TERRORISM AS AN INTELLIGENCE PROBLEM

By David S. Black

The work of intelligence services of leading world powers from the outbreak of World War I in 1914 to the end of the Cold War in 1989-91 was chiefly to assist the leaders of their respective governments in the formulation of diplomatic and military strategy by collecting and analyzing information about the capabilities and intentions of the governments of foreign countries thought to pose a real or potential threat to their own national security. Since the end of the Cold War and the emergence of the radical Islamic global Jihad in the 1990's, counterterrorism has become the top priority of the intelligence and security services of almost every country in the world, and this is likely to remain the case for at least the next few years. In this essay, I will describe some of the basic operational and organizational techniques employed by terrorist organizations in different countries since the second half of the nineteenth century, and will also discuss the basic methods which governments employ to suppress terrorist movements, as well as the legal, political and ethical problems that sometimes arise in the fight against terrorism.

I will focus on the role of "hard power" government institutions such as the police, armed forces, and security and intelligence services, and deal with the political aspects of counterterrorism only in passing.   This is not because I believe that soldiers, policemen and spies are the only people who know how to deal with terrorists, and that political and government leaders should simply stand aside while they accomplish their dirty but essential work.   While some terrorist problems have been eliminated entirely through police work and other kinds of "hard power," many others have not, due to the support which terrorist groups such as the Irish Republican Army have enjoyed in large parts of the population in the countries and regions where they were active.   In these situations, an exclusive reliance on police and military methods to suppress terrorist threats can result in a protracted low or high-intensity civil war which over time may render ungovernable the territory concerned and discredit the government which chose this course of action. To achieve a satisfactory outcome in such a situation, the tactical and technical aspects of counterterrorism must be subordinated to a multi-faceted, nuanced, and coherent political strategy which can only be devised by senior political leaders and government officials.   Yet the enormity, complexity and sensitivity of the political aspects of combating terrorism, as well as the limitations of my own professional background and experience, prompt me to focus on the technical and tactical aspects of counterterrorism in this essay. Even if those aspects of the problem are of less importance than the political ones, I do not believe that workable political solutions can be devised for terrorist problems without careful consideration of these technical and tactical issues.

For the purposes of this essay, I wish to define terrorism as a technique of

political struggle conducted by non-governmental entities, which are usually organized in a conspiratorial manner and perpetrate acts of extreme violence (such as murder, hostage-taking, the destruction of government installations and the sabotage of civil and economic infrastructure) in furtherance of objectives which they cannot achieve through legal political processes or open armed insurgency. From the standpoint of internal organization, cadre selection, financing, logistics, and methods of operation, terrorist groups often resemble guerrilla insurgencies and violent organized crime groups. For this reason, the measures which governments employ to combat terrorism often combine the kinds of paramilitary strategies and tactics used against guerrilla insurgencies, and the police investigative techniques used against Mafia-style urban criminal organizations and rural
 banditry. Guerrilla insurgencies, criminal organizations and terrorist groups are usually easy to suppress once their members have been identified and located, and their objectives are known. Good intelligence is therefore as vital a part of counterterrorism work, as it is of counterinsurgency and law enforcement. The corollary of this self-evident proposition is that in order to survive and succeed in their endeavors over a long period of time, terrorist and criminal groups must know how to conceal the identities of their members, the sources of their funding, the plans of their leaders and the locations of their hiding places, weapons, and other operational assets. In other words, they must work in a clandestine manner and maintain high levels of secrecy and operational security.

The basic technique which terrorist and criminal groups employ to protect vital secrets is the same one used by professional intelligence services, i.e. "compartmentation", which in practice means that each member of the group should know only as much about the identities of its other members, ongoing activities and future plans as is necessary for him to carry out his duties in the proper manner. To prevent infiltration by police and government informants, the leaders of terrorist groups usually attempt to scrutinize the backgrounds of new recruits – and especially of volunteers – as closely as possible before accepting them into the group. Each new member's accomplishment of assigned tasks will then be closely monitored to assess his discretion, competence, dependability and personal loyalty. An individual member's promotion within the group's hierarchy, and any significant expansion of his knowledge about the group's organization,
 personnel and operational plans, customarily depends on the successful completion of major services for the organization, usually a murder or other crime of sufficient gravity to deter him from trying to make a deal with the legal authorities at a later date. These precepts of operational compartmentation are often reinforced by a shared sense of intense personal loyalty to other members of the group, and a fanatical devotion to its leaders, as well as a latent fear on the part of each member that irregularities in personal demeanor and inconsistencies in the performance of assigned tasks could generate doubts about his loyalty and probity in the sometimes pathologically suspicious minds of the group's leaders and members.

Like members of organized crime groups, experienced terrorists often have a sophisticated knowledge and understanding of the techniques which the authorities employ to detect, disrupt and suppress their undertakings. In a number of historical instances, terrorists and criminals obtained this information from unwitting contacts and witting collaborators inside the official entities, including police and security services, whose mission was to curb their activities. Although there are many similarities between counterterrorism and the fight against organized crime, there are also some critical differences in the two pursuits, the most compelling of which is the imperative to prevent terrorist acts from occurring rather than simply catching and punishing the perpetrators after terrorist crimes have taken place. The enormous human suffering and material destruction resulting from successful terrorist actions has in many historical instances dwarfed that produced by even the most heinous kinds of organized criminality. The failure of particular governments to quickly and effectively repress terrorist activities has in some cases led to broader civil strife and damaged the fabric of legality and individual liberty in countries with long traditions of liberal democracy.

Unfortunately, no fool-proof and risk-free method has yet been found to quickly identify and suppress the activities of terrorist groups in a manner not likely to arouse serious legal and political controversy. None of the investigative and operational methods employed by law enforcement and state security agencies to combat terrorist groups are infallible, inexpensive or easy to implement. Some of them may generate serious legal and political complications inasmuch as they may infringe on individual privacy and freedom from arbitrary arrest, and also may interfere in the personal lives and political activities of the citizenry.

Police roadblocks and "stop and search" checks of pedestrians and drivers of private vehicles by security personnel may sometimes lead to the apprehension of fugitive terrorists and members of their support networks if conducted in a focused and selective manner on the basis of very specific, detailed and timely information about the identities and general whereabouts of the persons being sought. Otherwise they can quickly turn into a wasteful expenditure of the time and energies of badly overworked security personnel, and a senseless impediment to ordinary citizens' accomplishment of their essential daily business, thus diminishing rather than enhancing public confidence in a government's ability to deal effectively with terrorism.

Physical surveillance and the interception of personal communications of suspected terrorists and their supporters are essential investigative tools, and most democratic governments in the contemporary world have devised workable legal safeguards to prevent these methods becoming a threat to individual liberty. These kinds of investigative techniques, however, are usually very labor intensive, require large expenditures for equipment and other logistical needs, and may take a long time to produce useful results. Most experienced terrorists also realize that such techniques may be used against them and are familiar with

simple and inexpensive countermeasures which can greatly reduce their effectiveness.

 Interrogation, which is the rigorous and systematic questioning of persons believed to be deliberately concealing important information from their questioners, is an indispensable tool of police and intelligence work, even though there have often been serious controversies about the manner and circumstances in which it should be conducted. Proper interrogation does not involve the use of physical pain or other kinds of degrading and inhumane treatment to extract information from an unwilling subject, since torture is not only criminal and immoral, but also demonstrably unreliable as a way to obtain truthful information in a timely manner.   An effective interrogation is one in which the questioner generates a cooperative attitude in the person under interrogation by convincing him through a judicious combination of rapport building and different kinds of psychological pressure that the consequences of lying or remaining silent will be much worse than
 the consequences of telling the truth. The interrogation of an experienced terrorist however is usually a very delicate and complicated task which may require a good deal of time to accomplish, and in this interval the terrorist's comrades-in-arms may learn of his capture and change their plans and methods of operation in ways that will greatly reduce the utility of the information which his interrogators eventually may acquire from him. Another practical limitation on the use of interrogation in the fight against terrorism are the difficulties which almost every police, security and intelligence service in the world has had recruiting and retaining adequate numbers of skilled and experienced interrogators who also possess the linguistic skills and specialized cultural and area knowledge necessary to deal effectively with terrorist suspects from distant foreign countries.

Secret informants (or "agents") are probably the most effective tool in the fight against terrorism and organized crime. They can provide both factual information about the membership, organization, infrastructure and pending operations of these groups, and valuable insights into the concerns and outlook of their leaders and members. Such information and insights can enable police and security officials not only to know what the groups are doing at a particular moment, but also to anticipate their future moves.   Informants with this kind of access, however, are difficult to recruit and handle due to the intense bonds of mutual dependence, loyalty and affection which usually exist between the members of small conspiratorial organizations, and to their leaders' intense awareness of the authorities' desire to penetrate their ranks and the rigorous methods they often employ to assess the dependability and allegiance of both new recruits and
 established members.

Assuring the physical safety of a criminal or terrorist informant and his family is a major challenge for the police, security or intelligence service running him, since it requires major outlays in terms of manpower and resources, as well as the maintenance of high levels of operational secrecy. Even more daunting are the

legal problems which can arise from the major crimes in which informants often must participate to prevent suspicions about their loyalty from arising in the minds of their comrades, and to gain acceptance into what is usually a very exclusive circle of highly trusted veteran members who are privy to information about the short and long-term plans of the group's leaders. On some occasions in the long and complicated history of terrorism, considerations of source protection (and source enhancement) prompted highly competent and well-intentioned police and state security officials in different countries to allow terrorist acts to
 take place even though they had received advance warning of these acts from the informants they sought to protect. Regardless of these officials' motives, the tragic consequences that in certain cases resulted from these decisions sometimes prompted accusations of official complicity in terrorist crimes. Almost all secret intelligence activity involves some degree of political and legal risk, but there is probably no other intelligence activity with political and legal hazards as great as those involved in the handling of sensitive terrorist informants.

In liberal-democratic, rule-of-law countries like our own, the government institutions which have the main responsibility for combating terrorism are the criminal justice system and the organs of public and state security, including the agencies responsible for customs, immigration, the collection of tax revenue and monitoring of banks and other key economic institutions.   Since terrorists' use of violence to achieve political objectives is a calculated affront to legality and legitimate government institutions, terrorists must be identified, rendered incapable of doing harm, and punished in ways that vindicate the rule of law and demonstrate the efficacy of existing public authority. Police investigations of terrorist acts and other serious crimes are normally conducted under the close supervision of government prosecutors to ensure that criminal suspects are identified, apprehended and questioned in ways that will permit their guilt to be
 demonstrated in an open court of law.
Since the 1970's, the police forces and state security services of most of the world's industrial democracies have had the necessary training and equipment to combat terrorism within their respective countries' borders using the kinds of techniques which I have outlined above. Police investigators have always been the leading practitioners of "human intelligence," thanks to the skill and experience which most of them acquire in the recruitment and handling of informants to monitor organizations and social milieus in which criminal activity is suspected. Law enforcement personnel also tend to have close working relations with pertinent officials in public and private institutions responsible for education, public health and social welfare who can provide detailed and up-to-date information about particular segments of society which are of concern from the standpoint of state and public security, including newly arrived immigrant communities
 from less-developed parts of the world, many of whose members do not speak the language of the host country, and are still unfamiliar with the legal and civil institutions of their new homeland into whose social and economic life they are

just beginning to assimilate.

Since the armed forces of most countries are organized, trained and equipped primarily for open warfare against the military services of hostile countries, their role in counterterrorism is customarily limited to furnishing to the civil authorities on a case-by-case basis specialized kinds of technical and tactical assistance which exceed the capabilities of the country's civilian police agencies. Military services may be assigned a much broader and more central role in the suppression of terrorism and other forms of armed resistance to authority when occupying the territory of a foreign country with which their own country is at war, or when dispatched to maintain order in an imperial province or colonial possession in which the local authorities are unable to control a native insurgency, as was the case when the French attempted to suppress the Algerian independence movement between 1954 and 1962. In most situations of this kind, however, the use
 of regular military forces to combat terrorism or contain civil strife was intended to be a stopgap emergency measure necessitated by the absence of an effective civilian authority. Regular armies have occasionally been called upon, or taken it upon themselves, to assume the central role in combating terrorism in their own countries at times when civilian governments were, for whatever reason, too weak or divided to deal with violent civil strife among irreconcilable social and political groups. In these tragic situations, counterterrorism sometimes became an aspect of civil war in which the military usually sided with the stronger party to the conflict, while some of their desperate antagonists on the weaker side resorted to terrorism to compensate for their inability to hold their own in an open armed contest.

Diplomatic and foreign intelligence services have often played an indispensable role in fighting terrorism, because terrorist groups have often used the territory of foreign countries as safehavens in which their members and sympathizers could conduct political, organizational, logistical and financial business, and plan future operations, much more easily than they could in the countries in which they were actively engaged in clandestine political violence.   In some cases, the governments of the countries in which terrorist groups established an official or unofficial presence have disapproved of these activities and vigorously attempted to curtail them. In other cases host country governments have openly or secretly sympathized with these exile terrorist groups and provided them with material assistance. In yet other cases, the host country governments have felt constrained to tolerate the presence and activities of suspected foreign terrorist
 groups due to their country's laws regarding political asylum, or because influential citizens and political groups within their own country viewed these exile groups as persecuted freedom fighters rather than terrorist criminals.

 In such situations, the government which is being targeted by the terrorist group usually employs its diplomatic service to exert official pressure on the government of the host country to expel the terrorist group's representatives or

curtail their activities. At the same time, the targeted country's foreign intelligence service may attempt to monitor and thwart the exile terrorist group's activities in the host country with the assistance of the security services of the host country, or by the use of its own clandestine operational resources. Besides maintaining close working relationships with counterpart organizations in foreign countries, foreign intelligence services frequently have been called upon to support the fight against terrorism due to the experience which many of their personnel have in the recruitment and secure handling of sensitive informants with problematic backgrounds, as well as their knowledge of the languages, cultures,
 customs, and important social and political institutions of relevant foreign countries.

There are however some inherent limits on the institutional capabilities of foreign intelligence services which usually make it difficult for them to play more than a supporting, or "force multiplier," role in combating terrorism. Even the world's largest foreign intelligence services are comparatively small governmental institutions, which through most of their histories have had considerable difficulty recruiting and retaining adequate numbers of qualified and suitable personnel, and terrorism is only one of a wide assortment of complex and urgent problems which they are expected to deal with simultaneously. In practical terms, this means that a significant intensification of the CIA's current efforts against Al Qaeda may entail an appreciable reduction in the manpower and resources which can be allotted to other foreign policy challenges, such as the growing assertiveness of Russia in Europe and parts of the Middle East, and China's
 emergence as the leading economic and military power in East Asia.

Foreign intelligence services may also confront some tricky methodological problems when attempting to increase their role in the fight against terrorism. As I noted earlier, the chief mission of the CIA and comparable institutions in other countries has been the collection and analysis of "strategic intelligence" to assist senior government and military leaders in the formulation of long-term policies and strategies relating to foreign policy and national security. The collection and analysis of intelligence about terrorism, however, tends to have a tactical rather than strategic orientation, since its primary purpose is to provide a basis for concrete actions to thwart ongoing operations of terrorist organizations, and to capture or eliminate their members. Since counterterrorist work is heavily "action oriented," the intelligence service personnel who collect and analyze information in support of it often find themselves working much more
 intimately on a day-to-day basis with front-line and working levels of the other government organizations which take whatever concrete actions are deemed necessary on the basis of the intelligence they produce, than has normally been the case in the preparation of strategic intelligence for senior policy-makers. This increased intimacy in the interaction between "producers" and "consumers," has often enhanced the efficiency and dynamism of the work of everyone concerned, but it can also increase the difficulties which the intelligence services have in

protecting the sensitive sources and methods on which they depend to accomplish their mission. Since most counterterrorist work is tied to law enforcement in one way or another, intelligence service personnel dealing with terrorist problems also may find their work complicated by legal considerations, and subject to oversight and interference by officials of the criminal justice systems of their
 own country and the countries in which they happen to be working, in ways they had previously never thought possible.

The history of terrorism did not begin with the attack on the former World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. Terrorism has in fact been a major source of political instability and international conflict in different parts of the world since the last third of the nineteenth century. While people nowadays to tend to associate the concept terrorism with religiously inspired anti-western protest movements in the Middle East and Southwest Asia, terrorism has at different times been employed by a variety of radical protest movements with widely diverse outlooks and political agendas in almost every region of the world, including our own. One of the very first, as well as one of the most politically influential and long-lasting terrorist organizations in history was the Ku Klux Klan, which emerged in the American south after its defeat by the north in 1865, and whose violent criminality was not fully suppressed until the 1960's.

From the 1880's to the end of the twentieth century, the British Isles, which most of us think of as a bastion of highly ethical and stable democratic governance and the rule of law was the scene of very lethal and destructive terrorist campaigns conducted by the Irish Republican Army and its nineteenth century precursor the "Fenian Brotherhood" against the British government, which many times responded with severe and occasionally brutal repressive measures, including the preemptive use of lethal force against suspected IRA operatives. The actual origins of the modern British intelligence community are to be found in the creation of what is commonly referred to as the Special Branch of Scotland Yard after a series of political assassinations and dynamite bombings which Irish terrorists carried out in the early 1880's. Some of the earliest overseas undercover operations of British intelligence in the modern era targeted organizations in the
 United States which were suspected (often correctly) of helping underground Irish resistance groups to acquire the money, weapons and explosives which they used in these terrorist attacks.

(If I have dwelled on the Anglo-Irish terrorist problem at some length, it is not because I dislike the Irish or have a grudge against the British, any more than I have evoked the memory of the Ku Klux Klan's reign of terror in the American south – which happens to be where I hail from -- out of some kind of compulsive self-flagellation. Rather, I believe that, by studying a conflict in which participants on both sides spoke the same language that we do and shared most of the same fundamental moral, cultural, and political values which have characterized

Americans through most of our history, we can more easily comprehend the infernal imperatives and dynamics of this form of political struggle than by studying terrorist conflicts in which, for cultural, historical or ideological reasons, we might feel a reflexive sympathy for one of the opposed sides. It is also instructive – and may serve as a remedy for moral hubris --to recall that the United
 States has on many occasions found itself entangled in the long and vicious Anglo-Irish conflict both morally and materially, and that our responses to this entanglement have not always been helpful to a just and peaceful resolution of it.)

The first Russian secret police service, which was called the Okhrana, appeared about thirty years before the 1917 Russian Revolution in response to the activities of well-organized and highly dedicated terrorist groups such as the "People's Will" which assassinated Tsar Alexander II in 1881 and the underground combatant wing of the non-Marxist Socialist Revolutionary Party which murdered thousands of Tsarist government officials, including the Prime Minister Peter Stolypin, in the 25-30 years preceding the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. A large portion of the membership of these early Russian terrorist groups consisted of university educated, though bitterly disaffected, off-spring of the pre-1917 Russian upper classes, and the state administration of the Tsarist regime was riddled with secret and not-so-secret sympathizers of these groups. Despite its small size, the Okhrana had considerable success infiltrating the terrorist
 underground of the Socialist Revolutionary Party, one of whose leaders Evo Azef was a paid Okhrana informant. The Okhrana was the first intelligence or security service in history to establish an operational field office – which in the parlance of the contemporary U.S. and British services is known as a "field station" – in a foreign country. Working out of the Russian Embassy in Paris, diplomatically accredited Okhrana officials assigned to this office did a very effective job of monitoring, infiltrating, and neutralizing large parts of a support network of exiled Socialist Revolutionary sympathizers living in Western Europe who provided different kinds of political, financial and logistical assistance to the terrorist underground inside Russia.

Besides the Russian and Irish terrorist groups which I have already described, the final decades before the start of World War I witnessed a proliferation of extremely radical and violent political extremist groups whose programs usually consisted of a mishmash of utopian socialism and anarchism, and most of whose leaders regarded terrorist violence as the only way of bettering the human condition. Although none of these groups ever attracted enough members or sympathizers to play a significant role in the political life of any nation, a few of them are still remembered for historic terrorist acts such as the assassinations of the Italian King Umberto I, the Empress Elizabeth who was the wife of the Austro-Hungarian Emperor Franz Joseph, and the American President William McKinley. One of these terrorist acts, however, did change the course of history,

namely the assassination in June 1914 of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, who at the time was the heir
apparent to the Austro-Hungarian throne, by a group of Bosnian Serb students, who belonged to a Serbian nationalist organization called the "Black Hand" which enjoyed the patronage of high-ranking officials of the Serbian military intelligence service, thus triggering the start of the First World War a few weeks later.

Most histories of the period from 1914 to 1945 do not devote much space to discussing terrorism as a specific problem or issue, and at first glance this seems a bit odd since these thirty years were almost certainly the most violent and destructive period of comparable length in human history, encompassing the First and Second World Wars, the Russian Revolution, the Nazi seizure of power in Germany, and a global depression which lasted from 1929 to the start of World War II.   In fact, individual and collective acts of terrorist violence abounded in many parts of the world throughout this period, but in contrast to the decades before World War I, most of them were instigated and perpetrated not by small and politically isolated sects of visionary fanatics and demented sociopaths but by a large number of governments and political movements in different regions of the world, some though not all of which openly rejected previously accepted norms of
political legitimacy, and publicly proclaimed their belief in mass terror as an instrument of governance. Terrorism ceased to be a major agenda item for world statesmen and diplomats during this period, not because it had declined or disappeared, but because it had been rendered banal by the increasingly cynical and brutal practices of many governments and political leaders.

Terrorism reemerged as a political issue during the quarter century immediately following the Second World War, but it was generally treated, both by those who advocated and those who condemned its use, not as a distinct problem in and of itself, but as one element of low-intensity insurgency and counterinsurgency warfare. During the armed conflicts of the 1940's and 1950's which led to the end of British rule in Malaya and Kenya, French rule in Indochina and Algeria, and Dutch rule in what is now Indonesia, members of self-styled anti-colonial movements of national liberation often combined paramilitary guerilla operations against government outposts in thinly populated rural areas with terrorist attacks against government installations and personnel as well as non-combatant civilians of European ancestry in urban and other highly settled areas which were better protected by government security forces. The United States encountered a similar
challenge during its military intervention in Vietnam from 1965 to 1975, with the significant difference that the communist controlled forces arrayed against us included not just clandestine terrorist networks and paramilitary guerilla formations (which at the time were usually referred to as "Viet Cong"), but also the sizeable regular army of North Vietnam which was organized in battalions, regiments, brigades and divisions; equipped with state-of-the-art tanks and artillery manufactured in Warsaw Pact countries; supported by a highly

professional intelligence apparatus with an extensive network of informants throughout South Vietnam; and filled with veterans of the hard-fought struggle which ended French rule in the early 1950's.

During most of the so-called national liberation struggles from the 1940's to the 1960's, terrorism was employed by indigenous insurgent movements as one part of an integrated political and military strategy to wrest control of their territory from security forces of colonial governments, and to replace European colonial rulers with native governments controlled directly or indirectly by leaders of the insurgency movement. For western governments opposing these national liberation movements, the fight against terrorism was only one element of larger counterinsurgency strategies, most of which had political as well as military components, aimed at preventing the loss of their colonial possessions.

Terrorism became a more clearly differentiated form of political and armed conflict in the late 1960's and early 1970's due to terrorist campaigns which several groups connected with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) undertook against the state of Israel and Israeli interests in other countries. The basic objective of these terrorist attacks was to bolster the PLO leadership's claim to represent the aspirations and interests of Palestinian Muslims living in areas which had come under Israeli military control between 1948 and 1967, as well as those who had been forced into exile in other parts of the Middle East during this period. After Palestinian guerrilla attacks against Israeli territory failed to undermine Israeli control of the areas under dispute, groups of Palestinian terrorists undertook a number of spectacular actions like the kidnapping and eventual slaying of Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics in 1972, and the hijacking of commercial airliners and ransoming of captive Israeli passengers in exchange for the release of Palestinian terrorists imprisoned in Israel and other countries. These highly-publicized and sometimes bloody terrorist actions in no way lessened Israel's military control of the territory which it occupied, but they significantly raised the level of awareness of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict within western governments and public opinion and, rightly or wrongly, enhanced the credibility of the PLO'S claim to be the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

During the same period that the PLO was employing terrorism chiefly as a very bloody and destructive public relations instrument, a number of other extremely violent organizations appeared in various parts of the world, whose political programs were confused and exotic variants of Marxism-Leninism. The members of some of these groups received training from Palestinian organizations and occasionally collaborated with them in concrete terrorist operations, such as the hijacking of a French airliner carrying a large number of Israeli passengers to Uganda in 1976.   These groups included the Red Army Faction (sometimes referred to as the "Baader-Meinhof gang") in West Germany, the Red Brigades in Italy, and Japanese Red Army in Japan, all three of which sprang up in the late 1960's on the extreme fringes of the student protest

movements in their respective countries. They acquired considerable notoriety during the 1970's and early 1980's by
 carrying out a large number of spectacular and often highly lethal terrorist acts such as bank robberies and the kidnappings and assassinations of senior government and business leaders.

 Although these political desperados proudly referred to themselves as "urban guerrillas" and called for broadly-based "armed resistance" to overthrow the capitalist system, they inspired only a handful of people to join their ranks or follow their example, played no discernible part in the real political life of their countries, and never posed a serious threat to political stability.   Left-wing urban guerrilla groups in Argentina and Uruguay, whose members also came chiefly from the university educated middle classes, had somewhat greater political impact, inasmuch as their violent criminality furnished right-wing military leaders a pretext to overthrow the democratically elected governments of their countries in the 1970's and launch waves of wholesale repression against the political left whose casualties included the urban guerrilla groups in question. A more broadly-based urban guerrilla group called ETA appeared in the Basque region of
 northern Spain during the late years of General Franco's dictatorship, and achieved some renown thanks to its daring and successful assassinations of a couple of senior officials of the Franco regime. ETA terrorists enjoyed a certain amount of popular sympathy while Franco was still in power, but this sympathy largely disappeared after the revival of Spanish democracy in the late 1970's when ETA made it clear that it would not abandon its project of taking power in the Basque region by means of violent terrorism. Two terrorist organizations which really did manage to organize large guerrilla movements in rural areas of their respective countries, while also conducting terrorist campaigns in large cities, are the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) in Turkey and the Shining Path movement in Peru, both of which still exist and continue to operate after having caused the deaths of thousands of their countrymen and severely impairing their economic
 development and political stability.

The Red Brigades, Red Army Faction and Japanese Red Army had largely vanished from the political scene by the early 1990's due to large improvements in the counterterrorist capabilities of their country's law enforcement agencies, as well as the increasing age and infirmity of their members and supporters. They remained in existence and continued to operate as long as they did partly thanks to their highly disciplined conspiratorial methods, but mostly because the criminal justice systems of West Germany, Italy and Japan were initially at a loss how to combat forms of politically inspired and highly violent organized criminality without empowering the government to impose temporary limits on certain basic legal rights and civil liberties. Proposals to grant emergency powers to the government so that it could combat terrorism more effectively aroused understandable political controversy in West Germany, Italy and Japan during

the late 1960's and
 early 1970's, as well as in Spain after the end of the Franco regime in the late 1970's, since during the first half of the twentieth century each of these countries had endured decades of authoritarian or totalitarian rule whose imposition had supposedly been necessary to protect the state and society from imaginary or widely exaggerated threats of disorder and subversion. Despite these controversies, all four of these countries by the early 1980's found ways to modify their law codes and judicial systems to facilitate the prosecution and punishment of terrorists without appreciably diminishing the legal and political rights of their citizens, and also boosted the tactical, technical, investigative and intelligence capabilities of public and state security institutions to make them more effective against tightly disciplined and heavily armed terrorist groups.

None of the governments of these countries gave serious consideration to ending or reducing their terrorist problems by seeking political compromises with their terrorist opponents, and most of the time this resolute posture enjoyed broad public support due to the extravagant demands made by the terrorists, the gratuitous cruelty and destructiveness of their crimes, and the idiosyncratic behavior of the megalomaniac sociopaths who led most of these groups. The moral and intellectual defects of their terrorist opponents does not greatly diminish the historical importance of the refusal of the comparatively new (or recently restored) democratic governments of West Germany, Italy, Japan and Spain to negotiate with their terrorist opponents, since the readiness of political and government leaders in these same countries a few decades earlier to yield to outrageous demands of brutal and cynical leaders of violent authoritarian groups resulted in the
 extinction of liberty.   The difficult victory over terrorism which the governments of West Germany, Italy, Spain and Japan achieved during the 1970's and 1980's was also a decisive vindication of liberal democracy and the rule of law in countries which a few decades earlier had been ruled by authoritarian and totalitarian regimes.

A number of terrorist groups which were active from the late 1960's to the late 1980's – including the Red Brigades, Red Army Faction, Irish Republican Army, Japanese Red Army and Abu Nidal Organization – received financial aid, training, safehavens, weapons, and other kinds of support from such Middle Eastern countries as Libya, Syria, Iraq and South Yemen, as well as former Soviet Bloc countries such as East Germany, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, North Korea and Cuba. Although conclusive proof of these links did not become available until after western governments gained access to the secret archives of the Soviet and other East European intelligence services during the early 1990's, sufficient evidence of their existence had surfaced in the previous two decades for senior western government officials to have spoken publicly at the time of "state-sponsored terrorism."

Such countries as Syria and Iran continue to aid terrorist groups like Hamas and

Hezbollah, but "state sponsored terrorism" now seems to pose less of a threat to western security interests than the "failed-state terrorism" which over the past fifteen years has appeared in several Muslim countries where the failure of socialist and secularist modernization programs of the first generation of post-colonial rulers brought discredit on the established political elites and produced economic stagnation and greatly reduced employment and career opportunities for members of the younger generation which began to reach maturity in the 1980's and 1990's. The refusal of these increasingly unpopular regimes in North Africa and the Middle East to tolerate overt political opposition of any kind resulted in an intensification of interest in Islam among young people, since religious organizations tended to be the only places where ordinary citizens could meet and exchange opinions without close monitoring by regime officials. With time this led to a highly explosive fusion of religious observance and opposition to the existing regime.

The first country in which this development became visible to westerners was Iran during the late 1970's when radical clergymen and scholars under the political and religious leadership of the Ayatollah Khomeini spearheaded a broadly-based protest movement which overthrew Shah Reza Pahlavi, who had been long a close ally of the United States, and established the theocratic dictatorship which still exists. The second, and even more violent, Islamic revolt against a secular dictatorship backed by a major world power took place in Afghanistan from 1979 to 1988 in response to the brutal and relentless efforts of the communist-controlled Afghan government to remodel the country in the image of the Soviet Union. One part of the Afghan communist regime's revolutionary reform program was a brutal persecution of Islam which provoked a massive popular revolt throughout the country. This revolt soon came to be called a holy war or jihad, and eventually was
 recognized as such throughout the Muslim world. When one hundred thousand Soviet military personnel marched into Afghanistan to prop up the wobbling communist regime in late 1979 and early 1980, they too became a designated target of the jihad alongside the hated Afghan regime.

A few months after taking office in 1981, the newly elected and militantly anti-communist Republican administration of Ronald Reagan launched a covert CIA-directed program of large-scale military assistance to the Afghan resistance (often referred to as mujahedin) which was matched almost dollar for dollar by the Saudi Arabian government. To conceal American and Saudi involvement in the operation, almost all of the military assistance was channeled to Afghan resistance groups by the military intelligence service (ISI) of Pakistan.   The covert U.S. – Saudi – Pakistani operation gained momentum as the war inside Afghanistan intensified, and over the course of several years enormous amounts of money and increasingly sophisticated military equipment flowed to the mujahedin through the hands of the ISI. The one serious problem with this smoothly running and ultimately successful covert action operation against Soviet military aggression was that many

ISI officials, including some in the highest echelons, were very pious and zealous Muslims who tended to favor the mujahedin groups with the most fanatically Islamic orientation when distributing the secret military aid from the U.S. and Saudi Arabia. When U.S. officials raised questions about this practice, the Pakistanis responded that fanatical Muslims would undoubtedly fight the Soviets with greater dedication and skill than groups with lower levels of religious fervor.   At the time this explanation seemed plausible to American government personnel unacquainted with the social and cultural backgrounds of the assorted Afghan resistance groups.   What some U.S. government officials may have failed to consider however was that the Pakistanis had always viewed their next-door neighbor India, with whom they had fought a number of wars, as an even greater strategic threat to Pakistan's national security than they did the Soviets. When deciding which
 Afghan resistance groups would be the recipients of the U.S. – Saudi military assistance, ISI personnel appeared to have been more interested in a particular group's dependability and usefulness as an ally in a possible future conflict between Pakistan and India, than with the group's willingness and ability to contribute to the struggle that was already taking place with the Soviets inside Afghanistan. In the long and highly destructive civil war which followed the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1988, the Pakistanis eventually decided to support the Taliban, despite their extremely radical and despotic program, because they judged them more likely to prevent India from gaining control of Afghanistan.

During the anti-Soviet Afghan jihad of the 1980's, a Saudi citizen named Osama Bin Laden took up residence in Pakistan and directed an Islamic charity which provided humanitarian assistance to Afghan refugees, but took no part in actual fighting. American officials working in Pakistan at the time occasionally heard about his activities, but did not view them as a threat to U.S. interests, and for his part Bin Laden did not seem to have any strong negative feelings about the United States. His violent hatred of the U.S. was apparently provoked by the U.S.-led military action against Saddam Hussein after the Iraqi invasion and annexation of Kuweit in 1990-1991. Even though he considered the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein to be an enemy of Islam, Bin Laden viewed the U.S. military action as a profound humiliation of the Muslim world. After the Al Qaeda bombing of U.S. diplomatic installations in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 made him persona non grata in
 almost every part of the Middle East, Bin Laden and his entourage found refuge in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan. The Taliban rulers do not appear to been directly involved in the planning of the Al Qaeda attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, but they refused U.S. demands for the extradition of Bin Laden after his responsibility for the attack became apparent, even though this prompted the American military action which drove them from power later that fall.

Since the mid-1990's – and thus long before 9/11 -- we have faced a diffuse

constellation of fanatical and extremely violent terrorist groups in different parts of the world which usually appear to act in an uncoordinated fashion, even though they sometimes have provided each other with ideological inspiration, as well as financial, logistical, and operational assistance. Al Qaeda certainly has been the most prominent of these groups, and may also be the best organized and financed, but is probably not the only one capable of major initiatives. At this point, no authoritative information seems to exist about the actual number, size, leadership and locations of these groups, or about the ways and circumstances in which they interact with one another. Judging by the public pronouncements of their spokesmen, the main goals of this self-proclaimed global jihad are to purge contemporary Islamic civilization of corruption and assorted debilitating influences, and to restore the geo-political power and influence which it enjoyed during the Middle Ages. None of the jihad's identifiable spokesmen has ever articulated a coherent conception of how these vast and vague objectives are to be achieved, or presented a plausible program for governing a modern nation-state in accordance with jihadist precepts, and no jihadist group – with the possible exception of the Taliban in Afghanistan -- has ever governed or controlled any existing country in the Muslim world. The underlying strategy of the global jihad appears to be nothing more than the employment of highly lethal and destructive terrorist acts against official and non-official targets in Muslim and non-Muslim countries to exacerbate the mutual resentments and suspicions which have arisen in the peoples of the industrially-developed western world and the less-developed Islamic world as a toxic by-product of the inescapable and rapid growth of their economic, cultural and political interdependence. What the global jihadists preach (and also practice) boils down to death and destruction for the sake of death and destruction, and fear and hatred for the sake of fear and hatred.

While many fundamental questions about the contemporary anti-western jihad remain unanswered, there can be no doubt of the threat which this movement poses to the global community and the pressing need to respond vigorously and intelligently to it. One thing we can say for certain is that despite the lethal capacities demonstrated to the world on 9/11, neither Al-Qaeda by itself nor in concert with all the other jihadist organizations which now exist poses a threat to western security that is in any way comparable to the threat which the USSR posed during the Cold War. The contemporary jihadist movement does not control any expanse of territory with the population, natural resources, industrial-technical base, and civil administration necessary to create modern military and police institutions which could protect the territory from attack and occupation by an outside power, and would allow it to project armed force beyond its own borders. The global
 jihad has no army, navy, air force or the industrial and technical capability to manufacture weapons of mass destruction and the long-range aircraft or missiles that would be needed to deliver them to the territory of distant adversaries. The contemporary jihad does not possess a diplomatic or professional foreign intelligence service with a world-wide network of embassies and other highly

protected installations whose premises and personnel are immune to search and arrest by the local authorities, and can transport large amounts of sensitive equipment and material in and out of hostile countries in diplomatic pouches and cargo shipments.

In the foreseeable future, the only way jihadist groups can inflict physical harm or destruction on the inhabitants and territory of western countries is by acts of terrorist violence and sabotage conducted by undercover agents and operatives traveling to the target country on a short-term basis, as well as by legal permanent residents and citizens of the target country who are willing to help the jihadists for one reason or another. The major terrorist acts which jihadist operatives and their local sympathizers have committed in our own and other western countries have clearly demonstrated that these tactics can succeed. Yet while this threat is very serious, it is by no means unmanageable due to the array of interlocking government institutions which in all western countries routinely monitor and control the movements and activities of foreign citizens inside their borders, as well as key aspects of the professional and personal lives of their own
 citizens. These institutions are not limited to official organs of state and public security, but also include internal revenue services, agencies which regulate banking and business activities, schools, and the services which provide health care and other forms of social assistance. As banal and trivial as the work of these institutions may be, their overriding mission is to identify and swiftly curtail unlawful activities and social pathologies which pose an imminent or potential threat to the safety and welfare of the general public. It is extremely difficult for clandestine terrorist groups to plan and prepare for an attack inside a western country without coming to the attention of one or more of these institutions. While this network of government institutions may not be an infallible defense against terrorist attack, it is a formidable one which on many occasions has enabled the governments of different western countries to recognize
 potential threats and respond to them in a timely and effective manner.

Even some of the richest and most highly developed western countries have had difficulty preventing the spread of lawbreaking and social pathologies in large communities of recent immigrants from third world countries whose languages and cultures differ greatly from those of their new homelands. During the past thirty to forty years these problems have become increasingly pronounced in France, the United Kingdom, Germany and other Western European countries, due to the arrival of large numbers of refugees, immigrants and so-called "guest workers" from different parts of North Africa, South Asia and the Middle East. All of the European countries concerned have long had well-run and well-funded programs and institutions which cared for newly arrived immigrants and refugees and helped integrate them into the economic and social life of their new homelands, but the capabilities of these institutions and programs were quickly overwhelmed by unexpectedly
 large numbers of immigrants from third world countries whose social and

educational backgrounds tended to be more diverse than those of previous generations of immigrants.

These recent waves of immigration have included increasing numbers of young Muslims from "failed states" in the post-colonial third world who saw no future for themselves in the stagnant and dysfunctional economies of their homelands and sought broader career horizons for themselves and their families in the industrially developed countries of Western Europe and North America, whose aging populations and declining birthrates have created a great demand for immigrant labor.   All indications are that the majority of recent immigrants to Western Europe from Muslim countries in the Near East and South Asia have found life in their new homelands greatly preferable to the lives they had led in their countries of origin, but for some the process of assimilation has been much slower and more difficult. For Muslim immigrants in some European countries, the inevitable strains of assimilation into the social and economic life of a foreign country have been
 aggravated by latent resentments and antagonisms which may exist between former European colonizers and their former colonial subjects, as well as by outbreaks of anti-immigrant violence perpetrated by racist skinhead groups. This being the case, it is not altogether surprising that Al Qaeda and other jihadist groups have been able to find adherents and sympathizers in Muslim immigrant communities in some European countries.

The growing and increasingly visible Muslim immigrant community in the United States is much smaller in proportion to the general population, and appears to be more prosperous, better educated, and to have assimilated more rapidly into the social and economic life of their new homeland, than have the Muslim immigrant communities in Europe. I am not aware of any evidence which suggests that a significant number of Muslim immigrants in the U.S. support or sympathize with Al Qaeda or other jihadist groups, and might therefore constitute a "fifth column" which could imperil our country's security. What is certain though is that a large number of first and second generation Muslim immigrants serving in the U.S. armed forces, diplomatic service, and different components of our intelligence community have made a disproportionately large contribution to our country's fight against Al Qaeda and jihadist terrorism both at home and overseas before and
 after 9/11. Their foreign language abilities, intimate knowledge of the social and cultural realities of the Islamic world, and the special sense of devotion to their new homeland which tends to characterize recent immigrants, have already made their contributions to the current war on terror as vital as those made by first and second generation German, Italian and Japanese immigrants to the struggle against the Axis powers during World War II, and by refugees and immigrants from the Soviet Union and communist controlled countries of Eastern Europe during the Cold War. Far from being a potential weak spot in our defenses against jihadist terrorism, the Muslim immigrant communities in the U.S. can furnish us with the spearhead of the political and cultural counter-

offensive which we must now conduct against the hatred, violence and obscurantist tyranny which the jihadist movement is trying to spread in many parts of the world.   In the intelligence
 business, as in warfare and diplomacy, you only win by taking the offensive, while a fearful and exclusively defensive posture is tantamount to surrender.

Although I have used the term "war on terror" a few times in this essay, I am a bit uncomfortable with it, because in its literal sense "war" is something that can be waged only against a readily definable enemy such as a territorial nation-state, a political movement or other group of people with identifiable leaders and a specific program of action. Terrorism is not a country or political movement, but a strategy or tactic which has been employed far too often in political and military conflicts during the past hundred and fifty years. Using the phrase "war on terror" to signify some sort of concerted global effort to eradicate the use of terrorism in all future military and political conflicts may reduce it to a slogan such as "war on poverty," "war on hunger," and "war on drug addiction," which identifies a genuine problem but seldom prescribes a clear and practicable method of eliminating it with the vigor, determination
 and dispatch which are called for in combating contemporary jihadist terrorism. I am also uncomfortable with political leaders' appeals to wage war for or against something other than specific countries or readily identifiable groups of people who pose some kind of tangible threat, since in many historical cases such slogans or sentiments have turned out to be euphemistic code words for highly questionable – and sometimes despicable – programs and objectives. In the late nineteenth century, the German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck used the term "culture war" (kulturkampf) to denote and to justify the enactment of highly repressive and unjust laws directed against the Roman Catholic Church.

Over the past few years, the term "war on terror" seems to have been interpreted both by some of its proponents and by some of is opponents as signifying not just a coordinated and forceful effort to suppress Al Qaeda and other highly dangerous Islamic terrorist organizations, but also a global conflict with Islamic religion, cultural and civilization as a whole. I find such a definition of the war on terror troubling, because any view of the present struggle which explicitly or implicitly demonizes the Islamic religion, or the peoples and nations who practice it is, in my opinion, a sure-fire recipe for losing the real war on terror. One of the essential lessons of recent successes against Al Qaeda in Iraq, and of the rapid and wholesale defeat which we inflicted on the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in 2001, is that our most dedicated and effective foreign allies in combating jihadist terrorist groups are the Muslim countries and peoples who
 always have been the main victims of jihadist terror both before and after 9/11.

If we are to fight Islamic terrorism sensibly and effectively, we must also restrain ourselves from the natural impulse to view our most dangerous opponents as depraved and relentless enemies, who are devoid of decent human sentiment, and whose outlooks and values are completely irreconcilable with our own. One

of the most valuable lessons which some of my elders and betters pounded into me during my twenty-nine year career in the intelligence business is that we must always try to look upon our opponents as adversaries rather than enemies, since viewing them as enemies tends to excite feelings of hatred and fear which usually warp our perceptions of those we hate and fear in ways that reduce our ability to understand their true motives and anticipate their future actions.   An adversary, on the other hand, is someone we can look upon with respect, and occasionally even with sympathy, cognizant of his strengths and virtues as well as his vices and
 shortcomings. The need to treat our adversaries with respect, no matter how threatened we may feel by them, derives not from sentimental humanitarian considerations, but from the stark imperatives of self-preservation, since what makes our adversaries a genuine threat to us are not their vices and shortcomings but rather their strengths and virtues. To succeed in the intelligence business, we must strive not just to learn about our adversaries, but we must also try to learn from them things that they may know which we do not, and especially any weaknesses or limitations which they may have detected in our own knowledge and understanding to which we had previously been blind.