the terrorists appear. By “objective” I mean that the local context grievances are such that people of most political or religious persuasions would find them disturbing or outright unacceptable, such as repression or denial of sovereignty. One example of an organisation whose terror was based on the local context is the Russian Narodnaya Volya, active during the 1870s-1880s. One of the leaders, Zhelyabov, “propounded the idea that the regime must be attacked again and again until it was forced to grant political freedom by which it would be possible to engage in peaceful propaganda activities” (Ivianski 1985, p. 90). The terrorists may seek inspiration by copying foreign terrorist organisations or even seek direct support from foreigners, but they are nevertheless fighting for their own sake first and foremost. They may claim solidarity with others but they will not extend this so far as to claim that international solidarity is their primary inspiration. They will seek support locally and internationally but they will need to rally at least some degree of support from their countrymen to achieve their goal.

They may refer to different types of ideologies, but these will mostly be means to achieve an end. The basis for the struggle can consequently be identified as an objective outside any specific ideological context. Fighting for sovereignty or attempting to secure power for the sake of improving the positions of the organisation's members are two examples.

2.4 The global context

Every time period has its own global context, at any given time it is the essence of global events and political fluctuations, more often than not armed conflicts provide sources of polarisation. The global context can be more or less radical, contemporary history has seen recurring periods of intense global radicalism, such as the 1890s-1900s, the 1920s-1930s, the 1960s-1970s and today radicalism of the religious kind has been intensifying since the mid-1990s, taking off in earnest in 2001.

Frequently, conflicts which are localised even though they may involve global distances between the belligerents, will influence the global context. A war may become a globally discussed issue which people around the world take a stand on, thus spreading a polarisation from the local sphere to the global. Examples of conflicts of this type which have had a significant impact on the global context are the Vietnam War 1965-1975, the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians since 1948, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan 1979-1989, the conflict in Iraq since 2003, etc.

2.5 Practical terrorism

I argue that a well-entrenched struggle for sovereignty, such as in Northern Ireland and the Basques, provides a stable cause since it is based on political and geographical factors which have been present for quite some time and which are less prone to change. Consequently, the terrorist activities related to these causes tend to be present as long as the issue around which they revolve is present. The conflicts over the Basques region and Northern Ireland have historical roots. In these cases, the grievances of the local population are directly related to sovereignty, whether it is desired or feared. Despite the recurrence of periods of calm and violence which seems to indicate fluctuations, these causes and their capacity to recruit new followers seems rather stable compared to the purely ideological terrorist organisations which have come and gone while the IRA² and ETA have persisted. It would seem as if a solution related to the issue at hand rather than solutions related to the issue of terrorism per se is the most effective way to resolve the situation. In Northern Ireland, this focus seems to have reduced the IRA activities considerably. As previously mentioned, in Spain the degree of autonomy granted to the Basque region and the nature of the negotiations on this issue seems to have had an impact on the intensity of ETA operations to the extent that a “permanent cease-fire” has been declared by the organisation. This new era of relative peace in both Northern Ireland and the Basque region indicates that the status of the cause is strongly related to the level of terrorist activities. When confrontation is no longer required for furthering the cause, terrorist activity drops accordingly.

2.6 Ideological terrorism

In contrast to the practical nature of the causes of the IRA and ETA, there have been numerous terrorist organisations without any links to significant local grievances, specific geographical areas or ethnic groups. Their struggles have not been about clearly defined political objectives. Instead, their focus has been on abstractions and ideological utopias. Nicholson's (2005, p. 2) describes the phenomenon with the following statement; “[t]errorists who lash out from hatred but without concrete and achievable political goals, including those whose political goals are so sweeping as to be delusional [...] are practically, if not philosophically, nihilists with nowhere to go”. Clearly, the terrorism described by Nicholson is different from the previously mentioned terrorism as perpetrated by organisations like the ETA or IRA. Nicholson simply dismisses it as “nihilism”. I argue that there's more to learn about this type of terrorism, which I call *ideological terrorism*.

Like Western Europe, the United States suffered a wave of terrorism during the 1960s and 1970s, albeit on a smaller scale. Among the homegrown organisations

² In this case, I include both the Provisional IRA (PIRA) and the Official IRA (OIRA) in my wider definition of the IRA

were the Weather Underground³, the Black Panthers and the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA). Commenting on these organisations, Griset & Mahan (2003, p. 87) state that; “[m]any of them were involved with universities and were brought together because of antiwar and civil rights issues that were highly politicized during the decade”. Although the Vietnam War can be considered a local grievance, these organisations seem to have had goals reaching beyond that of ending the war. For example, one Weather Underground communiqué claiming responsibility for the bombing of the New York City Police headquarters stated that “The time is now. Political power grows out of a gun, a Molotov, a riot, a commune and from the soul of the people” (Griset & Mahan 2003, p. 87). The language is abstract, but the statement that “the time is now” and the Mao-influenced “Political power grows out of a gun” are indicators of the revolutionary ideology of the Weathermen.

Interestingly enough, with the end of the 1970s, the US homegrown terrorist groups like the Weather Underground and the SLA disappeared. It would be easy to accredit this to successful anti-terrorist campaigns and arrests but the fact remains that in 1999-2002 no less than five former members of the SLA were finally brought to justice. Thus, they had been at large for nearly thirty years without committing acts of terrorism (Griset & Mahan 2003, p. 88). During the wave of terror in Western Europe in the 1960s and 1970s, several active terrorist cells had around five members so insufficient numbers would not be an adequate explanation for their passiveness. Fusako Shigenobu, one of the founders and leaders of the Japanese Red Army, is another example of a notorious terrorist who was at large for decades. Active in the 1970s, he wasn't apprehended until 2000 (Griset & Mahan 2003, p. 47).

There are no indications that these former terrorists at large attempted to rebuild any kind of fighting organisation or recruit new followers. Instead it seems as if they had simply abandoned their struggle altogether. I argue that the most likely explanation is that their “inspiration” simply had disappeared. The basis which formed the terrorist groups of which they were once part was no longer there.

Peste (2003, p. 262) claims that one of the explaining factors behind terrorism is a conflict between the terrorist group and its social surroundings. This sounds too blunt to me. In the local context, it is not difficult to imagine how radical individuals could be drawn into conflicts with their social surroundings, in particular representatives of a repressive establishment. In the case of purely ideological terrorists the situation is quite different. They are not part of a local conflict and thus not subjected to a conflict with the establishment of an intensity that can rival that of the local contexts inspiring the practical terrorists. Once they have resorted to terrorism they will naturally be drawn into a violent conflict with the authorities, but that does not explain how they turned into terrorists in the first place.

I argue that one of the hallmarks of terrorists in general is the perception that the use of peaceful methods is futile and/or dangerous and that the enemy is the aggressor. In the case of ideological terrorists, this can be as abstract as the perception that collective violence is being perpetrated against a widely defined group to which the would-be terrorist perceives him- or herself to be affiliated or

³ Also known as “The Weathermen” or simply “Weatherman”

sympathetic to. If a group of people feel alienated from society, for example because of their political affiliation or ethnic identity, then they will be more prone to identify with groups outside society.

In the above case, the homegrown US terrorists were influenced both by the global context and the local. The alienation from the political system brought by their radical left-wing ideology made them identify more closely with foreign left-wing groups than their own society. This made them susceptible to influences from the global context. The local context also had an influence through the existence of factors such as racial discrimination and the draft, both of which presented a potential threat to their personal safety and that of their friends. Neither the draft nor racial discrimination, however, are unique phenomena. Both have been present in a multitude of nations over the years without sparking terrorism.

Consequently, I argue that the global context was the deciding factor in the US, the draft and other local context factors merely fuelled the fire. One example that supports this conclusion is the confused agendas of the ideological groups. The SLA is particularly interesting since their global context influences also extended to the mysticism of the hippie era, which for example made them adopt symbols drawn from mysticism, such as the cobra in their banner, claimed to be “a 170,000-year-old sign signifying God and life” (Laqueur 1987, p. 245).

The ideological terrorist links violent acts both abroad and within his or her own country together and is quick to interpret escalations in other countries against perceived comrades as harbingers of things to come in his or her own country or to his or her own person. This was for example the case in Italy in 1975, where the Red Brigades linked the events in Chile to the elections in Italy and acted violently to prevent what they thought was an imminent extreme right-wing coup d'état. The Red Brigades believed that the Pinochet coup in response to Allende's left-wing parliamentary victory would be repeated in Italy as a consequence of left-wing successes in local elections (Ruggiero 2005, pp. 295-296).

Although the Red Brigades could refer to local grievances as well, this motive for violent action was inspired by the global context.

2.7 Context & regenerative capacity

Since terrorist organisations are constantly clashing with security and law enforcement organisations, which frequently results in terrorists being killed or captured, all active terrorist organisations require a steady flow of new recruits. Without this influx of new personnel, the terrorist organisation will eventually cease to exist. In order to gain new recruits, motivated candidates must emerge and volunteer to fill the ranks of the terrorist organisation.

I argue that the stability of the context determines the overall stability of the terrorist activities. With a sufficiently stable context, the terrorist organisation(s) pursuing the cause will be able to re-emerge in new guises even after the most effective police actions simply because new volunteers will step up and take over even if there is very little left of the old organisation.

For example, during most of the 20th century, the British and Spanish governments have struggled to defeat the IRA and the ETA respectively. Despite all their efforts, these organisations have turned out to be impossible to destroy by resorting to police and military action. The British and Spanish governments have now abandoned their previously ruthless military campaigns of assassination and crackdowns against the IRA and ETA and today's far more peaceful approach with negotiations at its core seems to reap far bigger rewards since both the IRA and ETA are inactive today. Changes in the local contexts have had an impact on these causes and thus also on the organisations fighting for them.

Several ideological terrorist organisations were also able to re-emerge during their most active period during the 1970s, despite having large portions of their leadership and members arrested or killed. The SLA is one example. After a confrontation with the police that resulted in the death of six of the leading members of the SLA, which was a very small organisation to begin with, the surviving members were able to recruit new followers and continue their struggle. After the 1970s, the remaining SLA members ceased recruiting and split up, abandoning their terrorist campaign altogether until they were arrested and brought to justice in 1999-2002 (*70's Radical Bombing Case*).

I argue that both these cases are examples of how context will not only influence the appearance of terrorism but also its regenerative capacity. The same context that makes terrorism appear will also allow it to regenerate when the authorities have dealt severe blows to the existing organisations. The fluctuation aspect plays a major role. In the case of practical terrorism, the organisations have a very high regenerative capacity due to the stability of their cause. When more peaceful means of furthering the cause become acceptable to these organisations, they can cease their operations voluntarily. The ideological terrorist organisations follow a different pattern. In their case, their context is susceptible to far more fluctuations and rather than switching over to different strategies, they seem to simply abandon their cause. They cease to recruit new members and conduct terrorist operations altogether, instead abandoning their old cause in search of new peaceful lives in hiding.

2.8 Summary: the local-global causal connection

Above I have described the difference between the local and global contexts and how these are linked to practical and ideological terrorism. I argue that there is a difference in causality behind their appearances. In the case of practical terrorism, the local context spawns terrorists who then adopt an ideology. Ideological terrorists on the other hand start out with an ideology and then resort to terrorism mostly as a result of outside influences. Their ideology provides the foundation, the global context the spark (see illustration 1).

I argue that the practical terrorist organisations emerge as a result of local objective grievances. Their goals are more than anything intended to solve the local

problems at hand, regardless of the ideology they choose as their means. The conflicts which involve these organisations have an impact on the global context and can provide inspiration for the ideological terrorist organisations.

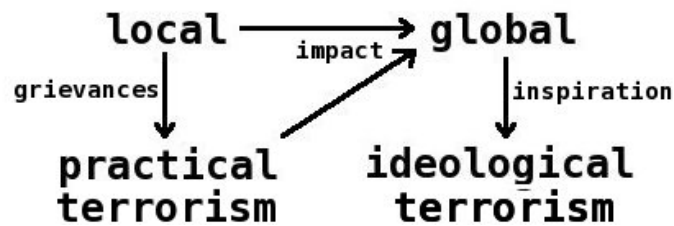


Illustration 1: The local-global causal connection

The ideological organisations do not emerge as a result of objective local grievances even though they often incorporate the local context into their agenda, their grievances are primarily global and subjective, i.e. directly related to their ideology. This is reflected in their objectives, which take on a far more abstract and far-reaching dimension than those of the practical terrorists. As long as the local grievances and local conflicts which have spawned the practical terrorists remain, they are likely to persist as organisations since new recruits will fill the ranks of the fallen and arrested in the terrorist units. The ideological terrorist organisations on the other hand are more susceptible to fluctuations. When the global trends become less concerned with the specific local conflicts which inspired the ideological terrorists, their foundation will start to dissolve. Since they usually do not have much in the way of a local conflict to rely upon for new recruits, this eventually leads to the complete destruction of the ideological terrorist unit when the last members are arrested or simply decide to cease their struggle. The latter seems fairly common since many terrorist members belonging to a number of organisations which had ceased to exist during the 1980s were at large for years and even decades without pursuing their previous goals, living rather peaceful lives.

3 Terrorism of the past

In this chapter, I present the empirical data on the West German terrorism of 1968-1993 and apply my theoretical framework as a means of analysing it. I describe the origins and decline of West German terrorism as well as contemporary research on it. The year 1968 was chosen because this was when the first arson attack by the radicals who would later form the RAF. 1993 was chosen because it was the year of the last noteworthy left-wing terrorist attack in West Germany.

3.1 West German terrorism 1968-1993

The wave of terrorism that plagued Europe 1968-1993 was rather intense, more so than most seem to recall today. In 1970-1978 alone, some 3,500 acts of terrorism were perpetrated in Europe (Hansén & Nordqvist 2005, p. 233). During the period, three terrorist organisations achieved a high degree of notoriety in West Germany; the Red Army Faction (RAF), the Socialist Patients' Collective (SPK) and the Movement 2 June (M2J). The three groups were originally independent of each other and had different doctrines. RAF was mostly Marxist-Leninist, the M2J was mostly anarchist and the SPK had its own strange doctrine of revolution for the sake of the mental health of its members (Huffman 2004).

The immediate origins of West German terrorism can be traced to the 2nd of June 1967 when the student Benno Ohnesorg was shot dead during a demonstration by a police officer. The act was particularly provoking since the police officer shot the pacifist Ohnesorg in the head at close range. This incident is the basis for the name "Movement 2 June". The year after, the left-wing activist Rudi Dutschke was nearly killed after being shot by a lone right-wing extremist. Also in 1968, only nine days before the Dutschke incident, the would-be founders of West German terrorism comprising Andreas Baader and Gudrun Ensslin were involved in a firebombing action against empty department stores, claiming the West German passiveness towards the Vietnam War as their motive. Although they were convicted of arson, their objective does not seem to have been to kill anyone. This was also stated in testimonies by the accused (Hansén & Nordqvist 2005, pp. 26-34).

The future members of the Red Army Faction, linked the violence perpetrated against the Jews during WWII, Martin Luther King and Gandhi with the domestic incidents related to Benno Ohnesorg and Rudi Dutschke. Gudrun Ensslin said in 1967 that "[w]e must organise a resistance! Violence can only be met with violence! This is the Auschwitz generation, there is no arguing with them!"[my translation] (Hansén & Nordqvist 2005, p. 29). Ulrike Meinhof stated in 1970 that

“the bullets which hit Rudi... ended the dream of non-violence” [my translation] (Hansén & Nordqvist 2005, s. 45). In the same communiqué, Meinhof also made references to the police as “the pigs”, proclaiming that those who did not defend themselves would perish. The sentence “[d]id the pigs who fired first think that we would let ourselves be slaughtered like cattle?” [my italics] shows that Meinhof's interpretation was that the RAF was responding to violence, not instigating it. They linked these events with themselves and saw in them what they thought would be their own fate if they did not “defend themselves”, i.e. resort to armed struggle. Thus, they abandoned the “peaceful” methods they had used during the nocturnal fire-bombing of the department stores and switched to full-fledged armed warfare. During their campaign, their most common targets were US military personnel, the West German authorities and leading businessmen.

Their struggle was not directed at the West German state primarily for grievances specifically committed by it but rather at the West German state as a representative of the global capitalist system they sought to disrupt. One of their early manifestos state that their goal was to illustrate the vulnerability of the German state, to carry on the global anti-imperialist struggle and to link the international struggle to the national by combining political and armed struggle (Hansén & Nordqvist 2005, p. 50). On one hand, the RAF manifesto stated that they did not believe in a sudden West German revolution but on the other hand they made the above mentioned references to international and national struggle, making the whole document quite confusing. The lack of any defined practical goals shows that their campaign was primarily ideological. The repeated attacks on US personnel and leading businessmen also indicate that the West German authorities were not the only targets.

Initially, the RAF enjoyed some public support. In 1971, a survey showed that 40% of the respondents interpreted the RAF's motives as political, not criminal. 20% stated that they could understand people who helped RAF members hide from the police. 6% stated that they were themselves prepared to hide RAF members. The support for the RAF quickly started to dissipate shortly thereafter when confrontations between the RAF and law enforcement officers started to cause casualties on both sides (Hansén & Nordqvist 2005, p. 51).

3.1.1 The global inspiration

The RAF, like many other ideological terrorist organisations in West Germany in 1968-1993, frequently mentioned Latin America in general and Carlos Marighella and his *Minimanual for the Urban Guerilla* in particular as a source of inspiration and instruction (Huffman 2004). Even though Marighella and his other Latin American counterparts to a large extent seem to have shared the Marxist-inspired revolutionary ideology with their West German successors, there is a significant difference; the Latin American urban guerillas fought for mostly practical reasons, their European successors fought for mostly ideological reasons. Laqueur states that the reason the Latin American revolutionary movements resorted to “urban

guerilla” methods a.k.a. urban terrorism, is because it was simply more practically useful in Latin America than traditional guerilla warfare (Laqueur 1987, p. 245-251). The Latin American guerillas were fighting in one of the most rapidly urbanising regions in the world at the time, the Maoist approach of launching a rural armed movement with the goal of encircling and conquering the cities was simply not realistic. Their objectives were nevertheless primarily focused around toppling their own governments in the name of revolution in order to address local grievances.

The 1960s and 1970s were heavily coloured by the struggles between left-wing revolutionary guerillas in various third world countries as well as the war in Vietnam. These events inspired and outraged students and radicals in Europe, making them protest openly in demonstrations. Although the police response could be quite violent, it was nevertheless a far cry from the brutality that characterised the fight between guerillas and authorities in South America. The terrorists, however, linked global events with individual and sporadic acts of violence occurring locally. The West German ideological terrorists had little in terms of practical objectives and motives. Police, government, law enforcement and capitalism in general became their targets not primarily because of practical reasons but because of ideological reasons. Unlike the Narodnaya Volya in Russia during the late 19th century, the West German left-wing terrorists of the 1968-1993 period did not fight because they were prohibited to spread propaganda peacefully. Their grievances, capitalism and imperialism, were primarily global, not local. Another indication of this is their involvement with the Palestinian cause; they participated in several terrorist acts in support of the Palestinians, for example the attack on the OPEC headquarters in 1975 in cooperation with the infamous Carlos and Palestinian PFLP terrorists (Hansén & Nordqvist 2005, p. 230).

3.2 Contemporary theories and research

In 1987, when the wave of European terrorism was dissipating, the well-known terrorist expert Walter Laqueur (1987, p. 86) wrote; “The mixture of brutality, self-pity and whining, characteristic of much of contemporary terrorism, was quite uncommon during the last century”. In addition, Laqueur also stated that “Latin American or Arab terrorists may be fervent patriots or feel the injustice done to their people as acutely as the terrorists of an earlier age, but they still belong to a different species” (Laqueur 1987, p. 92-93). The key difference noted by Laqueur was that “[t]he driving force is hate not love, ethical considerations are a matter of indifference to them and their dreams of freedom, of national and social liberation are suspect” (Laqueur 1987, p. 93). Laqueur thus contextualised the contemporary terrorists, making a sharp distinction between the terrorists of the past, who could somehow be at least vaguely understood and the terrorists of his time, whom he considered to be driven by little more than a desire for mayhem.

Rasch (1979, p. 79-80) noted that his contemporary colleagues in academia attempted to explain the appearance of West German terrorism by resorting to

various psychological theories and clinical criminology. In the end, these theories did not yield satisfying results and were forgotten. Rasch himself stated that his conclusion was that the terrorists he had studied were not paranoid or otherwise mentally ill and thus discarded all such explanations.

The tendency to contextualise terrorism is clear in the two above examples. Laqueur dismisses contemporary terrorism in the 1970s and 1980s as being motivated by little more than sheer love of carnage. Rasch describes the unsuccessful attempts to dismiss it as psychological conditions among its perpetrators. Although Laqueur attempts to compare the terrorism of his time with historical examples, he does not seem to be able to treat the contemporary terrorism as objectively as that of the distant past.

3.3 The decline of West German terrorism

The last major “offensive” of West German terrorism was the so-called “German autumn” of 1977 when the “second generation” of the RAF carried out assassinations, attempted attacks and a high-profile kidnapping as well as a hijacking operation carried out by a Palestinian team in support of the West Germans. Their primary objective was to secure the release of the incarcerated first generation of the RAF. Despite all the efforts of the second generation, the founders of the RAF were not released from prison. During the year, the former leaders instead committed suicide; Andreas Baader, Jan-Carl Raspe and Gudrun Ensslin all died on the 17-18th October. Irmgard Möller survived after attempting suicide during the same night. (Huffman 2005). Most of the second generation were later apprehended in the years leading up to the 1980s (Huffman 2004).

Some RAF cells remained active throughout the 1980s, but never on a scale similar to that during the 1970s. Only a handful of terrorists remained. The M2J was disbanded, most of its members instead joined the RAF. The SPK had ceased to exist as early as 1971 and by the mid-1970s, many of the remaining former members had instead joined the RAF (Huffman 2004). The “third generation” could never match the first and second. In 1993, there was a single high-profile bomb attack against a prison but nothing more. Finally, in 1998, a communiqué was sent out to the media announcing the formal disbanding of the RAF.

As previously mentioned, the support for the RAF started to drop significantly in 1971 following the first deaths among law enforcement officers during confrontations with the RAF. During the mid- to late 1970s, most of the operations carried out by the second generation of the RAF were intended to secure the release of imprisoned terrorists. This meant that the bulk of West German ideological terrorists were pursuing a battle of self-preservation rather than fighting for their original far-reaching goals. As public support for the terrorists dropped and their fight seemed more and more meaningless, the basis for their very existence was dissolving underneath their feet.

The change in global context brought by the end of the relatively warm relations between the US and the Soviet Union and the new cultural influences of the 1980s

finally halted the wave of West German terrorism. When nearly no new recruits appeared, only some of the remaining terrorists to whom the struggle had already become personal kept fighting. Eventually they were apprehended and the few would-be replacements lost their nerve and without the previous inspiration, they ceased their terrorist activities after 1993. That the sudden withdrawal of foreign funding from Stasi played a major role seems highly unlikely considering that the RAF started to deteriorate rapidly in the early 1980s, when, according to Epstein (2004, p. 324) the Stasi was growing and expanding.

3.4 Summary

The bulk of the West German terrorist groups; the SPK, the M2J and the RAF, were clearly ideological rather than practical. The primary indicator is that the groups in question started out as ideological groups who later decided to imitate their Latin American role-models and strike out violently against the West German state and global capitalism, in support of the Palestinian cause and against US military targets in retaliation for the Vietnam War. This multitude of targets show what a wide and also abstract platform these groups had. For example, for a practical terrorist organisation striving towards the overthrow of a government, it makes little sense to waste resources and personnel on fruitless attacks on US military installations and participation in Palestinian actions. This type of scattered acts violence makes sense only to the organisation that fights for a broader cause, one that is not confined to one's own territory or easily defined political objectives.

The wave of West German ideological terrorism was born out of the global context of the radicalism of the late 1960s, the Vietnam War movement and the Latin American guerilla wars. The small-scale political violence in West Germany perpetrated by police and right-wing extremists in 1967-1968 was hardly unique to that era, in many ways it is similar to the violent clashes between protesters and police that we've seen rather recently during anti-globalisation rallies. The main difference is that the global context then provided sufficient inspiration to some radicals, their local context merely added a little fuel to an already burning fire. Their dependency on the global context becomes more clear in the light of the changes occurring in the 1980s. New recruits were no longer appearing and the global radicalism that had such an impact on the Western world during the 1960s and 1970s had blown over and been replaced by the materialism of the 1980s. This spelled death for West German terrorism. Some remaining hardcore members managed to keep the banner flying for a few years longer but everyone knew that the RAF had become a shadow of its former self and the M2J and SPK had disappeared completely.

4 Terrorism of the present

In this chapter, I present empirical data on Islamic terrorism 1998-2005. I have set 1998 as the start date since this was the year when the US embassies in Tanzania and Kenya were bombed and references to Al-Qaeda and bin Ladin started to appear internationally. 2005 was chosen because it was the year of the London bomb attack. Below, I describe briefly how Islamic terrorism has developed between 1998 and 2005 and how my theoretical framework can be applied to it. In addition, I also discuss the similarities between Islamic terrorism 1988-2005 and West German terrorism 1968-1993.

4.1 Islamic terrorism 1998-2005

The most prominent Islamic terrorist organisation in the post-9/11 global context is without a doubt the shadowy Al-Qaeda, personified by its mysterious leader Usama bin Ladin. He was previously a well-known figure in the struggle against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in 1979-1989 (Peste 2003, p. 125). During this conflict, the basis for what it today known as Al-Qaeda was created (Peste 2003, p. 282) In a communiqué and interview in 1998, bin Ladin expressed threats against the United States. Later the same year, the US embassies in Tanzania and Kenya were bombed in terrorist attacks.

The September 11 2001 attack perpetrated by Al-Qaeda was the most significant indication of the shift from local to global. According to Doran (2003), the attack itself was an attempt to influence the global context by provoking a US retaliation that would create polarisation between the Muslim communities across the globe and the US. The attack had an enormous impact on the global context and the subsequent US “war on terror” and conflict in Iraq spawned new local contexts as well as laying the foundation for a global context that started producing ideological terrorists without direct links to neither the old nor the new local contexts. Two of the most notable terrorist actions after 9/11 are the bomb attacks in Madrid in 2004 (Nash 2006) and in London in 2005 (*Report into the London Terrorist Attacks*), both of which were perpetrated by homegrown terrorists.

4.1.1 The global inspiration

Many claims and speculations have been presented as explanations to the motives of Al-Qaeda and bin Ladin but few focus on actual communiqués and statements. In the *fatwa* published in 1998 by bin Ladin and three other extremist leaders, three

main grievances are listed. The first being the US presence in Saudi Arabia, the second being the US actions in Iraq, the third being US support for Israel. The *fatwa* states that the US is indulging in “aggression” and “occupation”, that the US is trying to “repeat the horrific massacre” in Iraq and supporting “the murder of Muslims” perpetrated by the Israeli state (Nacos 2005, p. 114).

These statements can clearly be interpreted as describing a perceived threat, i.e. bin Ladin sees Americans as a threat to him personally, albeit on a religious/cultural level. The fact that Americans are thought of as being responsible for “aggression” and “occupation” indicate that they are perceived as the aggressors, the instigators of conflict. The idea of oneself as a victim seems common among Islamic terrorists, as indicated by an interview study of 35 incarcerated Middle Eastern terrorists carried out by Post, Sprinzak & Denny (2005, p. 23). This is similar to Meinhof's above mentioned statement in which the RAF declare that they are abandoning the peaceful struggle in favour of an armed one because of the perceived aggression on behalf of the authorities. In bin Ladin's case, his widely defined group to which he feels that he is affiliated and which he feels is threatened is easy to pinpoint as being people of the Muslim faith.

Bin Ladin and Al-Qaeda are unusual phenomena in the sense that they have transcended from being primarily concerned with the local context, being Afghanistan during the war against the Soviets, to the global context, being the struggle against the US involvement in the Middle East in general. I interpret Bin Ladin's references to the Palestinian cause and to Israel as influences from the global context since bin Ladin is not a part of the local context of that conflict, being a wealthy Saudi by birth. Although bin Ladin is not an Afghani native, he did fight the war against the Soviets in Afghanistan in a conflict which was practical and local in nature; the removal of Soviet influence over Afghani politics. The later struggle against the US, on the other hand, is being fought all over the globe and has lost much of its practical dimensions. One of the earlier listed reasons, being the removal of the Americans from Saudi soil, is no longer the factor it used to be following the US troop withdrawals from Saudi Arabia in 2003.

4.2 Contemporary research and theories

Kegley (2003, p. 4) claims that there are a number of factors that makes post-9/11 terrorism “new”. He argues that contemporary terrorism, unlike the terrorism of the past is; global; lethal; novel in sheer size, destructiveness and professionalism; waged by civilians without state sanction; reliant on the most advanced technology, orchestrated by transnational non-state organisations; pursued by fanatical extremists to annihilate through maximum bloodshed rather than to convince or persuade; outside moral and legal norms that were universally accepted for centuries; predicated on the principle that the power to destroy is equal to the power to change and control and; driven by hatred. Similar theories have been expressed by for example Whittaker (2007) and Nicholson (2005).

Armstrong (2005, pp. 14-17) states that the root causes of Islamic terrorism are related to the fact that Muslim countries have had to modernise much more quickly than the West and that this creates tensions and hostility among people who feel that their traditional values and way of life are threatened.

The theories of these two scholars are examples of commonly held opinions regarding the Islamic terrorism of today. Below, I argue that these two views are too narrow and that Islamic terrorism is not as new nor unique as Kegley suggests nor as easily explained as Armstrong claims.

4.3 What's truly new?

Kegley seems to have conveniently forgotten that the terrorism of 1968-1993 was quite global and relied on transnational links too. West German RAF members trained with Palestinian terrorists in the Jordanian deserts (Hansén & Nordqvist, p. 46), the OPEC executives in Vienna in 1975 were attacked by an international team of terrorists comprising among others West German and Palestinian terrorists led by the Latin American “Carlos the Jackal” (Laqueur 1987, p. 220). In addition, the attack on the Israeli airport in Lod in May of 1972 was carried out by the Japanese Red Army (*ibid.*). Laqueur also states that “A new 'international brigade' came into being, able and willing to co-operate on both the strategic and tactical level all over the globe, provided the terrorist campaigns happened to be of interest and profit”.

During the 1970s and 1980s, there was a transnational network of Palestinian, West German, Italian and Japanese terrorists, to mention but a few of the nationalities involved. These terrorists received some piecemeal support from nations in the East Bloc, most notably the East German Stasi, but were mostly autonomous and unsanctioned (Laqueur 1987, p. 276; Epstein 2004, p. 330).

As far as moral and legal norms are concerned, it seems rather absurd to claim that the wave of terrorism in 1968-1993 was somehow in line with these norms despite the brutality and violence perpetrated. The “driven by hatred” and “lethal” factors are hardly new either. The RAF usually referred to law enforcement personnel as “pigs” and one M2J member upon hearing that his wife had injured a police officer by shooting him in the foot stated that “she should have aimed higher” (Hansén & Nordqvist 2005, pp. 45-46, p. 90).

Kegley is, however, correct in stating that contemporary Islamic terrorism is novel in sheer size and destructiveness. An attack on the scale of 9/11 is indeed hard to find in the history of terrorism. As far as the professionalism and use of technology arguments are concerned, I am more sceptical. The RAF assassination of Alfred Herrhausen, to mention one example, featured expert knowledge and advanced use of explosives, detonation devices and electronics (Huffman 2004).

Based on the above, I argue that contemporary Islamic terrorism is neither something new nor unique. Consequently, since it's not something new nor unique, I argue that the true core of the explanation is less related to the particular circumstances of this case than Armstrong & Kegley claims. Armstrong's theory cannot explain why people who have been born and raised in Western countries

would react to the quick modernisation process in Muslim countries by turning into terrorists.

5 Conclusions

I have above presented my theory and empirical data which I consider supports it. In essence, my main argument is that contemporary terrorism, except for a few novelties, shares common traits with the terrorism of the past, despite the differences in religious/political doctrine. Thus, theories on terrorism need not be limited to the immediate context. The pattern of re-emerging homegrown global terrorists is linked to contemporary local conflicts. The West German terrorists were inspired by the Latin American guerillas, the Vietnam War and the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. The Islamic terrorists were inspired by the Gulf War, the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and later also by the war on terrorism in Afghanistan and Iraq. The appearance of homegrown terrorists can occur without any direct links to international terrorist networks. These terrorists will be inspired by other terrorists but may not necessarily ever have had contact with them. One important motivation is a perceived threat against a loosely defined group with which one feels affiliated, for example for political or religious reasons.

This is why it is so important to understand how the global context is shaped and to be prepared for its consequences. Thus, the powers that are targeted by terrorists should carefully consider their impact on the global context and the effect it has of potentially turning their own citizens into terrorists. Creating new local conflicts with a potential of spawning new practical terrorists will only increase the likelihood of inspiring more ideological terrorists around the globe. Thus, the local conflicts should be the primary focus of any attempts to curb terrorism. Not by destroying the organisations since they will only re-emerge in new shapes or guises but by presenting solutions that are acceptable to all parties, including the people from which the terrorists are recruited.

5.1 9/11 in a historical perspective

Many authors pay considerable attention to the fact that 9/11 was an attack on a scale never seen before in the history of terrorism. While this is true and not something to be taken lightly, one should also keep in mind that terrorists can learn from the past. Thus, the scale and ferocity of the 9/11 attack may be a logical consequence of having a wide definition of “the enemy” along with highly destructive means of launching an assault at this enemy. The terrorists of the past had little empathy for their enemies and frequently disregarded the risk of injuring innocent people. Could 9/11 not be a continuation of this trend on a larger scale? As terrible as it is, I do not think it is something radically new. As stated above, Doran (2003) argues that the primary objective of 9/11 was a symbolic strike intended to

create polarisation by provoking a violent response. This polarisation would then provide more support for the perpetrators. This is exactly the same line of reasoning as Huffman (2004) states was one of the main driving forces behind the terrorism acts committed by the RAF. The main difference is that where the RAF attempted primarily to produce a domestic effect through a violent response against West German citizens, Al-Qaeda wanted to achieve a global effect. Their motives were nevertheless identical; creating polarisation through violence.

The RAF were ruthless in their attacks too. When they conducted operations against US military personnel or representatives of the system they were fighting, the killing was in itself often the purpose of the action, for example in the previously mentioned case of the assassination of Alfred Herrhausen. The bombs used against US military personnel were intended to maim and kill. The deaths of their enemies were to them symbolic acts. 9/11 can be interpreted in a similar manner. The main difference then is that not only did the terrorists strike at symbolic targets, they had widened their definition of the enemy to include the people in and around them. The level of destruction was something new, the motive was most likely not.

5.2 The repeating pattern of global terror

The ideologically motivated terrorist activities in the US and Europe 1998-2005 seems to have developed different motives than the earlier demands of the 1998 *fatwa*. The homegrown terrorists of today seem to be more focused on an abstract concept of war against certain Western countries in general rather than achieving specific objectives. After the Madrid bombings in 2004, modern analysts were quick to link them to Al-Qaeda, the “usual suspect” in the modern context of global Islamic terror. Ghosh & Graff (2005, p. 93-95) claim that “intelligence experts in Washington saw bin Laden's fingerprints in the wreckage” and that “a senior FBI counterterrorism veteran” stated that “There's no doubt in my mind it's Al-Qaeda”. However, in the light of what we know today, it seems the attack was carried out by individuals who seem to have had no direct link to Al-Qaeda. *The Independent* states that “[w]hile the bombers may have been inspired by Bin Laden, a two-year investigation into the attacks has found no evidence that al-Qa'ida helped plan, finance or carry out the bombings, or even knew about them in advance” (Nash 2006).

The essence of this example is that the perpetrators were “inspired by bin Laden”. For this reason, rather than any local grievances, they travelled to the country bin Laden had threatened and made that threat materialise. Thus, the contemporary Islamic terrorism is repeating the pattern of 1968-1993, where ideological terrorists committed acts of terrorism inspired by the global context in support of parties they were not directly affiliated with. The left-wing terrorists in 1968-1993 identified with and supported the North Vietnamese and FNL guerillas

by attacking Americans in Germany and supported the Palestinians through the attack on the Lod airport in 1972 (Laqueur 1987, p. 220).

The Madrid bombings have become yet another example of how ideological terrorism can spread without the active involvement of any global network and how the contextualised view on terrorism can make even experienced analysts jump to incorrect conclusions.

5.3 Learning from the past

My theoretical framework indicates a connection between local conflicts and homegrown terrorism. It also indicates that as long as the context that made the terrorists appear persists, efforts on behalf of law enforcement and military personnel to destroy the terrorist organisations will in most cases only result in temporary backlashes. After that, the organisations will recruit new members, form a new leadership if need be, and resume their campaign of terror. Only when the context has changed sufficiently will the terrorists be vulnerable. When this has occurred, the terrorists may even abandon their struggle voluntarily, as shown by the above mentioned SLA, JRA, RAF, IRA and ETA. Some hard core members may keep up the struggle for a while longer, trying to regain their previous position. The crucial factor is that when the context has changed, they will not be replaced by others if arrested or killed. The demise of the terrorist organisation thus becomes inevitable.

My most crucial recommendation based on my conclusions above would be to focus counterterrorism efforts primarily on resolving the grievances in the local context in order to prevent them from impacting on the global context. Ideological terrorists should naturally be contained but to think that they can be eradicated by striking out at them or any perceived source of inspiration for them using violent means seems unproductive at best. Wars against terrorists will most likely only create more terrorists. The IRA and ETA examples show that while appeasement may not stop the violence, a lengthy and reasonable dialogue very well could have far more of an impact than attempts to incarcerate or kill the terrorists. Just as those examples show the futility of attempting to destroy terrorist organisations, the RAF and SLA examples show that even the most ruthless terrorists can abandon their old ways. It may seem like a cliché, but I think it deserves to be repeated; there is simply no substitute for dialogue when it comes to conflict management.

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