Taming Terrorism

It's Been Done Before

Edited by
Anna Reid

foreword by
Charles Guthrie

policy exchange

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Foreword
Charles Guthrie

How often one nowadays hears the mantra that "terrorists can never be beaten" – a counsel of despair that is all too rarely rebutted with empirical evidence. In my own personal experience in four and a half decades of soldiering, insurgency has been defeated far more often than it has won. I myself fought in the Arabian Peninsula, the Gulf, Africa and Northern Ireland. All of these insurrections were confounded by the great skill and professionalism of our armed forces and security services, even if some might cavil with the precise terms of the settlements which our political masters struck from time to time with our foes.

I do not agree with all of the authors' conclusions in this timely volume of essays. Nonetheless, they all deepen our historical understanding of the point that terrorism is eminently tameable – if the proper mix of carrot and stick is judiciously administered. Self-evidently, there are even great divergences between the assaults on the established order described herein – by the Italian Red Brigades,

the Greek November 17 groupuscule, the Peruvian Maoists of Shining Path and the weird Japanese cult of Aum Shinriykõ – and current war on radical Islamist terrorism and its state sponsors. These were ideological movements or sects that operated with too little support from the rest of society to be truly successful in their own terms. Lacking large political or religious pools of support, they were isolated with comparative ease by security forces operating in their own country with a common linguistic and cultural base. Even Shining Path, which posed the most serious challenge to legitimate authority of all of these movements, only boasted around 25,000 supporters at the height of their campaign. Significantly, despite the alienation of Quechua-speaking people from a near-“failed state” (to use the fashionable jargon) Shining Path did not seek to play up racial division as much as it might have done.

What makes radical Islamism so difficult to deal with is the poisonous mixture of conventional extreme political ideology, such as violent “anti-colonialism,” with ethno-religious rage. Yet even in Afghanistan and Iraq, allied forces are gaining the upper hand. The recently released Soviet General Staff history of their Afghan War shows that despite the Red Army’s sponsorship of one of the largest partisan campaigns of all time – against the Nazis – it had lost much of its flair for this kind of conflict by the late 1970s. The 40th Army thus entered Kabul and the surrounding countryside quite unprepared for the sort of engagements it would have to fight against the Mujahideen, let alone “hearts and minds” to win over the people. Considering that we, too, have been “playing away from home,” under the eye of a watchful and critical media, what has been achieved since 2001 is quite remarkable.

But much remains to be done, most especially in the tricky realm of "soft power." Since 09/11 the United States has spent something like 1000 times more on "hard power" than on information, cultural development and assorted "nation-building" tasks. But even here, there are no easy answers. I found the essay on Peru especially informative on the effects of higher education. Less than one third of Shining Path terrorists came from worker, peasant or petit-bourgeois backgrounds. Rather like the perpetrators and organizers of the 09/11 attacks, they mostly came from privileged backgrounds and had personally experienced little poverty or oppression. Indeed, Peru's insurgency boomed in almost perfect tandem with the expansion of the universities from 17% to 40% of the relevant age cohort between 1980 and 1993. If we are to rebuild public education, as has been suggested in countries like Pakistan, we must make sure that there are jobs for those graduates to go to. Unless we rise to that challenge, we will find ourselves sitting on a volcano of over-educated malcontents. It reminds us that we can certainly tame terrorism, but that there can be no exclusively military solutions.

About the authors

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Introduction
Anna Reid

Taming Terrorism: It's Been Done Before is the second in a series of Policy Exchange publications that seek to draw from past experience in deciding how best to tackle foreign policy challenges today. The first – *Regime Change* – looked at state-building efforts abroad, from post-war Germany to contemporary Afghanistan. *Taming Terrorism* does the same with terrorist movements, from the Boxer Rebellion of 1899-1901 to Japan's Aum Shinriykõ and Greece's November 17th in the 1990s. Part of its point is to demonstrate that despite the hype today's struggle is not an unprecedented one, and in fact has much in common with episodes in the not so distant past. We've beaten terrorism before, and we can do it again.

As case studies, we picked groups which, like the Islamic radicals, were primarily driven by ideology rather than by concrete political demands, and whose aims were so extreme and/or eccentric as to preclude all possibility of rational negotiation. Hence separatists – such as the IRA, ETA and PKK – are excluded,

as are single-issue groups such as anti-abortionists and anti-vivsectionists.

Though sharing a religio-nihilist cast of mind, the chosen groups are far from identical. Some, like Peru's Sendero Luminoso, boasted tens of thousands of active members; others, like November 17th, barely a dozen. Some, once penetrated, collapsed in months; others have not to this day been brought wholly to book, with prosecutions still pending for decades-old crimes. Their beliefs ranged from the Marxist or Maoist to the plain lunatic: Aum Shinriykõ awaited apocalypse at the turn of the millennium, and viewed its random gassing of subway passengers as a pious act of salvation.

Their commonalities are nonetheless striking, as are those with radical Islamism. From high-rise Tokyo to shanty-town Ayacucho, all grew from a combination of belief, disappointed economic aspirations and social alienation. The majority drew their leaderships and much of their support – in the traditional paradox – from the relatively well-off middle class. All were eventually beaten with a combination of tougher terrorism laws and security and judicial reform, consolidated by long-term economic growth.

Not all the lessons these experiences teach are novel. The need to look forward to new threats, rather than backward to Cold War or post-colonial ones, for example, is already well appreciated, as is the importance of streamlining intelligence agencies. Others, such as the likely unsustainability, in liberal-democratic societies, of draconian anti-terror laws, are only now swimming into consciousness. To the old question of whether it is tougher security or social and economic reform that best solves terrorism we arrive at the predictable, not very helpful answer that it is both, and that no one-size solution fits all. As Professor Drake points out in his paper on the Red Brigades,

though terrorist movements all spring from a mix of the same basic ingredients, those mixes come in different proportions: poverty for example, is currently the key driver for Islamic terrorism in Central Asia, but was not in 1960s Italy or 1990s Japan.

Overall, the mood conveyed is one of resigned optimism: optimism, because even well-organised, well-funded and relatively popular terrorist movements fade in the end; resignation, because it often takes a very long time. So what should we, sitting in Whitehall or Washington, take from history? Our case studies say the following:

Like generals, spies and policemen tend to fight the last war. In 1980s Japan, the security services were still worrying about Chinese and North Korean-supported communist groups when they should have had their eye on a crop of strange new sects blossoming at home. The incoming Bush administration, according to critics, made a similar mistake with respect to al-Qaeda, concentrating instead on the possibility of a nuclear and biological threat from Iraq. Even now, its continuing determination to cast Islamic radicalism as an essentially state-sponsored phenomenon may be as much a product of an inherited way of viewing the world, as of its desire to justify the Iraq war to the public now that Saddam seems not to have possessed WMD after all.

Similarly, although Spain gave more attention to terrorism post 9/11, until the bombing of a Madrid commuter train by Moroccan radicals in March 2004 its focus was almost entirely on ETA, and its principal action the banning of the allegedly related Basque nationalist party Batasuna. Security services must learn to look forward to emerging threats, not backward at Cold War and separatist ones.

Faced with a major new threat, security services need strong central direction, bigger budgets and better training. Overlaps and rivalries must be eliminated. In Peru, Sendero flourished thanks in part to inter-agency rivalry between military and police, and was finally defeated by a small, specially-formed anti-terrorism unit that managed to insulate itself from political pressure as well as leaks and infiltration. In Greece, tiny November 17th managed to survive for over quarter of a century thanks to similar rivalries, plus police corruption. America's 9/11 Commission was thus right to recommend that the country's 15 competing intelligence agencies be placed under a single National Counter-terrorism Centre (NCTC). The administration should take the Commission's recommendations fully on board, giving the NCTC authority over appointments and budgets, not just a clearing-house role. Spain's new Socialist government should also quickly implement its manifesto promises to reform the Guardia Civil's intelligence arm and create a new National Policing Body specializing in terrorism.

Giving the security services more power is difficult in countries which have a history of militarism. Often, governments are either tacitly nervous about the possibility of another military coup (Greece and Peru), or strengthening police powers is politically taboo (Japan, where despite the Aum experience, the system for licensing 'religions' remains unchanged.) In Spain, the existence of ETA accustomed the public to tough anti-terrorism laws long before 9/11, but Germany – where recent reforms have extended surveillance powers, tightened immigration rules and removed special protections from religious groups – may find it has yet more to do.

When framing anti-terrorist legislation, governments must strike a difficult balance between security and civil liberties. Typically they are initially over-complacent, then – following a terrorist outrage – over-draconian, before arriving at a workable equilibrium. When the pendulum is allowed to swing too far towards authoritarianism, governments risk a backlash from mainstream society. Greece's Konstantinos Mitsotakis lost an election after trying and failing to censor the press, and Peru's Alberto Fujimori only managed to enact hardline anti-terrorist laws by dissolving parliament. Bush and Blair are already beginning to discover that their initial tough stances (closed military tribunals; indefinite internment without trial for foreign suspects; admissibility of evidence that may have been acquired by torture) may be unsustainable, and should start looking for longer-term solutions.

'Repentance' laws, allowing suspects to plea-bargain in exchange for identifying colleagues, are useful, though they can also result in derisory gaol terms for serious offences, and encourage suspects to fabricate information.

Troops sent on punitive expeditions to regions harbouring terrorists must be kept on a tight rein. Atrocities committed by the Eight Allied Armies during their punitive expedition against the Boxers turned both Chinese and Western opinion against the campaign, and continue to poison US-Chinese relations to the present day. In Peru, troops dispatched to the rebellious southern highlands similarly failed to distinguish between terrorists and ordinary villagers, stoking anti-government feeling. The army only began to behave better, and relations to improve, when high-ranking army officers were prosecuted.

As high civilian death tolls and prisoner abuse in Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrate, heavy-handed and/or out-of-control military remain a problem today. The US and UK should ensure that in such cases senior as well as junior personnel are forced to take responsibility, and publicly prosecuted where appropriate.

The capture of a charismatic terrorist leader can prove a turning-point. In Peru, television footage of the Sendero leader Abimael Guzmán ranting paunchily in striped prison uniform punctured his image as an invincible mastermind. US troops currently hunting Osama bin Laden along the Afghanistan/Pakistan border should aim to capture rather than kill him, since his public trial might similarly damage his standing in the Islamic world.

Security successes must be consolidated by broader reforms that tackle terrorism's root causes. Perhaps surprisingly, these are more likely to be economic than political. November 17th and Sendero Luminoso both got off the ground soon after their countries' first free elections, and Professor McClintock's interviews with Sendero supporters show that their grievances were about living standards and job opportunities, rather than rigged polls or human rights abuse. Everywhere, terrorism faded as economic reforms began to bear fruit and economies to grow.

The positive message here for Western governments is that promoting economic rather than political reform in the Arab world, as well as more do-able, would actually be more useful in combating terrorism. Instead of haranguing unreceptive regimes on election monitoring and women's rights – as envisaged by America's over-ambitious 'Greater Middle East' plan – they should concentrate on

doing away with trade barriers and nudging them towards economic reform.

Terrorist movements often draw their leadership, and much of their support, from the marginalized middle classes. Just as the 9/11 bombers included engineers and a Saudi diplomat's son, Sendero was led by a philosophy professor, Aum's top personnel included an astrophysicist and a virologist, and the Red Brigades' an array of student leaders and academics.

Societies are particularly vulnerable if they fail to create sufficient professional jobs to meet the rising aspirations of their young people: in the same way that Sendero's core support came from graduates from peasant families who had ended up in poorly paid teaching jobs back in the village school, radical Islamist leaders are typically working-class graduates of provincial, non-elite universities. Even in rich Japan, Aum grew in response to a long recession and high graduate unemployment.

Again, the lesson for Western governments is to encourage Arab countries to pursue economic reform – and perhaps also to concentrate education budgets on primary and secondary schools, rather than on surplus-to-requirements universities.

Keeping mainstream opinion on side doesn't solve terrorism on its own. Ideologically-driven terrorist movements are almost never genuinely popular, or at least do not remain so for long. The mainstream Italian left distanced itself from the Red Brigades after Aldo Moro's murder; similarly, support for Sendero in rural areas waned as Sendero became more brutal. But more pessimistically, terrorist groups can also keep going for decades with very little public

support. Western governments should understand that although winning Muslim hearts and minds away from al-Qaeda is a necessary condition for the defeat of Islamic terror, it is not a sufficient one.

Exaggerated rhetoric is harmful. During the Boxer crisis the European press demonized the (admittedly ferocious) rebels as crazed savages, and proof of the already-coined notion of a 'Yellow Peril' poised to swamp the civilized world. Numbers of Europeans killed during the siege of Peking's foreign compounds were wildly exaggerated. Though as the crisis developed Western newspapers also truthfully reported the Allied armies' atrocities against Chinese civilians, their earlier alarmism helped create the hysterical atmosphere in which those atrocities were allowed to happen.

Muzzling the press is counterproductive – as Mitsotakis discovered when he tried to stop editors from reprinting November 17th's communiqués. But governments can themselves refrain from inflammatory language (Bush's "crusade" against terrorism springs to mind), and – even in the run-up to elections – from stoking public fears for political advantage.

Governments must admit their mistakes, and adapt their policies to changing circumstances. What works in the immediate aftermath to a major terrorist attack may not do so a few years later, when voters are less fearful for their own safety and therefore less accepting of restrictions to their civil liberties. Conversely, as terrorist groups become more brutal and hence less popular, governments can afford riskier strategies – in the Peruvian case, the arming of local self-defence groups; in Italy, the introduction of controversial

'repentance' laws. The US is currently very publicly going through the same sort of adaptation process in Afghanistan and Iraq, where in both cases it has been forced to ditch unsavoury local allies and unrealistic election timetables. But it has been slower to admit shortcomings in its anti-terrorism policies more generally – viz its unwillingness radically to overhaul the CIA, or to grant ordinary judicial process to Guantanamo detainees. Elsewhere, to stay in power governments have had to show more flexibility.

The terrorist threat should be kept in proportion. Despite its much-hyped global reach, use of modern technology and suicide bombers, Islamic terrorism in the al-Qaeda mould has (so far) done relatively little economic damage and claimed relatively few lives. Past movements have been far bloodier: Sendero, for example, is reckoned to have killed more than 25,000 people in twelve years. According to the State Department's figures, in 2003 a total of 625 people died in all international terrorism incidents worldwide. In the same year, 43,200 people died in car accidents in America alone. That might all change, of course, if terrorists acquired useable WMD, and preventing them from getting it must remain a key aim. Meanwhile, governments should employ rational risk-assessment in deciding how to spend their budgets: increased security should not take precedence over cheaper ways to save property and lives.

Terrorist movements fade in the end, but it often takes 20 years or more. We are in for a long haul.

1. China's Boxer Crisis[1]

Jeffrey Wasserstrom

Many people remember exactly what they were doing when they first learned of the September 11 terror attacks, which claimed close to three thousand lives and set in motion a chain of events that included the mustering of the international force that toppled the Taliban. There has even been a hit country song – 'Where Were You When the World Stopped Turning?' – devoted to first responses to that day's horrors. I, too, have a clear memory of first hearing that a hijacked plane had hit the World Trade Center. What I was doing on September 11, though, is less relevant here than what I was doing two weeks earlier: finishing a short essay about a crisis that took place at the turn of the previous century and also led to an international military force taking action in an Asian country. I had, in other words, been writing about the Boxer Crisis of 1899-1901, which began with bands of insurgents attacking Chinese Christians and Western missionaries; reached an early crescendo with a siege of

Beijing's foreign legations; and culminated with a multinational peace-keeping force *avant la lettre* freeing the hostages and carrying out campaigns of reprisal.[2]

One reason the Boxer Crisis was on my mind then was because I had recently participated in a London workshop on the subject.[3] Another was that the centenary of the Boxer Protocol – the September 7, 1901, agreement that formally concluded the crisis and required the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) to pay a staggeringly large indemnity to several foreign governments – was about to come around. The piece on the Boxers I wrote that August appeared in several places, with each editor giving it a different title. The catchiest was: 'Has George W. Ever Heard of the Boxer Rebellion? (Let's Hope So).'[4]

In that essay, I argued that the then recently-elected second President Bush should familiarize himself with the Boxer Crisis before meeting Jiang Zemin, his Chinese counterpart, at the upcoming APEC Summit in Shanghai. Why? Because the Boxer Uprising – not really a "rebellion," since the insurgents expressed their loyalty to the Qing Dynasty and the imperial family – still holds an important place in Chinese historical memory, as does the Protocol. In addition, the post-siege actions of the foreign troops, which Chinese textbooks describe as part of the "Invasion of the Eight Allied Armies," remain a diplomatic sore point. Evidence of this had come just the previous year, in fact, when Beijing broke off relations with the Vatican after the Pope announced (on a particularly unfortunate date: October 1, 2000, the fifty-first anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic) the canonization of a large number of foreign missionaries and Chinese Christians who had died martyrs' deaths in China, in many cases as victims of the

Boxers. Beijing saw this proclamation as offensive not just because of its timing, but also because Catholic (and Protestant) missionaries are viewed as having played an important role in supporting the imperialist projects that led to China's subjugation during the decades following the Opium War (1839-1842). In addition, the Pope's statement gave the impression that only the deaths of Christian Boxer Crisis "martyrs" mattered.[5]

Yes, Beijing admitted, the anti-Christian insurgents who rose up in 1899 and 1900 (and became known in the West as the "Boxers" in part because of the use they made of martial arts techniques) had killed a great many people. But in 1900 and 1901 foreign troops had slain a large number of non-Boxer Chinese villagers. Chinese authors have long claimed that, though Western and Japanese generals of the time spoke of the post-siege campaigns as "relief expeditions" intended to "restore order," "save civilization" and punish those responsible for unspeakable acts of violence, those campaigns were, in reality, something much darker – brutal and often indiscriminate attacks on the men, women and children of North China. And evidence to support Chinese claims of high civilian death tolls – as well as large-scale looting on the part of foreign soldiers, diplomats and even missionaries – is provided by contemporary accounts by Western and Japanese observers, some of whom came away from China sickened by the atrocities they had seen committed by both sides.

When Bush met with Jiang, I speculated, the latter might well be thinking about the events of 1899-1901 in general and more specifically about the Boxer Protocol, a document that is still viewed in China as one of the most humiliating of the various "unequal treaties" forced upon the country by the West. It remains a potent

symbol of a long period of "national humiliation," during which, according to Chinese historians linked to the Nationalist Party and Communist Party alike, a once-proud country was "carved up like a melon" by greedy imperialists. Unlike India, China was never formally colonized, but according to Sun Yat-sen and later Chinese radical critics of imperialism, the "semi-colonial" arrangements imposed on it were in some ways even worse. With Western countries – not to mention Russia and Japan – establishing spheres of influence in which missionaries were free to seek converts and traders free to exploit the China market, the Chinese became not the "slaves" of one foreign power but of many.[6]

One reason I thought it might be good for Bush to know something about the Boxer Crisis and the very different way that it is remembered on the opposite side of the Pacific, is that it seems that whenever relations between Beijing and Washington grow strained, as they had just become early in 2001 with the spy plane incident, historical analogies tied to the bloodshed of 1899-1901 can be counted on to come into play. Take, for example, what had occurred in May of 1999, when three Chinese nationals died in Belgrade as a result of NATO bombs hitting that city's Chinese Embassy. Both sides immediately claimed to hear different sorts of echoes of the Boxer Crisis. The bombing, according to some Chinese, was an affront to their country's sovereignty reminiscent of the invasion triggered by the Boxer rising (a comparison facilitated rhetorically by the terms for "NATO" and "Invasion of the Eight Allied Armies" containing some of the same characters). *USA Today*, meanwhile, likened the raucous nationalistic protests that erupted outside of the U.S. and British embassies in Beijing in 1999 to the "anti-foreign" manifestations of the Boxers in 1899 (a comparison

facilitated by the fact that these protests occurred in the same part of China's capital to which the Boxers had laid siege).[7]

My sense back in August of 2001 was that George W. probably had indeed heard of the Boxer Rebellion. After all, it is a widely enough known event to have provided the setting for a flashback episode of 'Buffy the Vampire Slayer'. But I thought that he probably had a very limited understanding at best of what exactly had taken place between 1899 and 1901. He no doubt knew that Boxers had killed Western missionaries and Chinese Christians. He also probably knew that foreigners had been held hostage in Beijing.

In addition, though he probably would not have been able to name all the other foreign armies involved (those of Britain, France, Russia, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Italy, Germany and Japan), he probably would have known that U.S. troops had been part of the international military force that went to China in 1900. Indeed, if he had one strong image of the Boxer Crisis in mind, it was probably of confrontations between the Boxers and foreign contingents that included American soldiers. Why? Because they had been featured prominently in a film, 'Fifty-five Days at Peking', which starred none other than Charlton Heston, an actor who by 2001 had become a darling of conservative political groups and a leading spokesman for the National Rifle Association.

What concerned me was that, while knowing these basic details, George W. would probably not be aware of the disturbing things that happened after the final credits rolled in the Hollywood version of the story. During this period foreign soldiers flagrantly flaunted various terms of the then-recently signed Hague Conventions on war, which were presumed not to apply to China since the acts of the Boxers had proved that it was a savage land. When using their

weapons, some troops made little or no effort to figure out which Chinese they encountered were Boxers, which members of the imperial army, and which just ordinary villagers. In addition to looting widely, foreign troops also often treated Chinese prisoners of war with brutality and contempt. And according to many accounts, there were widespread incidents of rape. It seemed to me unlikely that the President would know about these things, or know that the Protocol (which was silent concerning the sufferings of Chinese victims of the Crisis who were neither Boxers nor Christians) required Beijing – but no foreign power – to pay indemnities for losses of life and property.

The events of September 11 instantly made obsolete some of my arguments about the value of Bush familiarizing himself with the Boxer Crisis as part of his preparation for meeting Jiang, since the terror attacks altered completely the agenda for the APEC Summit and the discussions between the two leaders. The main order of business in Shanghai became the potentially unending "War on Terror" that Bush had just declared. And tensions between Beijing and Washington were brushed aside, as Jiang announced his determination to join the struggle against al-Qaeda – a struggle that Bush initially called a "crusade," before realizing that even many Muslims with no sympathy for Osama bin Laden found this terminology deeply offensive.[8]

It is also fair to say that news of the World Trade Center's collapse and related events brushed the Boxers from my own mind for a time back in 2001, but I soon began to find it almost eerie that just before the invasion of Afghanistan, I had been thinking about the reasons that a multinational force had been mustered and the things that it had done in Asia almost exactly a century ago. To be sure, there are important differences between the Boxer Crisis and the ongoing one

that began September 11. There are also, however, parallels worth pondering. These include specific similarities between the rhetoric and terrifying acts of violence committed by the Boxers on the one hand, and by al-Qaeda on the other, and between media coverage of the earlier crisis and this recent one. But more striking are parallels between the international campaign launched in 1900 – often unapologetically likened to a "crusade" – and the invasion that toppled the Taliban, and between some of the atrocities committed in China just over a century ago, and in Afghanistan and Iraq very recently. Looking backward to the Boxer Crisis now, alas, seems even more worthwhile than it did in August of 2001.

The Boxers and al-Qaeda: similarities and differences

Since the two crises began with the violent actions of the Boxers and al-Qaeda, a good place to begin is by noting some of the main common points and contrasts relating to the words, deeds, and beliefs of these two groups – even though, as already stressed above, I find parallels between past and present linked to other things more compelling. First, it is important to note four basic differences between the two groups:

1. The Boxers never left China, whereas a defining feature of al-Qaeda is its international reach.
2. Osama bin Laden had no Boxer counterpart when it came to international fame (and infamy).
3. Despite expressing disdain for the decadence of contemporary culture, al-Qaeda does not disparage modern technologies (as the

Boxers did), and indeed makes active use of new technologies of communication (from videotapes to cell phone), warfare (sophisticated explosives), and transportation (including airplanes).
4. Though foreign newspapers spoke of the Boxers as a "terrorizing" force, it is only al-Qaeda that has been called a "terrorist" organization.[9]

Having looked at this list (which could easily be extended to include many other things, including the dramatically different religious orientations and spiritual beliefs of the two groups), readers may wonder if there are any significant areas of commonality worth noting. I believe there are – and not just because each killed large numbers of people.

One additional basic similarity is that the Boxers, like the September 11 terrorists, combined attacks on human beings with attacks on symbolically charged material objects (in their case, anything from telegraph lines to railways to churches). Another set of parallels has to do with claims made by each group about what was wrong with the world and what should be done to restore the proper order of things. Where these topics are concerned, Boxer proclamations contain many statements that resonate with texts issued by al-Qaeda and related groups. The Boxers, for example, expressed outrage that impure, lascivious foreigners had encroached upon and polluted holy territory. They referred to their acts of violence as divinely ordained. They used virulent rhetoric to dehumanize their enemies. And they claimed to be able to strike fear deep into the heart of the Western world.

All of the aforementioned can be glimpsed at play in a doggerel verse that circulated widely during the movement. It speaks of

"Divinely aided Boxers" rising up to undo the damage that had been done to China by a group of demonic figures. "Their men are immoral; Their women truly vile" – this is how one stanza sums up the nature of Christians in China, before ending with an allegation that incest was commonly practiced by these Devils. The poem goes on to call on all Chinese concerned with the situation to do the following:

> Rip up the Railway tracks!
> Pull down the telegraph lines!
> Quickly! Hurry Up! Smash Them –
> The boats and the steamship combines.

After this comes a pair of verses that speak to the potential power of the Boxers:

> The mighty nation of France
> Quivers in abject fear,
> While from England, America, Russia
> And from Germany nought do we hear.
>
> When at last all the Foreign Devils
> Are expelled to the very last man,
> The Great Qing, united, together,
> Will bring peace to this our land.[10]

Western responses

A more significant set of parallels relate not to the rhetoric and actions of the Boxers and al-Qaeda but to the international reper-

cussions of the anti-Christian violence of 1899-1900 and the September 11 terror attacks. Here, again, there are crucial contrasts to keep in mind. For example, the Boxer Crisis took place long before the founding of the United Nations – and indeed well before the founding of the League of Nations. This meant that there was no single international body to which aggrieved parties could appeal. It is also worth keeping in mind the speed with which military forces can now be conveyed across oceans. It made a difference as well that, in 1900, the Boxers were suppressed by troops sent by countries that were involved in intense competition with one another, for territory and for status within the international order. And it should be remembered that attitudes toward the establishment, protection and extension of empires was different then than it is now. Washington spokesmen insisted during the Boxer Crisis that America had never had an interest in becoming an imperial power – though this insistence was seen by some as hypocritical in light of what the U.S. was actually doing in the Philippines (where some of the troops that ended up in China were initially based), just as the Bush administration's denials of imperial ambitions are seen by some as hypocritical in light of what the U.S. is actually doing in the Middle East. Other countries that sent troops to China in 1900, however, were proud of having an imperial reach to protect and perhaps extend, if given the opportunity. Whether or not we are in a new age of imperialism, it is significant that the Boxer Crisis took place during a period in which it was not yet seen as essential to try to mask or deny one's desire for empire.

These contrasts noted, however, when we turn to international responses we find striking parallels between the distant and recent past. There are, for example, similarities between the siege of the foreign

legations and the September 11 terror attacks as media events that transfixed Western audiences and dominated the headlines for weeks. In addition, each became the source of wild rumors (such as the 1900 tale, widely believed until proven false, that the Boxers had murdered all of Beijing's foreigners, not just a very small number of them).

A subtler similarity between the international responses to the two crises has to do with the complex way that acts of violence emanating from Asia both reinforced and called into question widely current ideas about the dangers that distant 'others' posed to the West. In the late 1800s, the most significant of these ideas was the explicitly racist 'Yellow Peril' notion. When the Boxers rose up in 1899 and 1900, some Westerners immediately cited the group's actions as proof that talk of a 'Yellow Peril' was not an exaggeration but something real to be feared.[11] Yet at the same time, the role that Japan played in the suppression of the Boxers called into question the notion that, simply by virtue of 'race', all residents of the 'Orient' were dangerous. Indeed, Japan's 'conversion' to modern ways, as evidenced by the participation of Japanese soldiers in the campaign to quell the Boxer rising, was cited as a hopeful portent that, in the future, more and more countries might be 'civilized' along Western lines.

The contemporary counterpart to the Yellow Peril notion is the idea – already in circulation well before September 11 – that fearsome clashes between the 'Muslim World' and the West were likely to become an endemic part of the political story of the twenty-first century. When the World Trade Center and Pentagon were hit, in fact, some hailed Samuel Huntington as a prophet, claiming that we should have been more mindful of the arguments in his book *The Clash of Civilizations*[12] part of which focused on the potential threat to Western ways of life posed by Islamic forces. And yet, in the wake of September 11, some Islamic

countries expressed outrage at the actions of al-Qaeda and signed on to the "War on Terror" launched by Washington. Moreover, after his early reference to the need for a "crusade," Bush began to reach out to "moderate" Muslims and insist that it was not all followers of Islam, just particular sorts of extremists, whom the West should fear. These developments undermined the notion that there was an unbridgeable divide between 'civilizations' destined to 'clash', much in the same way that Japan's role in the fight against the Boxers undermined the notion that all 'Orientals' were to be feared.

Ironically, then, the crises of 1899-1901 and 2001 ended up increasing fears within the West of certain kinds of 'others', while simultaneously suggesting that there were problems with crude categorization schemes that placed all members of a racial or religious group into a single box marked 'threatening'. It is too soon to tell how the current Western discourse on Islam, with its concern with differentiating sharply between "moderates" and "extremists", and "radical" versus "secular" Muslim countries, will develop. But history suggests that dividing lines as now drawn and categories as now constituted will probably shift over time. After all, the bogeyman role within the Western imagination once played by China's Boxers – that is, as the personification of the Yellow Peril at its most savage – would be played by Japanese troops during the era of World War II (after which, of course, it was the Chinese "blue ants" fighting against the Western troops in the Korean War that were cast in that role again.)

The varied fates of regimes

Another area where there are obvious differences but also some similarities worth mentioning relates to the fate of the Qing in 1900-

1901 and contemporary governments that have been tied to al-Qaeda – albeit in the case of Iraq via questionable chains of argument. It may seem, at first glance, that all that needs to be noted here is a contrast. The Qing Dynasty continued to rule China for another eleven years after the Boxer siege of Beijing was lifted, even though the regime had rashly decided to support the insurgents in a last-ditch effort to gain back the ground it had lost to foreigners under various unequal treaties. Within several months of the collapse of the World Trade Center, by contrast, the Taliban was overthrown and a new government was in power in Afghanistan. Moreover, still unproven assertions that Saddam Hussein had ties to the September 11 terror attacks were used by Washington to help justify the 2003 military campaign that toppled his regime.

This contrast is important, but if we look into the issue more closely, we find some common ground – or, at least, gain a better appreciation of how easily the two crises might have come to more similar conclusions. One thing to keep in mind is that some high-ranking Qing officials accused of lending support to the insurrection were executed during the occupation. Another is that when the siege of the Beijing legations was first lifted, the leaders of the Qing ruling family, including the elderly Empress Dowager Ci Xi, who was generally seen as the main power behind the throne, were driven into exile.

This latter point is particularly significant, since it was initially unclear whether the dynasty would, in fact, continue to rule. The foreign powers discussed various plans for China's future, which they assumed it was their rightful place to design – much as some U.S. policy-makers have taken it for granted that Washington should be able to design blueprints for what is to come in Afghanistan and

Iraq, albeit with input from carefully chosen local actors. If there had been a competitor to the dynasty waiting in the wings, the powers would certainly have considered supporting that group. Unlike the situation in Afghanistan, however, there was no civil war in progress, and hence no clear alternative to bringing back the Qing.

It is also worth keeping in mind that the ruling family's return to Beijing came at a significant price. The dynasty had to apologize to Germany and Japan for the deaths of officials from those lands caused by the Boxers. In addition, as noted above, the regime had to agree to pay a large indemnity to all of the countries that had lost nationals or property during the insurrection. To ease the return of the Qing, moreover, all parties agreed to a useful fiction: that the Boxers had been 'rebels' from start to finish, suggesting that they posed a threat not just to Chinese Christians and foreigners but also to the Qing. The dynasty still had to take some responsibility for the Boxers, though, because the damage that these 'rebels' had done had been done on the imperial family's watch – and because of the pro-Boxer stance taken by the dozen or so executed officials, who became scapegoats of a sort. More generally, part of the price of continued rule was that the Qing had to convey to the world a sense that it was no longer the same regime that it had been before the siege took place, that it had seen the error of its ways, and that reformist elements within the dynasty would henceforth have more influence.

Among the many things that the Qing had to accept without complaint, as part of its effort to show that it had changed, was the fact that foreign armies, in a symbolic demonstration of domination of Beijing and an effort to teach a humbling 'lesson' to the dynasty, had marched through the sacred space of the Forbidden City. Another thing the dynasty had to accept in order to retain the throne

was that valuable national treasures looted during the occupation would not be returned.

Is it possible to imagine a scenario under which a contemporary regime could similarly overcome, at a price, the stigma of close links to terrorists, shed its pariah status, and be reintegrated into the international community? The short answer is yes. This is true even though this was not what happened with the Taliban in late 2001 nor what happened with Saddam Hussein in 2003, and even though we are supposedly living in an era when deals with supporters of terrorists will not be struck. To this day, of course, when there are compelling enough strategic or pragmatic reasons to do so, such deals are routinely struck with those who held positions of power within regimes that supported terrorists; not even all one-time Taliban officials are considered necessarily unfit for future positions of authority. And there are contemporary examples of leaders of countries who are taken back into the international fold after a period of being considered head of a rogue state. Consider, as just one example, the Libyan case, which has many parallels with that of the Qing. Recently, there have been moves to allow Qaddafi to reclaim his status as a legitimate leader, as opposed to an ally of terrorists, thanks to his willingness to accept responsibility for Lockerbie, an act of contrition equivalent in some ways to the Empress Dowager's acceptance of partial blame for the Boxers.[13]

After the invasions – worries and precedents

The strongest parallels between the Chinese Crisis of 1899-1901 and the cycle of violence that began with September 11, however, seem to me not to relate to the fate of regimes, nor to similarities between

what the Boxers and al-Qaeda did, nor to similarities in the way people around the world thought about those acts. Rather, they relate to the behavior of foreign forces of occupation. And it is here, I think, that we will find the lessons for the future most worth taking to heart. This at least is how it appears right now, as I write this in the summer of 2004, when headlines filled with details of terrorist acts perpetrated by al-Qaeda have given way to revelations of the torture by Americans of prisoners in Iraq (which have gotten a great deal of attention) and Afghanistan (where evidence of a similar pattern of abuse has also started to come to light).[14] This parallels the shift between the spring of 1900, when the only acts of violence committed in China that Western newspapers described were those perpetrated by the Boxers, and later stages of the Boxer Crisis, when these same pages were equally filled with horror stories about the brutal mistreatment of Chinese by foreign troops.[15]

One thing that brought this parallel home to me was a recent issue of *The Nation* (a progressive magazine which, incidentally, ran some of the most powerful indictments of the behavior of foreign troops in China in late 1900 and 1901[16].) It contained an essay, titled 'Conditions of Atrocity', written by Robert Jay Lifton to express his outrage over recent events in Iraq's prisons. Lifton claimed that these abuses brought to his mind disturbing World War II and Vietnam analogies, but much that he says about the ease with which ordinary people can commit terrible deeds in certain kinds of settings could apply equally well to China at the turn of the twentieth century. This is the case, for example, with his claim that "a counter-insurgency war in a hostile setting, especially when driven by profound ideological distortions, is particularly prone to sustained atrocity – all the more so when it becomes an occupa-

tion." "Grotesque improvisations" on the usual brutal scripts of warfare are especially likely, according to Lifton, when there is an "apocalyptic" aspect to the rhetoric justifying a confrontation, since this helps dehumanize the enemy. He sees such rhetoric as accompanying the "War on Terror" of today; it definitely accompanied the campaign against the Boxers.

Powerful evidence of the prevalence of this rhetoric and the excesses to which it led in 1900 and 1901 is provided by James Hevia in his new book, *English Lessons: The Pedagogy of Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century China*[17]. That publication – and particularly the chapter on the aftermath of the lifting of the siege, titled 'A Reign of Terror: Punishment and Retribution in Beijing and Environs' – gives a powerful sense of the apocalyptic rhetoric of the time, the mechanisms by which foreigners in China came to view the Chinese as less than human, and the range of abuses that took place. Hevia cites a contemporary missionary account that refers to the Boxers as having precipitated an "awful catastrophe that cast its shadow over the whole world," and required an extraordinary response. Hevia also quotes a contemporary newspaper report that describes the invaders' scramble for plunder as a "carnival of loot", as well as a report by a military commander on the scene that divided the plundering techniques of different nationals into separate categories, from the "crude" Russians to the "thorough" Americans. And he details what Henry Savage Landor in 1901 called a "disgusting bit of cruelty," during which a suspected Boxer spy was first kicked by some Americans, then shot in the head by a French soldier and "stomped" on by a Japanese one. Hevia also includes the following comment by an American general on the scene: "It is safe to say that where one real Boxer has been killed since the capture of Pekin, fifty

harmless coolies or laborers on the farms, including not a few women and children, have been slain."

Hevia is doubtless right to stress that, though troops from different countries behaved in distinctive ways at times, nationals of every land commited atrocities in the suppression of the Boxers.[18] This does not undermine, however, journalists' claim at the time that some groups of soldiers committed a disproportionate share of atrocities. And a recent specialized study of one such group – the German troops involved in the invasion – provides details that illustrate with great clarity the applicability to the Boxer Crisis of Lifton's recent statements about the prevalence of atrocities in "environments where sanctioned brutality becomes the norm" thanks to the routine use of a harsh rhetoric of dehumanization.

According to the author of this new study, Sabine Dabringhaus, even though the conflict in China was conducted "with extreme ferocity" by all those involved, Chinese and foreign alike, by 1901 German actions had justly become the subject of special criticism. She cites, for example, the *Japan Daily Mail*'s 1901 accusation that "the Germans have been equaled by none for unrelenting mercilessness from first to last". To explain this unusual brutality she cites a mixture of causes, including the fact that the Boxers had slain a German official and the fact that the German military was competing for "prestige" with other foreign forces. Most of all, though, she attributes the ruthlessness of German soldiers to a preexisting disdain for the 'yellow race' that had been taken to new heights by the leaders and opinion-makers of the day, whose overheated rhetoric "blamed the Chinese for 'crimes unparalleled in the history of mankind'" and stressed the danger that "Asiatic hordes" posed to Western civilization. She quotes the leader of the German

forces in China as insisting that 'one can only command the respect of the Asian through force and its ruthless application,' and argues that, in general, commanding officers dismissed the need to practice 'outdated clemency' toward the 'yellow race,'' while ordinary soldiers described Chinese as 'animals' or as having the 'souls of dogs.'"[19]

Looking forward – the Boxer Crisis as cautionary tale

In the short run, the actions taken by international forces at the turn of the two centuries had very different endings. As I write this, al-Qaeda remains active, the Taliban has (cross fingers) been toppled and Saddam Hussein's regime has fallen, while by 1901 the Boxers had been vanquished, never again to pose a threat to Chinese Christians or foreigners, and the Qing was back in power (albeit not for long). This does not mean, however, that the aftermath of the Boxer Crisis has nothing to offer when it comes to thinking about what the future may hold. If, in fact, there is anything worth learning from revisiting the events of 1899-1901, it may be the importance of avoiding certain kinds of mistakes that were made after the immediate threat was gone.

It is often said that the Boxer Crisis poisoned relations between China and the West for decades. This is true. But it is important to note that the poisoning did not result simply from what actually happened between 1899 and 1901, a time when, as Dabringhaus puts it, "extreme ferocity" characterized the behavior first of the Boxers and then of some of the foreign soldiers who arrived to 'restore order' to China. It also resulted from the unwillingness, again on all sides, fully to come to terms with what had happened. The Qing

partially skirted the issue of responsibility through the fiction that the Boxers had been "rebels" as opposed to loyalists. And the foreign powers were not called upon to apologize for anything – not even for ignoring the Hague Conventions when dealing with the Chinese.

It is true that, at the time, there were some foreigners, including famous ones such as Mark Twain, who criticized specific aspects of the occupation, including the prevalence of a rhetoric that emphasized revenge and often lapsed into treating all Chinese (other than the small percentage who were Christians) as subhuman beings.[20] This did not, however, lead to a full accounting of the crimes committed by foreigners in China – crimes that, when acknowledged, were often dismissed as isolated acts of savagery by members of particular nationalities as opposed to anything systemic.[21] This failure to deal directly with the misdeeds of foreigners, both in the Boxer Protocol itself and in subsequent diplomatic exchanges, played a crucial part in giving the crisis such a long and troubling afterlife in China. It did not help, moreover, that foreigners based in China would often invoke the specter of "Boxerism" when trying to discredit efforts to overturn the system of special privileges enshrined in the unequal treaties – even when these efforts took the form of non-violent protests as opposed to physical assaults.

There are worrisome parallels here to think about for the present. The case of the Boxer Crisis draws attention to the importance of treating those who commit crimes against humanity in current conflicts as equally culpable, no matter whose side they are on. It also suggests that it can become all too easy to use recent horrors as an excuse to smear by association anyone who calls for an end to specific forms of injustice – even if they eschew violence.

A final cautionary note has to do with what two countries then

newcomers to the game of empire – Germany and Japan – may have learned from the Boxer Crisis. There is no way to know what impact, if any, seeing foreign soldiers behave savagely in 1900 and 1901 without being censured by the international community had on German and Japanese military strategists of the day. Isn't it at least possible, though, that this experience played some part in pushing Germany and Japan onto the brutal paths that each would take during the second quarter of the 1900s?

Perhaps the most important general lesson that the last stages of the Boxer Crisis have to offer in this new era of all-out battles to 'save civilization' is that it is always dangerous to treat a situation as so extraordinary that one can place off to one side even the rules of war (whether in the form of the Hague Conventions of the 1800s or the Geneva Convention of the 1900s) – and that it is always dangerous to fall into the trap of thinking that not all people deserve to be treated as equally human.[22] When these things are done, it always serves to open a Pandora's box of the most dangerous kind.

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1 I am very grateful for the comments on earlier versions of this essay provided by Paul Cohen, Caroline Reeves, Henrietta Harrison, Ken Pomeranz, and Greg Grandin, though none of them should be held responsible for any of the views expressed below.

2 Throughout this essay, I rely heavily on two prize-winning studies of the Boxers: Paul A. Cohen, *History in Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); and Joseph W. Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987). Also of great value have been two short essays published to mark the centenary of the Boxer siege of Beijing: Robert Bickers, 'Chinese Burns: Britain in China 1842-1900', *History Today*, August 2000, pp. 10-17, and Henrietta Harrison, 'Justice on Behalf of Heaven', *History Today*, September 2000, pp. 44-51. For international responses to the Boxer Crisis and the actions of foreign troops in China, I have relied upon the general narrative provided in Diana Preston, *The Boxer Rebellion: The Dramatic Story of China's War on Foreigners that Shook the World in the Summer of 1900* (New York: Walker Books, 2000); the important extended discussion of looting and atrocities in James L. Hevia, *English Lessons: The*

Pedagogy of Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century China (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), pp. 186-314 and passim; and a fascinating essay by Sabine Dabringhaus, 'An Army on Vacation? The German War in China, 1900-1901', in Manfred F. Boemeke et al., eds., *Anticipating Total War: The German and American Experiences, 1871-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 459-476.

3 For details on that workshop, '1900: The Boxers, China, and the World', see Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, 'A Boxer Rebellion for Global Times', *Australian Financial Review*, July 13, 2001. Or go to the following website, http://mail.bris.ac.uk/~hirab/1900.html, which is devoted to the workshop and contains abstracts of the papers presented, a link to my *Australian Financial Review* essay, and other relevant materials. I remain grateful to the conference organizers, since attending the gathering greatly enriched my understanding of the Boxer Crisis, and much that I say below is influenced by things that I learned from other participants in the workshop, some of whom (Bickers, Cohen, Harrison, and Hevia) are the authors of works cited above.

4 This title was given to the version that was posted on the *History News Network* site on September 5, 2001; for the full-text, see http://hnn.us/articles/238.html.

5 The Pope made an effort to redress one of these grievances late in 2002, when he issued a statement expressing regret for the linkages between missionary activities and transgressions against Chinese national sovereignty in pre-revolutionary times.

6 For the place of the Boxers in Chinese historical memory and in Nationalist and Communist narratives, see Cohen, *History in Three Keys*, and Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, 'Civilization' and its Discontents: The Boxers and Luddites as Heroes and Villains', *Theory and Society*, vol. 16 (1987), pp. 675-707.

7 For 1999 Boxer analogies, see 'China Stokes Anti-U.S. Fires, Recalling Blunders of the Past', *USA Today*, May 11, 1999, p. 14A. Tensions rose again – and some comparisons to Boxer era events once more flew – in April of 2001, when the "spy plane" incident led to the death of a PRC pilot and the temporary detention on Hainan Island of U.S. military personnel. See, for example, A.C. Grayling, 'The Hostile Panda; The Spy Plane Drama Shows China Wants to be a Superpower. It Should be Stopped', *The Guardian*, April 12, 2001, and John Gittings, 'China Will Let US 'Inspect' Spy Plane; Gesture Will Allow Talks on 'Compensation' to Begin', *The Guardian*, April 30, 2001. The Gittings piece, incidentally, refers to talk in China of the upcoming centenary of the Boxer Protocol.

8 There were many things that made it attractive for Jiang to side with Bush initially. One immediate benefit was that Washington stopped being as censorious of Chinese suppression of certain Muslim groups within the PRC, which prior to September 11 the U.S. had treated as fighters for "independence", but after that point reclassified as supporters of terrorism. On the other hand, China has from an early point had reasons to be concerned about the Bush administration's foreign policy – which helps explain Beijing's disapproval of the invasion of Iraq. One concern is that U.S. actions will lead to anarchy in regions that China needs to be relatively stable if it is to have the steady flow of oil required for its development strategy; another concern (also felt by many European critics) is the administration's fondness for a

clumsy form of unilateral behavior, which can seem disrespectful toward and downplays the importance of allies.

9 Here, to give a sense of the kind of language used to describe the Boxer Uprising is the headline to a story that ran in the *New York Times* on April 15, 1900 (page 21): 'NORTH CHINA TERRORIZED: Bands Organized to Destroy the Homes of Christian Converts: Work of Pillage and Murder by Boxers – Would Drive Out Foreigners – Suspicion of Government Connivance.' (Accessed online, via *ProQuest Historical Newspapers*.)

10 Translation by Joseph W. Esherick; quoted in his book, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, pp. 299-300.

11 See, for example, the comments on China in the "Review of the Month" section of the American periodical, *Gunton's Magazine*, August, 1900, pp. 97-102, which says that the Boxer Crisis might prove the "gravest" that "Christendom has faced since the Moorish invasion of Europe"; that one possible outcome could be the "intrusion into Europe of Mongolian hordes striving to repeat the mighty crusades of Genghis Khan"; and warns of the potential of an apocalyptic struggle between "western civilization and oriental barbarism."

12 Samuel P. Huntington *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (NY: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

13 For a short summary of the Libyan situation, see Saul Hudson and Arshad Mohammed, 'Powell says no longer see Libya terrorism link', *Reuters* dispatch, April 26, 2004 (http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/N26434714.htm).

14 On abuses committed by Coalition forces in Afghanistan, see Duncan Campbell and Suzanne Goldernberg, 'Inside America's Secret Afghan Gulag', the *Guardian*, June 23, 2004 (http://www.guardian.co.uk/afghanistan/story/0,1284,1245055,00.html).

15 Compare, for example, the April 15, 1900, *New York Times* story mentioned in an earlier note, with the August 2, 1900, report in the same newspaper (accessed via *ProQuest Historical Newnspapers*) that came with the headline: 'CHINESE WOUNDED AND KILLED: German Lieutenant Explains That It Is Impossible to Aid Them or to Take Prisoners.' A section from that report reads as follows: "'We did not take prisoners,' said Lieut. Kron. "So far as the capture of prisoners is concerned, that was an impossibility, as the Chinese are not civilized enough for that kind of warfare.'"

16 See, for example, 'Enemies of Civilization', *The Nation*, August 16, 1900, pp. 125-6. Here is one of the more gruesome parts of that report: "The wife of an American, a Commissioner of Customs at Tientsin, says she escaped slaughter by the Boxers only to witness the most horrible excesses on the part of the Russian troops. These advance agents of civilization tortured and murdered Chinese mothers with babes in their arms, and tossed these helpless babies from bayonet to bayonet."

17 James L. Hevia *English Lessons: The Pedagogy of Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century China* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003).

18 Ibid, pp. 195-240.

19 Sabrine Dabringhaus 'An Army on Vacation: The German War in China, 1900-1901', in

Anticipating Total War: the German and American Experiences, 1871-1914, ed. Manfred F. Boemeke et al. (Cambridge University Press, 1999), especially pp. 465-469.

20 On Twain's response, see Wasserstrom, 'Civilization' and Its Discontents', pp. 684 and 703, note 37. Works by Japanese journalists of the time who took stances similar to those of Twain – who once referred to the Boxers as China's "traduced patriots" – are discussed in *Ch'ing I Pao [Qing Yi Bao]*, viii, (1901), pp. 811-814 and 4188-4194. See also, for a sense of the tone of contemporary debates on apportioning blame for recent violence, ' 'Civilization' of China', *New York Times*, January 27, 1901, p. 17 – accessed via the *ProQuest Historical Newspapers* database. Criticisms of foreign behavior, of course, had to vie for public attention with many publications that focused exclusively on the violence perpetrated by the Boxers. See, for example, Harold Cleveland, *Massacres of Christians by Heathen Chinese and Horrors of the Boxers* (Philadelphia: National, 1900).

21 It is worth noting that racial and national stereotypes about groups other than Chinese played a role in this discourse, with atrocities committed by Russian troops, for example, sometimes being seen by Europeans and Americans as stemming from the special characteristics of subjects of the Czar.

22 For a recent article claiming that a willingness to limit the applicability of the Geneva Convention to the "War on Terror" was shown by the U.S. President himself, see Laura Sullivan and David L. Greene, 'Bush sanctioned Geneva exception – Taliban, al-Qaida prisoners referred to in 2002 memo' *Baltimore Sun,* June 23, 2004, accessed online on http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/nationworld/.

2. Italy's Far Right and the Red Brigades

Richard Drake

Between 1970 and 1985 Italy experienced the most severe outbreak of terrorism in the industrialized world. Robberies, kidnappings, kneecappings, assassinations and bombings traumatized the country during those years. Some 1,200 people died in the violence; hundreds more were wounded. In a 1984 poll, Italians identified terrorism as the most significant event in the country's history since its founding in 1860. They thought that the terrorists of the 1970s and '80s eclipsed even Garibaldi and Mussolini in importance.[1] History never repeats itself precisely, but Italy's agonizing experience with terrorism may shed light on our struggle with terrorists today.

Masons and Marxists

Italy's *anni di piombo* or 'age of lead' began on 12 December 1969, when terrorists set off a bomb inside a bank in Milan's Piazza

Fontana. Seventeen people died and nearly a hundred were injured in this attack. Numerous other bombings of the same type occurred during the next fifteen years. The worst of them was the 2 August 1980 Bologna train station explosion, which claimed eighty-five lives and left two hundred wounded.

Judges investigating these bombings have declared that responsibility for them lay with fanatics from the fringes of Italy's highly variegated right-wing culture. These judicial findings, along with revelations in diverse memoirs by neo-fascist activists, point to Julius Evola – a Roman aristocrat who became a Dadaist after World War I and then a political philosopher – as the intellectual guru of the extreme right. Influential books of his such as *Gli uomini e le rovine* ('Men and Ruins,' 1953) and *Cavalcare la tigre* ('To Ride the Tiger', 1961) bear a striking similarity in tone if not in intellectual inspiration to the anti-Western polemics of the Ayatollah Khomeini and Osama bin Laden.[2]

According to Evola, the West had become caught in a vortex of spirit-quenching decadence, epitomized by the consumer society of the United States. The only hope for Europeans, he professed, lay in a complete rejection of the American model. Well to the right of the Movimento Sociale Italiano, the official neo-fascist party of the period, the *evoliani* were extremely diverse in political outlook and temperament. It would be completely mistaken to generalize about them, or to claim that Evola's ideas could only be understood as a justification for terrorism. Nevertheless, some of the *evoliani* did interpret the master's books as a call for the violent overthrow of Italy's American-dominated status quo. Controversy over the bombings continues to rage in Italy. The Piazza Fontana case, for example, remains legally unsettled after eight trials spread over thirty-four years, but about its radical right-wing provenance the most experienced investigators assert that there can be no dispute.

Radical neo-fascists did not act alone. They received support from the criminal underworld, deviant elements in the secret services, and various conspiratorial groups, such as the Masonic Propaganda 2. Their '*tanto peggio tanto meglio*' ('the worse things are the better they are') strategy was designed to create confusion and to bring about demands for an authoritarian regime.

Meanwhile, on the extreme left the bombings helped to produce the climate that brought the Marxist-Leninist Red Brigades to worldwide notoriety. Italy had the largest communist party in Western Europe, the Partito Comunista Italiano (PCI), which in 1976 received more than one-third of the national vote, barely behind the dominant Christian Democrats. Beyond the fringes of the PCI, communist intellectuals played the same role for the extreme left that Evola did for the extreme right. The most famous of these intellectuals, Toni Negri, called for a Marxist-Leninist revolution. His *La fabbrica della strategia*: *33 lezioni su Lenin* (The Making of the Strategy: 33 Lessons on Lenin) of 1976 and *Il dominio e il sabotaggio: sul metodo marxista della trasformazione sociale* (Domination and Sabotage: On the Marxist Method of Social Transformation) of 1978 provided intellectual inspiration and guidance for a generation of Marxist radicals. He described modern capitalism as an unparalleled scourge of the human race and prescribed standard Marxist-Leninist methods of revolution as the only way to rid the world of it. A star academic at the University of Padua, he played a leading role in the revolutionary Potere Operaio (Worker Power) organization, through which many activists would pass on their way to membership in full-blown terrorist organizations. His involvement in the violent passions of the period is therefore much more direct than that of Evola, who died in 1974.[3]

The far left's terror campaign – mostly consisting of shootings and kidnappings rather than bombings – began soon after that of the right, amid factory violence, student protest and fears of a far-right coup. A small group of communist radicals led by Renato Curcio, Mara Cagol, and Alberto Franceschini founded the Red Brigades in 1970, largely in response to the political situation created by the Piazza Fontana bombing of the previous year. Hoping to forestall the neo-fascists with a Marxist-Leninist revolution, they launched a campaign which from the beginning included kidnappings and car bombings, but initially caused no deaths or injuries. In 1974, however, the Red Brigades killed two people. Over the next ten years they murdered or maimed with their trademark kneecappings many more politicians, policemen, military officers, university professors, journalists, and union officials. Though even at their peak the Red Brigades only had about three hundred active members, in the early years they enjoyed the support and even adulation of thousands in the amorphous 'movement' on the extra-parliamentary left, which unlike the PCI still dreamed of Marxist revolution, and admired the Red Brigades' coherence and rigor.

The Red Brigades committed their most spectacular crime on March 16, 1978 when they kidnapped and then fifty-five days later murdered Aldo Moro, the Christian Democrat leader and former prime minister.[4] At that point, the state finally brought its full power to bear against the Red Brigades. At the same time, the Moro kidnapping's failure to provoke a decisive confrontation between the movement and the Christian Democratic establishment sent the Red Brigades into crisis, resulting in defections and bitter factional disputes.

Despite numerous arrests and deaths in their own ranks, the Red Brigades continued their terror campaign. In 1979, 2,513 separate

terrorist attacks occurred in Italy, the national record for a single year. Though under growing pressure from the police, the Red Brigades still set the pace for Italy's many other left-wing terrorist groups, such as Front Line and the Fighting Communist Front. Personality clashes and tactical splits within the Red Brigades actually resulted in an upsurge of violence, as each faction sought to establish supremacy.

In 1982 the arrest of Giovanni Senzani – a respected professor of criminology at the Universities of Florence and California, Berkeley – underlined the ongoing Red Brigade menace. Searching Senzani's apartment, police found plans for a large-scale attack on the Christian Democrats' next council meeting, at which the Red Brigades hoped to kill at least a hundred policemen and party delegates. Additional plans for kidnappings and a wave of attacks on police headquarters and military barracks also were discovered.

The nearly simultaneous rescue of General James Lee Dozier, deputy chief of staff for logistics and administration at NATO's headquarters in Southern Europe, from his Red Brigade kidnappers further accelerated the decline that had begun in the aftermath of the Moro murder. An informer revealed the address of the apartment in Padua where the Red Brigades held Dozier prisoner. Thereafter many other terrorists came forward, and their testimony led to a series of successful police raids on Red Brigade hideouts and to numerous arrests. Red Brigadists remained in the field, but lost their coherence and élan. Assassinations still occurred sporadically until 1988, but thereafter little was heard of the group until 1999, when radicals claiming the Red Brigade name and ideology assassinated a government advisor on labour reform. They killed a second economist doing similar work in 2002. The killings sparked a still

ongoing debate over whether those responsible are genuine Red Brigadists, or part of a new organization seeking to resurrect the revolutionary mystique of the past.

Numerous memoirs and voluminous trial testimony by former terrorists have furnished abundant details about the aims, tactics and membership of the Red Brigades, as well as the socioeconomic context in which the group took hold. Patrizio Peci, one of the most notorious Red Brigade killers, asserts in *Io l'infame* ('I the Infamous One', 1983) that he and his colleagues tried to follow as precisely as possible in the footsteps of Lenin, citing in particular his slogan "Strike one to educate a hundred" as the essence of their campaign.[5] Unlike Osama bin Laden and other Islamic terrorists of today, it was never the Red Brigades' intention to kill large numbers on their ascent to power, for there was no need to do so if they chose the 'one' victim with Leninist precision. Red Brigade founder Alberto Franceschini similarly stressed the importance of Marxism-Leninism, declaring in his memoirs that he and his colleagues were "drug addicts of a particular type, of ideology. A murderous drug, worse than heroin."[6]

The Dante scholar turned terrorist, Enrico Fenzi, explained that left-wing terrorism in Italy could only be understood in the context of the wider social and political events of the '60s.[7] In Italy, violent factory strikes and student demonstrations defined the decade: workers erupted over low wages and poor factory conditions; students over a congested and dysfunctional university system. US failures in Vietnam and surging violence in America's black ghettoes encouraged Italian radicals to believe that world revolution might be in the offing. Certainly Fenzi so believed when he joined the Red Brigades and went underground. Aldo Moro's killer, Mario Moretti,

confirms Fenzi's observations, declaring that the Red Brigades could never have lasted as long as they did without the support and sympathy of the extra-parliamentary movement.[8]

The many trials in the Moro murder case produced uniform testimony in support of the thesis that the Red Brigades arose and operated as a Marxist-Leninist sect in opposition not only to the Christian Democrats but also to the increasingly moderate PCI. Quoting Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Negri, they spoke about their dreams of a Marxist revolution. The trials also revealed that the Red Brigades recruited members and attracted supporters from every level of society. On the basis of the judicial documents, it appears that they financed themselves through robberies, though in *The Sword and the Shield* Christopher Andrew and the Russian turncoat Vasili Mitrokhin present evidence that the Czechoslovak StB supported the Red Brigades.[9] A special committee of parliament is still investigating the reliability of this claim.

How the Italians did it

The defeat of both far-right and far-left terrorism gives Italy high standing amongst countries faced with similar challenges. How did the Italians do it? The answer to this question may make a contribution to the eternal debate over whether it is best to fight terrorism with tougher security measure or by political means.

The gravity of Italy's crisis can best be understood in the light of special measures passed soon after Moro's kidnapping by a new national unity government under the Christian Democrats' Giulio Andreotti. The government gave Carabiniere General Carlo Alberto Dalla Chiesa virtually unlimited power as chief of anti-terrorist

operations; military men took over traditionally civilian offices such as regional prefectures; laws went into effect allowing imprisonment on issue of a magistrate's warrant alone and interrogation of suspects without the presence of a lawyer; search and seizure powers were greatly extended; the imposition of life sentences, the maximum penalty in Italy, became much more common.

The most controversial of these special measures was a law encouraging terrorists to 'repent'. Designed to elicit testimony against terrorists still in the field, it raised a host of constitutional issues about hearsay evidence and special sentencing provisions for defendants who turned state's evidence. Amidst controversy that continues to this day, even those convicted of multiple homicides often served only three or four years once 'discounts' earned by cooperating with authorities was taken into account. As a practical measure, though, the law resulted in the arrest of dozens of terrorists. Later some Mafia *pentiti* would receive similar benefits amidst the same kind of controversy.

The Italian case vividly illustrates the advantages that governments enjoy when terrorists, though able to muster significant support on the extremes, lack a satisfactory connection with society as a whole. Although neither extreme ever managed to generate mainstream support, the cause of the extreme right was particularly hopeless as a political project. People for the most part thought of the terror bombers as freaks of inhumanity; beyond their own turbid and utterly marginalized precincts, they had no standing at all. The Red Brigades had the allegiance of the radical left – or at least large strata of it – for a while, but as the tide of battle turned against them people within and around the organization deserted. The greatest advantage that the Italian government had in its campaign

against terrorism was the increasingly obvious inability of the extremists to reach beyond relatively limited segments of the population. Italy had a large and vocal extreme left-wing culture, but even the Italian Communist party thought that the Red Brigades were hopelessly delusional fanatics with absolutely nothing sensible or even remotely sane to offer society. Everyone to the right of the PCI – i.e. the vast majority of the population – concurred with this assessment.

The Italian example must therefore be counted as an exhibit for the proponents of the military over the political strategy in defeating terrorism. The Italians fought the terrorists by unleashing the *Carabinieri* and by related displays of state power, in much the same way that the United States government fought the Weather Underground – the approximate American counterpart to the Red Brigades – with the FBI's Squad 47 in the 1970s. Some terrorist challenges can be dealt with effectively through force alone.

The Red Brigades and Islamic radicalism

In considering the extent to which anti-terrorism strategies used in Italy during its 'age of lead' might be useful against the Islamic terrorism menacing us today, we might begin by observing an important characteristic they share.

Both movements must be understood against a deep historical background of ideological extremism and economic stress. The modern Italian revolutionary tradition originated in the late nineteenth century, when the pioneering Marxist revolutionaries appeared on the scene, for the most part in the backward and depressed city of Naples. Only after World War I, under Antonio

Gramsci, did the movement shift to Turin. Naples also figured prominently in the history of fascism. The Neapolitan historian and political theorist Pasquale Turiello, who pointed to imperial Rome as a model for the present, stands out among the precursors of Mussolini and Evola.[10] Italy, a land of exalted ideals and cultural accomplishment but suffering from a poor distribution of land and resources for the people since its unification in 1860, has been one of the foremost breeding grounds of extremist politics in Western Europe. The existence of long-standing radical cultures on the left and right, their substantial abandonment for increasingly moderate reformist policies by the official communist and neo-fascist parties, and a social context of violence triggered simultaneously by protests against the Vietnam War and conditions in Italian factories and higher education provided radical groups with exceptional opportunities. Cultural factors, it should be noted, were at least as important as economics.

Much poorer and more backward than even 1960s Italy, Islamic societies have historically provided an even wider field of opportunity for extremists, who have further benefited from the unusually strong emotional fervor that their religion generates. Though precedents for today's radical Islamism can be found as far back as the thirteenth century, in his *The Holy Wars: The Rise of Islamic Fundamentalism* (1989) Dilip Hiro traces the origins of modern movement back to 1924, when Turkey's secular republican forces under Mustapha Kemal Attaturk abolished the caliphate. Outraged traditionalists perceived the Kemalist revolt as a modernizing movement for the social and intellectual emancipation of Muslims everywhere. In 1928 an Egyptian teacher, Hassan al-Banna (1906-1949), founded the Muslim Brotherhood as a youth club for the

perpetuation of pure Sunni Islam against the modernizing defilers. In the mid-‘30s, when Arabs launched an armed uprising in Palestine against the British mandate and Zionist colonization, the Muslim Brotherhood transformed itself into a political organization. Aimed at liberating the Islamic homeland from Western political control and cultural influence, the Brotherhood blazed the trail for all subsequent radical Islamic organizations.

In an action typical of the terror and counter-terror that engulfed Egypt mid-century, secret service agents of the Egyptian government killed al-Banna in 1949. Nonetheless, radical Islam never lacked for charismatic standard bearers. Inspired by al-Banna, Sayyid Abu'l-A'la Mawdudi (1903-1979) created the Jama'at al-Islami party in Lahore, Pakistan, in 1941, as a revolutionary vehicle for the Islamization of the entire world. He in turn inspired Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966), the next great figure in the Brotherhood. In *Milestones* (1964), Qutb condemned Western modernity as a state of pagan disregard for Islamic law and the world's greatest tragedy. He preached that a revolutionary vanguard would have to set an anti-Western insurrection in motion. Hanged by the government of Gamal Abdul Nasser in 1966, he became one of radical Islam's foremost martyrs. His ideas continue to provide the movement with its ideological core.

One of Qutb's most important ideas concerned the necessity of assassinating corrupt, lawless rulers. Such an individual, by his standards, was Anwar Sadat, whose support of the American-sponsored peace plan for the Middle East enshrined in the Camp David Accords of 1978 produced shock and outrage within the Muslim Brotherhood. Revival movements swept the Islamic world, and dozens of even more extreme groups emerged. One, the Al Jihad

Organization, declared a *fatwa* on Sadat, and he was killed at a military parade in Cairo on 6 October 1981. Abdul Salam Faraj (1952-1982), Al Jihad's chief theoretician, explained in *Jihad: The Absent Precept* that every Muslim is obliged by his faith to wage holy war for the complete realization of Islam in the world against the West. Ayman al-Zawahiri, today second in command to Osama bin Laden in al Qaeda, was once a member of Faraj's group.

The current violence in Iraq underscores the struggle for power within Islam between Sunni and Shia elements. By overthrowing Saddam Hussein's dictatorship, the United States and its coalition partners have upset the traditional Sunni-dominated balance of power in Iraq. Militant Sunni groups such as al-Qaeda view the occupation as a plot of joint American and Shia authorship. The almost daily terrorist bombings and assassinations in that country are directed against both of these targets.[11]

Despite the bitter doctrinal feuds between the Sunnis and the Shia, the occupation of Iraq has united elements of both groups there around the theme of anti-Americanism. On this theme little difference exists between the avatars of Sunni militancy and the foremost Shia intellectual figure of the twentieth century, Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini. His ideas have inspired a host of acolytes all over the Islamic world, including the radical Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, who has joined forces with Sunni opponents of the occupation in Iraq. Both groups view the West as a deadly bacillus. Khomeini's *Islam and Revolution I*, a collection of his speeches and sermons since 1941, is a scream of anguish at the prospect of encroaching Westernization. He thought that Islamic morality alone could save the world from the miasmic swamp of materialism, pornography, and hedonism into which humanity had been lured by the siren call

of America. The spiritual possibilities of the human race seemed to him at risk. For people inspired by such convictions, the attacks of September 11 belong in the same category of noble deeds as the Resistance movement against the Nazis in World War II. Though a follower of Wahhabism – a puritanical Sunni sect found mainly in Saudi Arabia – Osama bin Laden shares the basic assumptions of the Ayatollah Khomeini and of all the past masters of radical Islamic fundamentalism about the West as the worm of evil in the world.

Italy, too, has a long history of anti-Americanism. Evola and Negri may be regarded as contemporary prototypes of Italian intellectuals on the right and left who for very different reasons have condemned the United States. The terrorist groups encouraged by fascist and communist ideologies differ in some important ways from the Islamic religious fanatics. Islamic suicide bombers, for example, belong in a classification of their own, exemplifying a degree of fanaticism virtually missing from the Western world. Dealing with people prepared to kill themselves for a cause presents special problems outside the historical experience of Italian terrorism. Nevertheless, all terrorist groups face the same crucial problem of how to establish an effective political following. In Italy, neither the Red Brigades nor the terror bombers managed to solve this problem, but Islamic fundamentalist groups are doing so. In his *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia* (2002) the Pakistani journalist and historian Ahmed Rashid explains how.

Rashid begins by observing that poverty, injustice, hunger and deprivation are intrinsic parts of the terrorism problem. In Central Asia, GDP is one-quarter to one-third what it was in Soviet times. Unemployment stands at 80% in some areas. A massive economic downturn, plus the collapse of the region's healthcare and educa-

tional systems, have created an opening for extremist groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Hizb-ut-Tahrir. Operating in the orbit of al-Qaeda and the Taliban, these groups are proliferating because Western-backed Central Asian governments have failed to provide two fundamental necessities of life: security and, especially, jobs. Rashid claims: "Historically, socio-economic aid has proved to be the critical factor in counterinsurgency. A well-fed, well-housed, and fully employed population would not provide recruits for the IMU."[12] His argument can be extended to al-Qaeda and related groups from Morocco to the Philippines. Perceived as the effective opposition to a Western-dominated status quo intent on imperialist exploitation, the radical fundamentalists have generated support and sympathy across a broad spectrum of opinion in the Islamic world.

Rashid has explained in articles subsequent to the publication of Jihad that American policies in Afghanistan have strengthened the cause of Islamic extremism. Nearly two years after the American invasion of Afghanistan, the country suffers from worsening unemployment, a dilapidated infrastructure, hunger, and an appalling lack of security in its vast warlord-ridden hinterland and even in Kabul. In such an environment, the Taliban have inevitably made a comeback.[13] Corroborating Rashid, the anonymous author of *Imperial Hubris: Why the West Is Losing the War on Terror*, laments "the now unfolding nightmare and ultimate ignominy" of America's mission in Afghanistan. This openly conservative intelligence officer in the United States government concludes that "The reestablishment of an Islamic regime in Kabul is as close to an inevitability as exists."[14]

Rashid's thesis that the Bush administration has made the threat of Muslim extremism worse receives added support from the

president's former counter-terrorism chief, Richard A. Clarke. This longtime Republican hawk castigates Bush's war policy not for the humanitarian and democratic reasons advanced by the left, but as an ideologically motivated transgression against the code of realpolitik. Our proven mortal enemy was al-Qaeda, not Saddam, he argues. Yet the Bush administration devoted its attention and the vast bulk of America's military resources to Iraq. Like Rashid, Clarke claims that the war in Iraq caused the United States to leave its mission in Afghanistan unfinished. Worse, "our unprovoked invasion of an oil-rich Arab country" handed al-Qaeda a monumental propaganda victory.[15] Islamic peoples and much of the rest of the world besides view the war as an attempt to impose our values and will through violence. He laments that al-Qaeda has now "metastasized," while American credibility droops at an all-time low.

Rashid raises all the crucial issues at the heart of the contentious debate over how best to combat terrorism. Because of their long experience with terrorism, it is unsurprising that Israelis have been at the debate's forefront. Within that country, proponents of political and military anti-terrorism strategies have been vying with each other for a long time.

On behalf of the political solution the journalist and novelist David Grossman has explained in two important books – T*he Yellow Wind* (1988) and *Sleeping on a Wire: Conversations with Palestinians in Israel* (1992) – how the wretchedness of the Palestinians in their refugee camps has been a constant incitement to terror. Similarly, the Hebrew University philosophy professor Avishai Margalit has argued extensively that the presence in Palestinian areas of fanatical Jewish settlers helps to create an environment in which terrorism flourishes. Historian and journalist Amos Elon points to the gross

discrepancies between government services granted to Palestinians and Jews.[16] Grossman, Margalit and Elon all leave no doubt that the legitimate grievances of the Palestinian people must be addressed if there is to be any hope of ending the problem of terrorism in the Middle East. This is a point made repeatedly by Richard Clarke in *Against All Enemies*. By "paying scant attention to the Israeli-Palestinian problem," the just solution of which would do more than a hundred preemptive wars to combat the problem of terrorism in the Middle East, we have increased Muslim hatred for the United States and strengthened al-Qaeda.[17]

The Likud politician Benjamin Netanyahu counters that terrorism is a conspiracy against democracy, and can only be successfully opposed by a no-nonsense policy of political, economic, and military force. In two influential books, *Terrorism: How the West Can Win* (1986) and *Fighting Terrorism: How Democracies Can Defeat Domestic and International Terrorists* (1995), he defines terrorism as a pathology made possible by the support of sovereign states and concludes that in combating it political concessions of the kind proposed by the likes of Grossman, Margalit, and Elon are out of place. The first book purported to unveil a network of professional terrorists sponsored by the KGB. In the second, the role of the now-defunct Soviet Union is taken by an Islamic International that uses branch organizations all over the world to foment terror.

Netanyahu's ideas have been seminal for proponents of the military strategy in fighting terrorism. Since September 11 American leaders have agreed with the current Likud government under Ariel Sharon about the need for regime change both in the Palestinian Authority and in Iraq as essential prerequisites for peace in the region. In contrast, we have heard very little of a practical nature

about how to ameliorate the social and economic conditions that breed a following for terrorism. The terrorist leaders themselves are often wealthy, well-educated, and motivated purely by ideology. Without such places as the Palestinian camps of Grossman's eloquent lament, however, Osama bin Laden would be a much less appealing figure in the Islamic world than he is.

At first glance, the Italian case appears to support current Likud/US policy. A hard-line strategy of *fermezza* or 'firmness' conquered the Red Brigades, the *trattativa* or 'negotiations' party having lost the national debate during the Moro kidnapping. The government neither tried to address the root causes of terrorism nor reach any kind of understanding with the terrorists, concentrating instead on a war of attrition that the Red Brigades had no chance of winning.

A serious problem arises, however, in applying *fermezza* to the war against Islamic terrorism. To a degree reached only in the wildest fantasies of the Red Brigades and the radical neo-fascists, the Islamic extremists have established an effective political constituency for their ideals. Though its economic problems and stresses should not be minimised, in the 1970s and '80s Italy nonetheless enjoyed one of the highest standards of living in the world. Today's Islamic radicals, in contrast, operate in conditions of near-biblical calamity. Astronomical unemployment and crushing poverty have made it possible for extremists to gain a degree of support denied them in times of relative ease and prosperity. The existence of maladjusted imbeciles and crazed fanatics is a constant in history, and not only in Muslim cultures. In *What Went Wrong? The Clash Between Islam and Modernity in the Middle East* (2002), the distinguished Orientalist Bernard Lewis makes too much of contemporary Islam's supposedly

unique predisposition to dissolve into a witches' brew of murderous aberrations. The meltdowns of tsarist Russia in 1917 and Weimar Germany in 1933 perfectly illustrate how the Judeo-Christian West can 'go wrong' as well. How to quarantine such individuals as Lenin, Hitler and Osama bin Laden before they set their hooks should be an abiding concern of statecraft.

President Truman specifically referred to the lessons of recent history when in 1947 he recommended to Congress that the United States invest in the economic recovery of Europe. He thought it essential to widen as much as possible the distance between the totalitarian parties and the rest of society. To bind Europeans to the democratic status quo required a superior record of social, economic, and cultural achievement over its ideological competitors. The logic of Truman's argument, applied to the current war on terrorism, would lead to the conclusion that support for al-Qaeda will dry up only if we persuade the peoples of Islam that the movement has nothing to offer them. To be defeated, Osama bin Laden must be seen by the people of Islam in the same negative way that the Italians generally saw the Red Brigades and the neo-fascists. All the work in creating such a perception remains to be done.

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1 This Monitorskopea poll appeared in *La Repubblica* (Rome) on 8 February 1984.

2 For an analysis of Evola's ideas, see Richard Drake, "The Children of the Sun," in *The Revolutionary Mystique and Terrorism in Contemporary Italy* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), pp. 114-134.

3 For an analysis of Negri's ideas, see "7 *aprile* 1979," *ibid*., pp. 78-99.

4 Drake, *The Aldo Moro Murder Case (*Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press,1995).

5 Patrizio Peci, *Io, l'infame*, ed. by Giordano Bruno Guerri (Milan: Mondadori, 1983), p. 15.

6 Alberto Franceschini with Pier Vittorio Buffa and Franco Giustolisi, *Mara, Renato e io: storia dei fondatori delle BR* (Milan: Mondadori, 1988), p. 204. For an update of his views about the

Red Brigades, see *Che cosa sono le BR* (Milan: Bur, 2004). This book is the result of a conversation between him and a journalist for Panorama, Giovanni Fasanella.

7 In *Armi e bagagli: un diario dalle Brigate Rosse,* (Genoa: Costa & Nolan, 1987), p. 25.

8 In *Brigate Rosse: una storia italiana*, (Milan: Anabasi, 1994), p. 45.

9 Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), pp. 298-299.

10 See Pasquale Turiello, *Governo e governati in Italia*, ed. by Piero Bevilacqua (Turin: Einaudi: 1980). This book was first published in 1882.

11 Vali Nasr, "Regional Implications of Shi'a Revival in Iraq," *The Washington Quarterly*, Summer 2004.

12 Ahmed Rashid, *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia* (New York: Penguin, 2002), p. 236.

13 Rashid, 'The Betrayal of the Afghans', *The New York Review of Books*, 29 January 2004.

14 Anonymous, *Imperial Hubris: Why the West Is Losing the War on Terror* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's Inc., 2004), p. 47 and p. 58.

15 Richard A. Clarke, *Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror* (New York: Free Press, 2004), p. 246.

16 See *A Blood-Dimmed Tide: Dispatches from the Middle East*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

17 Clarke, p. 264.

3. Greece's Revolutionary Organisation November 17th

George Kassimeris

By strange coincidence, Greece's Revolutionary Organisation November 17th (17N) met its end almost exactly a year after Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda terrorists felled New York's twin towers, when the group's leader of operations, Dimitris Koufodinas, turned himself to the police, after months on the run, on September 5th 2002. The capture of Koufodinas and his group marked the demise of the last (and most stubborn) of a generation of ideological terrorists whose campaigns caused serious political and security problems in Western Europe for more than a quarter of a century. Motivated by revolutionary communism and contempt for parliamentary democracy and monopoly capitalism, these violent political organizations directly challenged the state with their activities. They killed scores of prominent businessmen, politicians, judges, police and military officers. Their religious contemporaries – al-Qaeda and the

like – naturally differ considerably in their operational perspective, strategic ambition and apparent willingness to use large-scale indiscriminate violence. But like any terrorists of any generation, they ultimately seek to force events to conform to their vision rather than to rationally convince their audience of their agenda. This paper seeks to analyse the parallels – and differences – between 17N and its Islamic equivalents, and to examine what lessons can be drawn from Greece's long fight with terrorism by other Western governments.

17N took the European stage on December 23rd 1975, a year and a half after Greece's first democratic elections since a military coup seven years previously. Three unmasked gunmen stalked Richard Welch – officially first secretary at the US Embassy but in fact the CIA's Athens station chief – shooting him down at point-blank range in front of his wife and driver. A previously unknown group calling itself Revolutionary Organisation November 17th (17N) claimed responsibility for the assassination. It was the first serious terrorist attack on Greece's still-fragile attempt to wipe away the legacy of 'the colonels' and to re-establish itself as an effectively functioning democracy.

For the next 27 years, Greece suffered one of the West's most lethal, protracted and uncompromising terrorist campaigns. 17N commandos assassinated American and British officials as well as Greek politicians, magistrates, newspaper publishers, industrialists and shipowners, planting bombs under diplomats' cars and firing rockets at foreign embassies and businesses.[1] Astonishingly, in all this time not one 17N operative was killed or injured; neither in an operation nor by the Greek security and intelligence agencies. Nor did any undercover agent ever succeed in penetrating the group, despite astronomical rewards offered by the Greek and US authorities.

The group – often referred to as the *organossi phantasma* or 'phantom organization' – was named after the day in 1973 on which the military junta used tanks to crush a student-worker occupation of the Athens Polytechnic. Styling itself the defender of Greek national independence against great-power interference, and of the working class against a corrupt domestic elite, it cultivated an image of itself as a revolutionary group, without ever in practice attempting to become a popular movement. Even had it done so, it would almost certainly not have succeeded: seven years of military dictatorship had had a dramatic impact on political values and attitudes; all ordinary Greeks wanted after 1974 was political calm and long-term institutional stability.

European terrorism in the 1970s

When 17N emerged Western Europe was the most active terrorist scene in the world. The mid-1970s was a period of both Red and far-right terror, involving political assassinations, kidnappings and indiscriminate public bombings. In theory, 17N's aim, like other urban guerilla groups', was to galvanise and destabilise society, nudging it towards revolution. Like other groups, it used the argument that 'if violence constitutes the most efficient and essential instrument without which the revolution cannot succeed, then it is desired, rational and justified'. However, 17N's evolution and organisation were very different from those of Italy's Red Brigades, France's Action Directe or Germany's Red Army Faction. Unlike those groups, 17N did not begin as a loose network of minor groupings sharing a general extreme-left orientation. Both the Red Brigades and Action Directe originally emerged from small cells such as the CPM (Collettivo Politico Metropolitan)

and CLODO (Comité Liquidant ou Detournant les Ordinateurs). In contrast, 17N never attempted to become a broad-based umbrella-group or movement, which partly explains its operational continuity and remarkable resistance to infiltration.

Another striking difference between 17N and other groups was its targeting strategy. Most European revolutionary groups graduated slowly from minor to more lethal attacks. For example, Action Directe took almost four years to progress from low-level bombings to the assassination of the French general René Audran in January 1985. Belgium's Cellueles Communistes Combattants (CCC) carried out 26 small bombings before even considering a more serious attack. Italy's Red Brigades went through seven years and two major operational phases before 'raising their sights' from kneecappings to assassinations. 17N's approach was radically different: from its inception it deliberately killed chosen targets.

17N's early assassinations of high-profile 'enemies' of the Greek people were designed to put the group on the map, publicise its ethno-patriotic credentials and throw into question the legitimacy of *metapolitefsi* – the 1974 transition from dictatorship to democracy. 17N viewed *metapolitefsi* as a façade, a huge confidence trick played on the nation by a political class that sought to legitimise its authority through the deliberate cultivation of fantasies of stability, transparency and pluralism. Unable to grasp the complexities of post-1974 political life, and unwilling to accept the return of Konstantinos Karamanlis (the conservative pre- and post-junta premier) to power, 17N saw its mission as undermining the legitimacy and institutions of *metapolitefsi*.

Throughout its 27-year campaign, 17N never disguised the centrality of violence to its strategy and organisational system. The

group engaged in armed struggle because it viewed itself as 'a significant revolutionary force' on the Greek political scene. According to the court testimony of the group's operational leader, Dimitris Koufodinas, "the left which 17N belonged to was the left of Lenin and Che Guevara; the left of the October, Spanish, Chinese and Cuban revolutions; the left of the anticolonial revolutions in Algeria and Vietnam. The left of May '68 and November '73. The left of urban guerrilla warfare."[2]

Another of Koufodinas's most insistent themes during the nine months of his trial was 17N's 'struggle' against 'American military imperialism'. Koufodinas presented the group's attacks on US targets as a response to American bullying and barbarity on Greek soil and in the region as a whole. American imperialism, he argued, had brought chaos and butchery not only to Greece but to many other parts of the planet, so that "the only way left to the people of the world to resist was 'asymmetric guerrilla warfare."[3] This was premised on the prototype guerrilla assumption that sustained small-scale military operations could generate a degree of coercive psychological pressure disproportionate to their destructive consequences. Koufodinas was convinced that guerrilla warfare would result sooner rather than later in the creation of "many Vietnams", and would "prove the Achilles' heel of this arrogant, hyper-armed empire". Koufodinas also said that for the past 27 years, 17N had made it its central task "to discredit and humiliate the mythologized [US] secret services, quash and crush their image as the formidable Hollywood super agents".[4]

But although 17N became a permanent, almost accepted, fixture in Greek national life, it never held the country to ransom in the same way that the Red Brigades did Italy in the late 1970s.

This was because it never became either a true guerrilla force or an effective political movement. Despite attempts to position itself within historically-defined traditions of Greek communism and quest for nationhood, 17N's entire trajectory suggests that it was less an authentic revolutionary group, more a clandestine band of armed radicals with a flair for revolutionary rhetoric and symbolism.

Throughout its campaign, 17N maintained an extremely one-dimensional view of the world, peopling it with clearly demarcated heroes and villains. Combining fanatical nationalism, contempt for the existing order and a cult of violence for its own sake, 17N never grasped that its eclectic belief system was incompatible with modern democratic principles. At the same time, despite the contemporary quality of its concerns, 17N leaders never had a discernible political plan. Unlike the Red Brigades and Red Amy Faction, both of which took on 'the capitalist state and its agents' directly, 17N hoped to create an insurrectionary mood which would empower people into revolutionary political action without promoting a general sense of chaos within Greek society. 17N's violence was an audacious protest, which aimed to discredit and humiliate the Greek *katestimeno* (establishment), but never moved beyond terrorism to reach the stage of revolutionary guerrilla warfare.

Overall, the group's conception of the political environment was always one of protest, resistance and violence. From the outset, 17N saw violence as the most effective form of political pressure against the regime and an unresponsive international order. Its assassination of the British military attaché Brigadier Stephen Saunders (its last hit before the summer 2002 arrests), in response to NATO's bombardment of Belgrade, demonstrated precisely that nihilistic spirit, at the

same time confirming that the group would not voluntarily abandon armed struggle.

What Greece got wrong

Studies of Europe's most enduring ideological terrorist groups show that such organizations rely heavily for their strength and survival on the existence of a clear moral identity characterized by sacrifice, strong emotional bonds and a quasi-religious devotion to an ideological cause. In the case of 17N, three of the terrorists were brothers, two were cousins and one was godfather to the other's children. Blood bonds – so important in Greek society – reinforced trust and silence, helping to explain the group's operational continuity and remarkable resistance to infiltration. At the same time, however, the fact that 17N's members were so few and so close to each other also meant that once its structure cracked it crumbled like a 'house of cards', to use the phrase of veteran US State Department terrorism analyst, Dennis Pluchinsky.[5] Back in the early 1990s, Pluchinsky had prophetically written that 'the Achilles heel for 17N may be the absence of any known supporter or sympathizer base. In essence, unlike the RAF and Dev Sol [a left-wing Turkish group], 17N has not demonstrated an ability to reorganize after police arrests. The group may be susceptible to a police "knockout punch" – like AD and the CCC. 17N appears to be small, possibly single-cell, self-sufficient group that could become demoralized and unravelled with the arrests of one or two of its members.'[6]

Which is exactly what happened on June 29, 2002 with the premature detonation of the bomb Savvas Xiros was carrying in the port Piraeus. From his hospital bed Xiros, apparently fearing for his

life, gave the prosecutor in charge anti-terrorism investigations critical information that fuelled a chain of arrests that dismantled the 15-member strong group in less than a month.

Unintelligence

Why did destroying such a tiny organisation take the Greek state so long? One important reason was political elites' failure to agree a common definition of what constituted political violence. The absence of consensus polarised the political environment and negatively impacted on the mechanisms responsible for dealing with the problem. At the same time, 17N exposed deficiencies within Greece's political structures: irresolute administrations, unreliable intelligence services, inadequate police forces and a cumbersome judicial system.

17N might have been more easily contained had the governing elites and the security authorities acted decisively. Their underestimation of the seriousness of the threat, slow and indecisive responses, deliberate exploitation of the situation for political ends and, above all, outright failure to grasp the nature and dynamics of terrorism all contributed to the growth and consolidation of serious revolutionary violence.

Terrorism, the American historian Walter Laqueur once wrote, attempts to destabilize democratic societies by demonstrating that their governments are impotent. In Greece, 17N certainly accomplished the latter. Although it is unlikely that terrorism could have been prevented altogether, Greece should and could have defended itself and the lives of its citizens better.

In particular, the 1983 murder of the head of the Joint US Military Advisory Group in Greece, US navy captain George Tsantes, and his

driver, should have prompted the government to reorganise its security systems. Development of stronger intelligence infrastructure and proper co-ordination between government, police and judiciary might have enabled 17N to be identified and eliminated much earlier. But in practice responsibility for intelligence remained diffuse and confused, to the detriment of intelligence gathering, dissemination and operational use.

Moreover, corruption remained rife. Although a huge amount of money changed hands over the years between the security services and a variety of informers/agents/operatives, its total failure to get results reinforces the view that informers and information were being manufactured for the absorption of state-supplied financial rewards. Rather than periodically reorganising the security services in an attempt to weed out corruption, it might have been better to dissolve them and set up an entirely new organisation. But in practice, in the words of former government advisor on terrorism Mary Bossis: "Governments, both left and right, generally agreed that it was much safer to keep the secret services faction-riven, inefficient and dependent on political control and patronage than to modernize them into a powerful intelligence apparatus." In short, far from sending an early and clear signal that violence would not be tolerated by taking a clear-cut stand and effective measures to confront the problem, state authorities and political parties allowed terrorism to grow so uncontrollably that it finally became a routine element of the nation's life.

Greece can in fact be used as an excellent case-study of what not to do when dealing with terrorism. The capacity to protect its citizens against terrorism and subversion is a necessary attribute of any modern state. Whenever faced with a severe test of that capacity, however, the Greek state failed to pass it. The histories of the Red

Brigades in Italy, Red Army Faction in Germany and Action Directe in France suggest that, while democracies are initially uncertain in their handling of domestic violent political organizations, they overcome them in time. In Greece, successive governments deployed a variety of measures to deal with 17N. But none managed to establish a clear set of strategic goals nor a coherent approach to achieve them.

For a long time, Greek anti-terrorism forces remained under-resourced, under-trained and under-equipped – in sad contrast to 17N, which planned its operations patiently and meticulously, and was disciplined enough to call them off half-way through if they threatened to go wrong. Critical mistakes in the planning and execution of surveillance operations meant that the terrorists were able to escape on several notorious occasions. During the Louisa Riankour Street debacle of March 1992, for example, police successfully set up a 30-man ambush but then lost the terrorists in a chase; the year before 17N commandos escaped a shoot-out in a commandeered taxi.

Islamic terrorists' most deadly characteristic is that they are similarly professional and patient. The 9/11 attacks, for example, took more than a year to plan and execute. Similarly again, Western anti-terrorism efforts are hampered not so much by lack of resources as by jealousies and vendettas between security agencies. Each agency stores its own intelligence and "even though all of them claim to be willing to work together, all of them try to keep their intelligence concealed from each other."[7] In Britain, MI5 and the National Criminal Intelligence Service do not give each other access to their databases. In the US, Congress's damning report on intelligence failures pre-9/11 put much of the blame on rivalries between CIA, FBI and National Security Agency. A central lesson to emerge from the Greek anti-terrorism experience is that an effective intelligence strategy requires a centralized intelligence

organization that can channel information effectively to the security forces engaged in anti-terrorism. The absence of such a structure can only lead, as the Greek case clearly demonstrated, to diffusion of authority, bureaucratic squabbling, and poor intelligence gathering, analysis and dissemination. Needless to say, such lapses do not escape the notice of the terrorists themselves.

What makes terrorists tick?

To counter terrorism effectively, governments need fully to understand terrorists' strategy in social and political as well as operational terms. Another reason why 17N was able to survive for so long was the failure of successive Greek administrations to grasp exactly what the group was about. Put another way, the cardinal rule of counter-terrorism – 'know your enemy' – was violated. When a terrorist war begins there is a reason for every bombing and each shooting. In Greece, governments failed at first to recognise what 17N was, what it wanted, or how dangerous it might become. The same, of course, could be said about the US's approach to Osama bin Laden. It was disturbing to see how for a long time after 9/11 the administration failed to comprehend bin Laden's motivation, capabilities or objectives.

It has always been easier for governments to dismiss terrorists as wild-eyed fanatics or homicidal maniacs than to try to plumb the roots of their seemingly irrational actions. But in his book *Inside Terrorism*[8], RAND expert Bruce Hoffman admits that after studying terrorists and terrorism for more than two decades he is still struck by how disturbingly 'normal' most terrorists seem when you meet them. When you actually sit down and talk to these militants, Hoffman writes, many are not the crazed killers you would expect,

but articulate and thoughtful individuals for whom terrorism is an entirely rational choice, reluctantly embraced only after a considerable reflection and debate. Koufodinas' performance in court backs up Hoffman's argument. In nine months of court proceedings Koufodinas never raised his voice above the pitch of natural conversation, and his every gesture and word was controlled and measured. Under intense questioning, he stubbornly resisted the temptation to say anything substantial (and possibly incriminating) about his comrades or the inner workings of his organization.

Discerning the inner logic behind terrorists' use of violence does not, of course, rationalize it, nor in any way lessen the barbarity of their acts. Yet trying to see thing from the terrorist's point of view can be an extremely effective tool in the effort to dismantle terrorist networks and deter further attacks. In Greece, until the mid-1980s, incidents of terrorism were regarded by the security sevices as one-off events perpetrated by isolated anarchic agitators, rather than as a sustained campaign of violence directed at the government. At the same time, the country's security services showed little interest in what the terrorists actually wrote in their frequent public communiqués and commentaries. Had they done so, they might have realised earlier that 17N was a single, coherent organisation that attacked predictable targets using predictable methods.

Security versus civil liberties

Public relations are another crucial component in the fight against terrorism. Terrorists cannot succeed without support from the general population; conversely counter-terrorism needs support and co-operation from diverse sections of the community. While it is

incumbent upon governments to protect society and to bring the perpetrators of violence to justice, they must do this without undermining the wider population's support for law and order, or putting basic liberties at risk.

Greece stands as an excellent example of how responses to terrorism can be more dangerous for a democratic society than terrorism itself. In 1990 the right-wing government of prime minister Konstantinos Mitsotakis (whose son-in-law had been assassinated by 17N) introduced legislation making the publication of 17N communiqués a criminal offence. A vendetta between government and media ensued – editors were imprisoned – and 17N took heart, launching 31 strikes over the next three years. The legislation was finally scrapped by the incoming Papandreou government in 1993.

Any form of counter-terrorist legislation naturally entails striking a difficult balance between security and civil liberty. Several European states have got the balance wrong in the past, but with common sense, we can find the correct way forward – one which will give us the tools we need to protect ourselves without tearing apart our societies or individual rights and liberties.

Fit to print

Terrorism is a form of psychological warfare, in that the terrorist act is one designed to deliver a message, not only to a specific target but also to the general populace. It uses fear to influence public opinion. At the same time, perhaps the prime influence on public opinion in Western democracies is the mass media. The manner in which media organisations choose to place news before the public influences

public perception of that information and conclusions drawn from it.

Politicians and intelligence analysts often complain that media reporting of terrorist violence is excessive, sensational and unbalanced, and that these factors produce a contagion effect. Writing in the *Washington Post* a year after the 9/11 attacks, US State Department terrorism analyst Dennis Pluchinsky attacked American news media for doing terrorists' "target vulnerability research" for them. "No terrorist group that I am aware of", Pluchinsky wrote, "has the time and manpower to conduct extensive research on a multitude of potential targets...Imagine that you are a supporter or a sympathizer of a terrorist group and you have been asked to identify and collect tactical information on potential US targets. Consider some of the following headlines that have appeared since 9/11: 'Private Plane Charters: One Way Around Air Security', 'Freight Transport: Safe from Terror?', 'America's Roads May Be Just As Vulnerable As Its Skies', 'Study Assesses Risk of Attack on Chemical Plants'… I do not understand the media's agenda here. You are making the jobs of terrorism analysts, intelligence officers and law enforcement officials very difficult. Help us, don't hinder us from defeating our enemies."[9]

An examination of the Greek media's coverage of 17N shows that "the use of terrorists by the media became as crucial as the use of the media by the terrorists"[10] In the early 1980s, newspaper editors and proprietors began to recognize that 17N's name and five-pointed star on the front page always sold thousands of extra copies. As a result, a tendency to suspend editorial judgement developed. Unsubstantiated rumours and theories about 17N were over-dramatized, even invented, so as to maximize readerships: newspaper stories had 17N helping train Libya's terrorist forces, and named

ministers, MPs and diplomats as 17N members. Like their Italian counterparts during the *anni di piombo* (the years of bullet), Greek media preferred the "melodramatic to the analytical approach, emphasizing emotion, violence and speculation rather than a balanced explanation of facts."[11]

Without doubt, journalism's fundamental purpose is to satisfy the desire for information and "describe a situation with honesty, exactness and clarity".[12] The public is entitled to know of terrorist events as they occur, and to hear or read analysis of issues that affect the collective interest. But unless they fulfil these functions responsibly, newspapers and television stations can become – as the Greek and Italian experiences demonstrate – unwitting instruments in the terrorist cause. In the same way that ordinary people have to get used to a higher level of security and disruption in their daily lives than is desirable, the media have to get used to higher levels of self-restraint, and develop self-regulatory guidelines which place responsible reporting above sales, and which do not make terrorists' work easier.

Conclusion

Coping with a new sort of terrorism – violent Islamic radicalism – is the challenge of the new century. What we have is a wide international movement whose followers combine medieval beliefs with modern weaponry and a level of fanaticism that expresses itself in suicide bombings and willingness to perpetrate large-scale, indiscriminate slaughter.

That said, it is imperative that we maintain a realistic sense of the threat these religious terrorists pose. Since 9/11 we have – mistakenly – treated Islamic terrorist militancy as a form of war. It is true that

the replacement of political ideology with religious fanaticism has eroded the self-imposed constraints that had limited terrorist violence in the past. In the 1970s and '80s, terrorist factions issued communiqués explaining their political agendas, and their targets were specific and comprehensible. It is also true that the 9/11 attacks set a new standard in terrorist strikes. Nonetheless what we are up against is not a specific enemy nor an *über*-terrorist organization but something wider. Islamic terrorism is a socio-political phenomenon not a foe, and the enemy here, for better or worse, is more than an extremist group of fanatics. It is a world-view, a set of attitudes, a belief system organized into a recruiting network that will replace terrorist losses until defeated politically. It would be a mistake to become fixated on al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden.

If the Greek experience against 17N has a lesson to offer, it that is that neither lethargy nor hysteria are good ways of approaching national security. Balanced determination grounded in facts and sound judgements about the nature of the challenge confronting us is more useful than quick-fix solutions that risk creating more problems than they solve. And if there has to be a 'war on terror', it has to start with a better understanding of the terrorists themselves. Considerable thought must be given as to what frustrations and grievances mobilise recruits to the Islamic cause, and more diplomatic and political resources devoted to addressing them. Radical Islamic militancy did not begin with bin Laden and his deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri, and will not end with their arrest or demise.

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1 For a detailed analysis of 17N's historical antecedents, ideology, strategy and attacks see George Kassimeris, *Europe's Last Red Terrorists: The Revolutionary Organization 17 November* (London: Hurst, 2001).

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 As Dennis Pluchinsky put it to me during a private conversation, 'I have never seen a terrorist group unravel so quickly'.

6 Yonah Alexander and Dennis Pluchinsky (eds.), *Europe's Red Terrorists: The Fighting Communist Organizations* (London: Frank Cass, 1992), p.48.

7 Ibid.

8 Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1998).

9 See 'They heard it all here, and that's the trouble' in *Washington Post*, 16 June 2002.

10 See A.P. Schmid, 'Terrorism and the Media: The Ethics of Publicity' in *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol.1, No.4 (October 1989), p.539.

11 On Italian terrorism see Alison Jamieson, 'The Italian Experience', in H.H.Tucker (ed.), *Combating the Terrorists: Democratic Responses to Political Violence* (New York: Facts on File, 1988), p.152.

12 See Christian Tyler, 'Where lies the truth?', *Financial Times*, 25 July 1998.

4. Japan’s Aum Shinrikyõ

Christopher Hughes

The sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway by Japan’s Aum Shinrikyõ (Supreme Truth) cult on March 20th 1995 first alerted the world to the future nature of post-Cold War terrorism. The attack marked the first widely-publicised use (if not attempt to produce) weapons of mass destruction (WMD) by a non-state actor/terrorist/organised crime group. Its rationale went beyond even maximalist political demands, destruction apparently being viewed as an end in itself.

However, despite the forewarning provided by Aum Shinrikyõ of the ‘shape of terrorism to come’, in the latter half of the ‘90s the lessons from this Japanese case were often overlooked or forgotten. It is only during the post-9/11 period and ensuing ‘war on terror’ that attention has begun to turn back to Aum Shinrikyõ, and to what it might have to teach policy-makers in facing the challenge currently posed by al-Qaeda.

This chapter argues that the Aum Shinrikyõ experience is indeed instructive for dealing with al-Qaeda, not just because it stands as an earlier example of religiously-inspired terrorism, but more importantly because it demonstrates a range of characteristics that are common to other new forms of terrorism, including al-Qaeda, and that are likely define the future terrorist challenge for governments. In particular, Aum Shinrikyõ highlights the unexpectedness of the directions from which terrorism may come, its expanded destructive potential, and the erosion of traditional barriers between domestic and international security. Moreover, the reaction of Japan's security authorities to Aum Shinrikyõ carries managerial lessons for other states in meeting the terrorist challenge.

Aum's record

Aum Shinrikyõ was founded in the late 1980s by Asahara Shõkõ (real name: Matsumoto Chizuo). Born in 1955 to respectable working-class parents, he suffered partial blindness and rejection by prestigious Tokyo University before setting up a successful business selling alternative medicines, and studying yoga in India. Aum won official recognition as a religion – hence also tax-free status – in 1989, having mounted a belligerent protest campaign against religious discrimination outside local government offices. Philosophically, it consisted of a complex hybrid of Buddhism, Hinduism and apocalyptic millenarian ideology. By the time of the Tokyo subway attack it had around 500 full-time followers living a communal existence at its headquarters near Mount Fuji. It is estimated that a further 1,100 lay followers had joined the movement.[1]

Aum Shinrikyõ attracted followers from a wide cross-section of society, though most were in the 20 to 30 age bracket. Many were highly educated, but felt frustrated by their inability, in the midst of a recession, to find employment that met their aspirations, and alienated from an increasingly urbanised, impersonal and spiritual-less society.

Aum Shinrikyõ seemed to offer a more fulfilling alternative. The movement replicated many of the hierarchical features of Japanese society, with Asahara as the dominating figure at its apex. Below Asahara, activities were organised into a number of 'ministries' mimicking those of the Japanese government, including ministries of 'health', 'education', 'justice', 'defence', and 'science and technology'. These enjoyed rich funding from the movement, and gave its educated members the opportunity to pursue, in a closeted world, many of their real-life ambitions – including experimentation with weapons technology and hallucinogenic drugs. The movement's chief scientist was a graduate in astrophysics from Osaka University, its biological weapons supremo a virology researcher from Kyoto University, and the chief of its in-house clinic a fully-qualified doctor who had studied in the US. At its height, Aum was reported to dispose of financial assets of between US$300 million and US$1 billion, made up not only of donations, but of extortions from followers' families, and proceeds from illegal drug sales and medical treatments.[2]

As well as making indiscriminate attacks on symbolic targets such as the Diet and the subway, Aum was ruthless in violently intimidating critical officials and dissenters within its own ranks. Since Asahara's arrest a few weeks after the Tokyo subway attack,

he and his followers have been indicted on a series of charges, including:

- the kidnapping and murder of Sakamoto Tsutumi (a lawyer representing the families of movement members) and his wife and infant son in November 1989;
- murder in the case of a sarin gas attack on a block of flats inhabited by investigating judges, Matusmoto, Nagano Prefecture (seven killed and 600 injured) in June 1994;
- the hanging of Ochida Kotata (a dissident Aum member) in February 1995;
- the kidnapping and death of Kariya Kiyoshi (a Tokyo public official) in February 1995;
- murder in the case of the sarin gas attack on the Tokyo Subway (12 killed and 5,500 injured) in March 1995;
- the production of hallucinogenic drugs, including LSD;
- the production of biological and chemical weapons;
- the production of firearms.

Aum is also suspected of involvement in the shooting of National Police Agency chief Kunimatsu Takaji in March 1995, and in the deaths of another 33 movement members between 1988 and 1995. Asahara's marathon trial for up to 104 charges lasted from 1996 to 2004. He was convicted in October 2003, and sentenced to death in February 2004. The trial of other members continues today. Extraordinarily, Aum Shinrikyõ itself – renamed Aleph or 'start anew' – still exists, though stripped of its official status as a religion. It is reckoned to now have around 700 communal and 550 lay members scattered around a series of facilities in Japan. It keeps itself afloat financially via donations from members, the

assembly and retail of computers, and the sale of unlicensed medicines. The group is now under constant and heavy police surveillance.

Aum's challenge: coming from nowhere

One of the greatest puzzles of the Aum Shinrikyõ experience is why, despite the group's high profile and a first sarin gas attack in Matsumoto in 1994, the security authorities failed to identify it as a specific threat until after the Tokyo subway attack. Unsurprisingly, there has been widespread press speculation that the police were in fact alerted to Aum's activities prior to the Tokyo attack, but failed to take warnings seriously. In part this speculation is correct, since the security authorities were not wholly unaware of the movement's activities. On the other hand, it would be inaccurate to say that they were highly cognisant of the threat and should thus be blamed for failing to act. This would be to overestimate their abilities. For it is clear that they failed to spot the threat from Aum Shinrikyõ simply because it was not where their intelligence capabilities and priorities lay. In short, Aum Shinrikyõ was only on the margin of their radar screens.

Japan has long possessed formidable and well-resourced intelligence and security authorities. Responsibility for counter-terrorism has traditionally been distributed among three institutions: the National Police Agency, prefectural policing organisations, and the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) of Tokyo. Each of these has special security police sections, with around 10,000 personnel between them in total, and the MPD has usually taken the prime coordinating role. In addition to these policing agencies, the Ministry of Justice has a Public Security Investigation Agency (PSIA) charged with the monitoring of subversive groups.

These well-staffed security institutions were never oriented, however, towards the investigation of religious terrorism. Established during the Cold War, they were designed to counter the threat from domestic communism. In particular, they were vigilant against the threat from North Korean residents in Japan, and radical groups such as the Red Army Faction (Nihon Sekigun-ha) and its various splinter factions.

This orientation was a product, also, of revulsion at Japan's pre-war history of suppression of all religions bar Shinto. Post-war, it became accepted practice for tax-free religious status to be handed out (by local rather than central government) with relatively few checks, and official interference in religious affairs in general became taboo. Hampered by this hands-off culture, and by an outdated preoccupation with communism, the security services failed to monitor an explosion of 'new religions' in the 1980s, and simply failed to spot the Aum Shinriykõ threat until it was too late.

All this resonates, of course, in relation to al-Qaeda. Like the Japanese government in 1995, the security authorities in the US and other developed states have been criticised for being stuck in a narrow Cold War mindset over a decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and for failing to orient quickly enough to threats from non-traditional quarters. Even though the America's security services were clearly much more awake to the al-Qaeda threat prior to 9/11, it is still the case that, as in Japan, they were essentially looking the wrong way.

Appetite for destruction

Aum Shinrikyõ's leadership had a talent for inward violence against its own members as well as outward violence against the Japanese

state and its citizens. In many ways, this penchant for internal feuding was in line with earlier Japanese terrorist groups such as the Red Army Faction. Nevertheless, Aum Shinrikyõ superseded these earlier groups in a number of ways. It put more emphasis on training, establishing a 15-man special commando unit at its Mount Fuji base, and was able to receive instruction from members drawn from the Japanese Self Defence Force. (Low-status since the war, Japan's army often provides a refuge for men unable to get work elsewhere; it is hence not surprising that it provided recruits for Aum.) The end of the Cold War also brought opportunities to train in post-Soviet Russia: members of Aum are reported to have received a ten-day training course from the elite Spetsnaz army unit in 1994.

Much of this organisation and training was novel to terrorist groups operating inside Japan, but not to other groups around the world. Where Aum Shinrikyõ was truly innovative was in the sphere of weaponry, both conventional and unconventional. The movement succeeded in stealing weapons secrets from Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, one of Japan's largest defence contractors, and its 'minister of construction' is alleged to have established connections with the intelligence community in Russia, allowing him to obtain weapons technology from there and other former Soviet republics. In 1994, Aum Shinrikyõ purchased a Mi-17 military-class transport helicopter in Azerbaijan and shipped it to Japan without hindrance from the customs authorities. Aum's ambitions even extended to trying to purchase from Russia four T-72 main battle tanks and a MiG-29 fighter aircraft. Moreover, Aum also planned to mass-produce its own weapons. The movement succeeded in manufacturing the explosives TNT and RDX, and, using as a blueprint an AK-47 obtained in Russia, intended to tool up its own

plant to manufacture assault rifles and ammunition. During the Cold War, the Japanese state had always maintained extremely tight controls over the possession of firearms by its citizens, but Aum Shinrikyõ defeated these controls and proved that no state was immune to the acquisition by its terrorist groups of weapons from the former Soviet Union.

Aum Shinrikyõ made even more dramatic advances in the acquisition and use of WMD. As well as planning to produce 70 tons of sarin (and actually stockpiling 66 pounds), the cult produced large quantities of VX nerve gas and mustard gas blistering agents. Earlier groups such as Germany's Red Army Faction had experimented with the production of toxins. But none went as far as Aum in producing in quantity biological toxins such as botulinus toxin A, Q fever, the Ebola virus and (given even greater relevance in the post-9/11 era) anthrax. Altogether 1,200 drums of toxic chemicals were found in its headquarters after the '95 attack. Aum also signalled new levels of terrorist ambition with its desire to obtain nuclear technology and even a nuclear weapon from the former Soviet Union. Furthermore, the group's adoption of a distorted version of the Tibetan Buddhist philosophy of *phowa* – which in Aum eyes taught that the world would end at the turn of the millennium, and that murders were acts of religious salvation – absolved its leadership of any qualms about using WMD.

Aum Shinrikyõ once again presents important cross-over lessons for understanding Islamic terrorism. With its willingness to deploy any form of weaponry towards the end of total destruction, Aum clearly stands at the most extreme end of the spectrum of terrorist potentialities – exceeding even what might be termed the maximalist political ends of al-Qaeda. In the scale of their ambitions and appetite for violence, however, the two groups were very similar. Six

years before 9/11, Aum supplied a preview of the 'no holds barred' terrorism of the future.

The erosion of barriers between domestic and international security

The third way in which Aum Shinrikyõ presaged new trends in terrorism was by breaking down traditional divisions between domestic and international security. In many ways the group functioned as an organised crime network, able to run its own front businesses and to use technology such as the internet to organise its activities, domestically and abroad. The movement's leadership was able to visit Russia to purchase arms and established a substantial headquarters in Moscow. It opened offices and had followers in Bonn and New York. It managed to buy a tea plantation in Sri Lanka and to test sarin gas on a ranch in Australia. Members of the group visited Laos and, it is rumoured, North Korea.

Operating across borders is not, of course, a new thing for terrorists: traditional groups such as the IRA have long recruited and raised funds abroad. Nonetheless, Aum Shinrikyõ was in certain ways the forerunner of the highly globalised type of terrorist network that has emerged with al-Qaeda. It was probably more centralised than al-Qaeda, with responsibility for most actions clearly traceable back to Asahara, whereas al-Qaeda has taken on the characteristics of a loose franchise. But in terms of geographical scale—stretching from the US to Southeast Asia—and of opportunism in exploiting weak states, the two groups are similar. Just as Aum exploited the collapse of the Soviet Union to acquire weaponry, al-Qaeda headquartered itself in weak states such as Afghanistan and Sudan. Together, they demonstrate that

the trend for terrorist groups is to organise on a global scale, operating fluently across borders. All this presents a far more complex scenario for security policy planners in the future.

Aum's lessons

So far we have looked at what can be learned from the case of Aum Shinrikyõ as to the nature of the post-Cold War terrorist threat. This final section briefly considers the ways in which the Aum case helps us decide how best to counter that threat.

The first clear lesson from Japan is that security authorities need to broaden their horizons to encompass a range of non-state terrorist threats beyond those with which they have already been dealing since the end of the Cold War. Alongside nationalist terrorists, ideological terrorists, single-issue fanatics and state-sponsored terrorists, governments need to consider religious terrorists, as well as staying alert to other new types of threat that may emerge.

The second lesson that Aum Shinrikyõ first raised, and al-Qaeda finally brought home to the West, is that efforts need to be made to counter all types of weaponry, including WMD. This lesson is one that has already been taken on board by the US, UK and other developed states. But unfortunately, it is also one which has been distorted to justify the Iraq war and the destruction of a regime which, although repugnant, acted in part as a bulwark against various forms of religious-based terrorism. The result has been a diversion of the West's energies to Baghdad, when it should have been concentrating on the fight against terrorism and connections with WMD closer to home.

The third lesson first derived from Aum Shinrikyõ, and confirmed by al-Qaeda, is that we now face a range of 'inter-mestic' terrorist threats penetrating across state borders. The concomitant response from states must also be one that is capable of being instrumentalised globally. In certain cases, this may mean forceful intervention in 'failed states', but in others it means improved multilateral cooperation.

The fourth and final lesson from Aum is one that is vital but has often been forgotten during the current 'war on terror'. This is that enhanced state legal and military capabilities, and forceful suppression of terrorism, are necessary but not sufficient for resolution of the threat. Just as important is an understanding of the root social causes of the terrorist phenomenon, and implementation of measures designed to address them. In the case of Aum, as noted above, support for the group grew from a deep disaffection with the nature of contemporary Japanese society.

The temptation for some in Japan was to respond to Aum Shinrikyõ by invoking draconian legislation that would allow the compulsory dissolution of groups deemed to be implicated in violent acts for political ends. It was proposed to re-activate the Subversive Activities Prevention Law, a still extant but never-used statute passed by the US-controlled post-war government in 1952, with the aim of safeguarding the country against communism. In the event, Japan's habitual nervousness about anything smacking of pre-war militarism won the day and the Act was not invoked, though new legislation was passed giving police greater surveillance powers. Nor were any changes made to the system for officially recognising religious organisations, thanks in part to opposition from Soka Gakkai, a powerful Buddhist group currently in coalition with the

ruling Liberal Democratic Party. As mentioned above even Aum itself continues to operate, in a new form and under new, non-violent leadership.

This moderation has in practice worked well. Aum's remaining followers have not been pushed underground, preserving the opportunity to reintegrate them back into mainstream society. With respect to Asahara and his co-defendants, the normal workings of the criminal justice system have been allowed to take their course, and the basic principles of democracy and rule of law have not been undermined.

There is clearly an important lesson here for other states as they wrestle with al-Qaeda and its brethren. Like Aum's followers, many elements of the network and its wider sympathy base in the Middle East are relatively wealthy and well-educated, but have turned to terrorism in disgust at the nature of contemporary society. Militaristic and/or authoritarian solutions to such movements clearly fail to address this disaffection, and indeed risk becoming blunt instruments whose use only increases it.

Curing deep-rooted social malaise is of course easier said than done. Japan has generally eschewed attempts at social engineering – for a rich country, its welfare system is underdeveloped – and has instead concentrated (with success) on climbing out of its 12-year recession via high government spending, low interest rates and a weak yen. Arab governments need similarly to concentrate as much on creating jobs and a sense of political ownership for their millions of unemployed, disenfranchised young men, as on reinforcing traditional security operations. The US should encourage them in this, as well as itself adopting a genuinely comprehensive approach that employs in equal measure both military and non-

military measures. Without it, no counter-terrorism strategy is likely to succeed.

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1 For an overview of Aum Shinrikyõ's activities and impact on Japanese society, see Robert J. Kisala and Mark R. Mullins (eds.) *Religion and Social Crisis in Japan: Understanding Japanese Society through the Aum Affair* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001).

2 Meredith Box and Gavan McCormack 'Terror in Japan: The Red Army (1969-2001) and Aum Supreme Truth (1987-2000)', *Critical Asian Studies*, vol.36, no.1, 2004, p103.

5. Peru's Sendero Luminoso

Cynthia McClintock

Peru's Sendero Luminoso or 'Shining Path' emerged in the early 1980s, in the country's remote southern highlands. By the end of the decade it boasted around 25,000 militant followers and support, according to independent surveys, from 15% of the population. It was active throughout the country, controlling one in four municipalities. Politically its high point was probably July 16th 1992, when a truck bomb in the wealthy Miraflores suburb of Lima killed 22 and injured 250, heralding a week-long series of attacks against police stations, factories, schools and shops. On July 22nd-23rd a two-day 'armed strike' paralysed the capital. Businessmen, doctors and other members of the middle class fled; soldiers deserted. Revolution seemed imminent.

Yet a few months later, the tide turned. In September 1992 the capture of Sendero's leader, Abimael Guzmán, and several of his key lieutenants punctured the myth of the movement's proficiency and

invincibility. A year later Guzmán called for peace negotiations with Peru's president, and by the late '90s Sendero comprised only a few hundred armed militants, whose activities were largely confined to the remote coca-producing eastern Andes and the drugs trade.

Peru's struggle with Sendero was thus both long and bloody – in the twelve years of its ascendancy, the group is reckoned to have killed upwards of 25,000 people. A few even fear that Guzmán is still in charge, masterminding, from prison, summer 2004's strikes and demonstrations in his old headquarters town of Ayacucho. The mainstream view, however, is that the strikes were the work of other left-wing groups, and that Sendero remains defeated. In this study we examine where Sendero came from, how it was beaten, and lessons the Peruvian experience has to teach us in combating Islamic radicalism today.

Where Sendero came from

Abimael Guzmán, Sendero Luminoso's charismatic founder and leader, was born the illegitimate son of a prosperous wholesaler. His mother died when he was aged five, and for the next seven years he was brought up by rural uncles, before moving to a Jesuit school, then on to university, in his father's city of Arequipa. He founded the Shining Path in 1970, while teaching philosophy at the University of Huamanga in the southern-highlands town of Ayacucho. He took the movement's name from Peru's first prominent Marxist, José Carlos Mariátegui, who said that "Marxism-Leninism will open the shining path to revolution." The name most used by *Senderistas* themselves, however, was the Communist Party of Peru.

Sendero adhered strictly to the ideological tenets of the Maoism of the Cultural Revolution. Guzmán had studied in China in 1964,

1967 and 1975, and adopted much of the Maoist vocabulary. He described Peru as "semifeudal" and "semicolonial" – just as Mao described China. Ideological concepts were simplistic: the Peru of the 1980s was as semifeudal and semicolonial as the Peru of the 1930s, and a leftist 1968-'75 military government and the elected civilian governments of the 1980s were all "fascist." As in Maoism, Guzmán assigned a leading role to the peasantry, arguing that world revolution would be achieved through a prolonged popular war in the countryside, eventually encircling the cities. Remarkably, his writings made no mention whatsoever of race, despite the vast cultural and wealth divide between Peru's indigenous population and its Caucausian elites.

In Sendero ideology, as in Maoism, violence was extolled. It not only destroyed the old but created the new. A poem commemorating Shining Path militants who died in a massacre in Lima's prisons in 1986 runs: "Glory to the fallen heroes, long live the revolution! Blood does not drown the revolution, but irrigates it!" Sendero killed routinely and savagely. A notorious example was the murder of the Lima shantytown leader María Elena Moyano, who was shot at a barbecue in front of her two young sons. Victims' eyes were gouged out, men were castrated, and children disemboweled.

In sharp contrast to most Latin American revolutionary movements, the Shining Path was also extremely sectarian. It denounced non-Maoist ruling communist parties: Fidel Castro, for example, was "a puppet of social imperialism", and Cuba's revolution "a petit bourgeois 'militaristic' deviation, doomed to sure defeat, against which President Mao wrote long ago." Within Peru, Sendero not only scorned rival Marxist groups but killed local elected officials belonging to these groups.

Also atypically, Sendero Luminoso's organizational structure was hierarchical and disciplined. Often described as a "philosopher-king," Guzmán was the permanent number one leader; officially, there was no number two. Indeed, in many respects Sendero was a cult whose deity was Guzmán. Among Peru's Quechua-speaking peoples, who traditionally revered the sun, Guzmán was called Doctor 'Puka Inti' or 'the Red Sun'. The Senderista newspaper extolled him as "our dear, heroic, eminent chief…the greatest existing Marxist-Leninist-Maoist, the greatest political and military strategist, philosopher, master of Communists, center of unification of the motherland…" Even while in jail, Senderistas marched in formation to constantly repeated chants of Guzmán's nickname, "President Gonzalo".

Guzmán also supervised the organization's finances, made decisions about overall strategy, and met frequently with regional leaders. Until her suicide in 1988 his wife was probably the movement's second most influential leader; subsequently, a new lover appeared to assume this role. At the formal apex of Sendero's organizational chart was a Central Committee of nineteen regular members; directly below it were six regional committees, and below them zones, sectors, and cells. In classic revolutionary style, communication was only from one group's leader to the next higher level, and few if any cell members ever saw Guzmán. To protect their anonymity, Senderistas used aliases and wore balaclavas during attacks.

In the mid-'80s, the Shining Path expanded into the drug-producing Upper Huallaga valley, and started to raise substantial funds by charging drug traffickers for the use of its airstrips. Estimates of the amounts raised range from a 'mere' $20 million per

year to a huge $550 million per year. Additional sums were obtained by levying 'taxes' on businesses and individuals, and smaller amounts from support groups abroad. How did Sendero use this war chest? By the 1990s a considerable sum was spent on salaries for activists, which ranged from around $250 to $500 a month, well above the Peruvian average. Other money was spent on purchasing guns, explosives and other equipment, or went into foreign bank accounts.

Middle-class Maoists

Although in Senderista ideology the movement's social base was supposed to be the peasantry, in fact the socioeconomic backgrounds of its members were diverse. The entire original Shining Path leadership was university-educated and came from the middle or upper middle class. Among the rank and file, university students were a particularly important group: in Ayacucho and subsequently wherever it sought to expand, Sendero focused its attention first on the local university. In particular, it sought to recruit students studying to become schoolteachers, who would later be able to recruit in turn in the communities where they worked. Of 33 Senderistas interviewed by my research team in Huancayo (a town in Peru's central highlands) in 1993, eight (24%) were students; five (15%) were teachers; three (9%) were other professionals (one obstetrician, one architect, one government employee); six (18%) were peasants; six (18%) were workers; two (6%) were vendors; and three (9%) were unemployed. Similarly, of a sample of 421 terrorists captured in Lima in the early and mid-1990s, 35% were students. The education establishment's leading role in Sendero Luminoso is

highlighted by the remarkable but widely-accepted estimate that 15% of all Peru's teachers sympathized with the movement.

Why were these relatively well-off and well-educated Peruvians so attracted to Sendero? First, we should note that Senderistas' grievances were quite different from those of most Latin American insurgents. Most Latin American revolutionary movements – Castro's 26th of July Movement; the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) in Nicaragua; the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) in El Salvador – were formed out of rage at repressive, dictatorial regimes. So too was today's strongest Latin American revolutionary movement, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

By contrast, when Sendero launched its first violent attacks in 1980, Peru had just returned to elected, civilian government. Although human-rights abuses occurred in Peru's southern highlands prior to 1980 and escalated through the decade as the security forces tried to confront the insurgency, anger at repression was not Senderistas' primary motivation. Interviewed by my research team, not one mentioned political exclusion as a reason for joining the movement, and only three (9%) cited human-rights abuse. Rather, Senderistas were motivated primarily by their perceptions of economic injustice and poverty. They bemoaned the hunger, malnutrition, and generally abject conditions of living and dying in Peru, and held the Peruvian government was responsible for these conditions. In a new usage of the word *hambre* (hunger), the Peruvian state was often described as *hambreador* – 'making the people hungry'. The state was even deemed 'genocidal' because it was intentionally 'killing the people with hunger.' The following quotes, drawn from our interviews, are representative:

> "I entered Sendero Luminoso because I could no longer bear seeing on one side so much hunger and misery, and on the other side wealth and extravagance. The exploitation has to stop. There has been enough injustice and abuses, humiliation and contempt. The discussion has finished. It's the hour for action." (From a 42-year-old sociologist)

> "I could not tolerate the injustice, the poverty, and the corruption in the state. I had to act in order to change the system. There is no place for those who comply with the exploiters who cause hunger and misery for the people." (From a combatant of peasant origins)

Amongst the Shining Path's wider supporter group, indignation at economic injustice was similarly the prime driver. In surveys carried out amongst the general public in 1990, more than 60% of respondents thought economic crisis, social injustice or poverty were chiefly to blame for the movement. By contrast only 35% of El Salvadorians, surveyed during their own period of revolutionary violence, cited poverty as a prime driver.

That Sendero's rise was driven by poverty is hardly surprising, since it coincided with the prolonged collapse of the Peruvian economy. Between 1971, when a military government began wholesale nationalization of Peruvian industry, and 1983 average real household income fell by 29% for the poorest twenty-five percent of households. From the early '60s to the late '80s average daily calorie intake actually fell. Hunger was especially severe amongst the peasants of the rural highlands, where the Shining Path originated. In 1984, for example, over 70% of subsistence farmer and agricultural labourer households showed evidence of chronic malnutrition.

Poverty worsened not only among peasants but also among young people who had gained an education and had expected to rise into Peru's middle class.

Many were of peasant origin, and had struggled to attend provincial universities. (Between 1980 and 1993, university enrolment jumped from 17% to 40% in Peru – a much bigger jump than the Latin American average.) But at the same time unemployment skyrocketed: by one estimate, a mere 5% of Lima's working-age population was formally employed in 1990, down from over 50% in the mid-1980s. Inflation was rampant and real wages plummeted: by 1989, Peru's real minimum wage was a scant 23% of its 1980 value, compared to a Latin American average of 75%.

Accordingly, many educated young people – and especially those of highlands-peasant origin – could not find white-collar jobs in the cities, and were often forced to return, deeply frustrated, as schoolteachers to the peasant communities of their birth. There they discovered that schoolteachers' salaries were only about $90 a month – less than a third of 1979-1982 levels.

After their painful journeys away from traditional rural life and back, many of these young people found in Sendero an explanation for their dashed hopes and a cause that gave meaning to their lives. For them, Sendero's fundamentalist Maoist creed was not dogmatic, but clear and firm. Its use of terrorism was not barbaric, but a means by which they could finally command respect and even fear. The organisation's cohesion and discipline were not stultifying, but a demonstration that Peru's long-standing problems of mistrust and corruption could be overcome. Nor did these young people appear to discern a contradiction between Sendero's 'moral valor' and its recourse to funds from coca production and the drug trade. Perhaps

most important of all, as the Shining Path expanded during the 1980s, it appeared to be an organization that – unlike most of Peru – actually worked; it achieved its stated goals, and to an increasing number of Peruvians its march to power seemed inexorable.

How Sendero was beaten

The critical turning point in the war against Sendero Luminoso was the capture of its leader, Abimael Guzmán, at his Lima hideout on September 12, 1992. The capture was the fruit of several years of effort by a specially-formed elite police-intelligence squad called the GEIN (Grupo Especial de Inteligencia, or Special Intelligence Group), and punctured Guzmán's charismatic image. Also important were better controls over soldiers operating in the countryside, and reforms to anti-terrorism legislation.

These policies evolved by trial and error over a twenty-year period. To generalize, the first president to face the Sendero challenge, Fernando Belaúnde (1980-'85), was at a loss for an appropriate response; the next, Alan García (1985-'90), tried a variety of approaches, some of them successful; and finally Alberto Fujimori (1990-2000) reinforced the successes of his predecessor, but often in ways that were divisive and violated democratic principles.

Intelligent intelligence

The foundation of GEIN in March 1990 met several kinds of resistance. Previously, the conventional strategy of Peruvian police intelligence units was immediately to arrest and interrogate suspects. Interrogation was often brutal, but ineffective because the location

of Guzmán's hideouts was known to only a few top leaders. By contrast, GEIN's agents were first and foremost detectives, and their strategy was to track suspects, hoping for intelligence that would lead to Guzmán's whereabouts. At times this strategy was at odds with the political goals of higher-level officials, who wanted demonstrable proof – in the form of captured militants – that their counterinsurgency strategy was working.

Second, GEIN was a unit within the Peruvian police, whereas traditionally the military was the lead agency for an initiative of this importance, and at times turf battles were intense. The Belaúnde government of the early '80s had little interest in developing any kind of effective intelligence capability at all, since Belaúnde himself had been ousted in a military coup in 1968, and feared that intelligence units might again be used against legitimate civilian government. García, in contrast, fully appreciated the need for better domestic intelligence, and having developed bad relations with the army, turned instead to the police. GEIN, founded just before García left power, was the brainchild of Benedicto Jimenez Baca, an officer with its predecessor the Dirreccion Nacional Contra el Terrorismo, or DIRCOTE. DIRCOTE, he thought, had become large and unwieldy, and vulnerable to leaks and even infiltration. GEIN, in contrast, began life with only 27 staff, and was specifically tasked with capturing Guzmán and other top Senderista leaders. It scored a first major breakthrough within months, with the seizure of a Guzmán safehouse in the wealthy Lima suburb of Monterrico. The raid secured valuable documents leading to several important arrests, and missed Guzmán himself by little more than a week.

Taking office in July 1990, President Fujimori and his spymaster Vladimiro Montesinos tried to put GEIN under the control of

Montesinos's military intelligence unit, the National Intelligence Service or SIN. GEIN resisted, and with Montesinos's help appears to have secured substantial aid from the CIA, including cash, sophisticated cameras and listening devices, and training in surveillance and disguise (for example, as garbage men when examining the dustbins of suspected safe houses.) Nevertheless, Montesinos and SIN constantly prodded GEIN for more results, taunting them as "followers of phantoms". (It was true that GEIN often had difficulty deciding when it had got as much information as it could from surveillance, and should make an arrest.)

GEIN's second big breakthrough was the discovery of another safehouse, again in a rich Lima suburb, in which Guzmán had recently celebrated his birthday. Inside GEIN found videotapes of the party, showing Guzmán dancing drunkenly to Greek music with other Senderista leaders. Played and replayed on Peruvian television, the tapes dramatically punctured Guzmán's image as an ascetic 'philosopher-king'.

Guzmán's actual arrest came eighteen months later, in the house of a ballet teacher identified by an earlier arrestee who had been persuaded to inform under a recently-introduced plea-bargain or 'repentance' law. Finally deciding to pounce when Winston Light cigarettes – Guzmán's brand – were found in her rubbish, Jimenez directed the raid himself, with complete success. Guzmán put up no resistance, and the arrest was hailed as 'the capture of the century' throughout Peru – to the fury of Fujimori, who was away fishing at the time.

Behind bars, Guzmán was revealed not as a deity, but as a paunchy middle-aged man with a ragged beard and thick glasses. Dressed in a cartoonish striped prison suit and placed in a cage, he ranted and

raved – and looked silly to millions of Peruvian television viewers. Information on computer files found at his final safehouse enabled the immediate arrest of some twelve of his nineteen Central Committee members, and within six months hundreds of mid-ranking militants, not only in Lima but throughout the country, had been taken into custody. Of Guzmán's inner circle, only Oscar Alberto Ramírez Durand ("Feliciano") remained at large, before finally being captured in 1999. Guzmán himself was convicted of treason and sentenced to life imprisonment in October 1992, after a closed trial in front of hooded military judges. Though the trial was recently declared not to have met international standards, and a retrial is theoretically promised, it is not likely to happen soon.

Taming the Andes

In Peru's rural highlands, finding the right strategies to defeat Sendero was a long and painful process. On the one hand, given that the Senderistas were armed and brutal, measures lacking a military component failed. On the other, given that they were often indistinguishable from ordinary villagers, military action was often not only ineffective but counter-productive.

Belaúnde initially sent only police to the southern highlands. But by December 1982 it was clear that they were no match for the Senderistas, and he sent in the army too. The move was a disaster. Unfamiliar with the territory, unable to speak Quechua, scared and frustrated, soldiers acted like members of an occupying force. In 1984, the bloodiest year of the whole campaign, the security forces killed over 4,000 people – about 20% of the total killed by the security forces during war, and the great majority indigenous

peasants. Unsurprisingly, the violence bred intense resentment of the government and army, and swelled support for Sendero.

It was clear to the succeeding García government that a different approach was needed. García immediately reined in the army, dismissing three of its highest-ranking officers on human-rights grounds, and bringing legal charges against numerous other higher- and lower-ranking security-force personnel. In 1986 and 1987 the number of deaths and disappearances at the hands of the security forces declined to about one-fifth of the 1984 number.

García also started to tackle rural poverty. The state-owned Agrarian Bank more than doubled its lending in the southern highlands, and reduced interest rates to zero. Public investment in Ayacucho approximately quadrupled, to about $30m in 1986, and 100,000 highlanders were given jobs via a short-term road and sewerage-construction program.

Though more sophisticated than the Belaúnde approach, both these policies failed. The human-rights prosecutions infuriated the army: officers refused to send their soldiers out of barracks, and effectively went on strike. Civilian development workers found themselves without protection from Sendero attacks, and had to abandon most of their employment-creation projects. Other economic measures were swamped by the general economic crisis.

From 1988, therefore, García modified his strategy. Recognising that no progress was possible without basic security, he softened his stance towards the chastened military, and re-established *rondas campesinas* or armed self-defence patrols. Tentatively attempted by Belaunde, these had initially proved a failure: few peasants wanted to join, and those that did acted criminally (notoriously, one patrol shot a journalist.) By the late '80s, however, Sendero had become

more brutal and the army less so, making the patrols more popular. Fujimori boosted the *rondas* further, equipping them with Winchester and Mauser rifles as well as shotguns, and encouraging the army to work with them on food, medical and civic-action projects. By mid-1993 4,000 *rondas* had been established, with about 300,000 members and 10,000 rifles.

Although recognized today as vital to Sendero's decimation, the *rondas* were not without problems, many of which critics foresaw from the start. In some places, the army compelled participation, executing peasants who refused to serve. The wholesale distribution of weaponry at the time may also be to blame for violence in the highlands today. Critics' fears that the *rondas* might join Sendero were not, however, borne out, largely because (unlike in Guatemala) the army learned how to work on 'hearts and minds', and because Sendero made itself genuinely disliked.

Anti-terrorism legislation

The nature of the Senderista organization raised unprecedented challenges for prosecutors and judges. First, given that militants were clandestine it was difficult to secure evidence. Second, Sendero often delegated the execution of terrorist attacks to new or forced recruits or even to unsuspecting children, but there were no provisions in Peru's anti-terrorist law for the conviction of the "intellectual authors" of terrorism. Third, Sendero not only bribed judges – unfortunately a common practice in Latin America – but intimidated and assassinated them. For these reasons, of 4,897 terrorism cases tried between 1981 and '91, 56% were dropped due to lack of evidence, 19% resulted in verdicts of not guilty, and only 11% (552

cases) yielded convictions. Sentences were often relatively short and parole was available.

The rarity of conviction and long imprisonment for Senderistas was one reason Peru's security forces took to illegal violence. In the countryside during the 1980s, army officers feared that released Senderistas would seek revenge against those responsible for their arrest, so opted for massacres that left no witnesses. Later, as the conflict shifted toward Peru's cities, over a hundred terrorist suspects were killed by death squads, predominantly in Lima.

Though concern about the judiciary's inability to cope with Senderista was pronounced during the 1980s, reform efforts fell short. In 1981 the Belaúnde government approved a new antiterrorist law that established a framework for terrorist cases and penalties for convicted terrorists – none of which existed in Peru's 1924 penal code.

García toughened the law further: June 1987's Law 24,700 allowed the establishment of special civilian tribunals for terrorism cases, providing greater protection – in particular bodyguards – for judges. Both Law 24,700 and the following year's Law 25,103 included provisions for 'repentance'; a repentant terrorist could receive clemency in return for information leading to the arrest of other terrorists.

In practice, however, García's new provisions were not implemented. The civilian tribunals were unpopular both with the military, which wanted to retain military jurisdiction over terrorism, and with judges, who feared that even with bodyguards they would be vulnerable to Senderista reprisals. García himself failed to push hard for negotiation or compromise.

Ousted by Fujimori in 1990, García saw his moderate proposals overtaken by a raft of draconian new legislation under Fujimori. In

November 1991, Fujimori proposed a series of new counterinsurgency laws drastically restricting freedom of expression and concentrating power in the presidency and in Montesinos's military intelligence service. Peru's legislature, which had proposed more moderate toughening of anti-terrorism laws, resisted, and on April 5th 1992 Fujimori disbanded it, suspended the constitution, jailed opposition leaders and gave himself emergency powers.

Untrammelled by parliament, Fujimori was able put his new laws into effect unopposed. Essentially, guilt was presumed and due process denied: defense lawyers were not given access to the prosecution's evidence; they were not allowed to cross-examine prosecution witnesses; and often, they were not notified of the time of a trial until a few hours before it began. The powers of the anti-terrorism police were increased, and trials heard in secret, by hooded judges. Prison sentences stretched to a mandatory minimum of twenty years.

Most draconian of all was a decree that the crime of 'treason against the motherland' (*traición a la patria*) be tried in military courts. 'Treason' was not precisely defined; even simply distributing Shining Path propaganda could qualify. The police rather than the courts were given responsibility for distinguishing between it and the lesser crime of terrorism, in general applying it only to Senderista leaders. A 'repentance' law – long proposed by parliament – was also finally enacted, offering penalty reductions in exchange for information. By June 1994 over 4,100 former Senderistas had 'repented', amongst them the senior Guzmán lieutenant whose information led to the arrest of Guzmán himself.

Did Fujimori's legislation, though dubiously enacted, actually work? Virtually all analysts agree that prior to 1992, anti-terrorist legislation

was too lax and way too few Senderistas were in jail. However, it is also accepted that with the 1992 legislation the pendulum swung too far the other way. Of all the suspects tried by military courts under the system, an overwhelming 97% were convicted. Between April 1992 and December 1996 (a few months after the passing of an amnesty law), around 5,000 people were imprisoned for terrorism, about a third of whom are reckoned to have been innocent. A particular problem was that in order to take advantage of the repentance law, suspects denounced anyone who came to mind.

It's the economy, estupido

While careful police intelligence, peasant self-defense patrols, and legislative reform were pivotal policies for the defeat of Sendero, they did not address the root causes of the insurgency. As indicated above, Peru's 1980s economic debacle was one of the region's worst. In 1990, the Fujimori government's immediate, all-out financial stabilization program pleased the international financial community, but took a heavy toll on Peruvians' living conditions. By 1993, however, the reforms were beginning to pay off, and Peru's economy was rebounding. Four years of robust growth, combined with public-works and food-donation programs in Peru's highlands, consolidated Sendero's defeat.

Much more complex was the question of the Fujimori government's overall legitimacy. In the short term, while they feared an actual takeover by the Shining Path, Peruvians mostly accepted the government's abuses – for example, the draconian anti-terrorist legislation – as a regrettable necessity. Fujimori's landslide victory in new elections in 1995 was in good part a reward for his decimation of Sendero. But as Fujimori's government became progressively

more authoritarian, Peruvians began to clamor for democracy. In 2000 Fujimori and Montesinos both fled the country amid bribery scandals. Montesinos was arrested in Venezuela a year later and is currently standing trial on various charges, while Fujimori continues to fight extradition from Japan.

Lessons for dealing with al-Qaeda

The single most important lesson to be drawn from the Peruvian experience is that the capture of a terrorist movement's leader can be of transcendental significance. Given that Osama bin Laden appears to be revered as intensely by al-Qaeda members as Abimael Guzmán was by Senderistas, his capture should be the very top priority of the anti-terrorist effort today. To groups such as Sendero and al-Qaeda – based on ideological or religious faith, and claiming the leader to be divinely invested – such captures are devastating.

Guzmán's downfall also highlights the advantages of meticulous police intelligence work, culminating in an arrest, over a military attack. No one expects bin Laden's meek surrender, but no one expected Guzmán's either, though in the event its advantages were major. Computerized files of militants were captured rather than destroyed, and Guzmán, rather than becoming a martyr, was shown to be not a deity but a man – indeed, a surprisingly pedestrian one. Of course, Peru's security forces were fortunate in that by late 1980s Guzmán had moved from the countryside to Lima, where they could locate him more easily. Presumably, bin Laden continues to hide out in remote rural areas, moves regularly and takes greater security precautions. But we don't know: Saddam Hussein, of course, was found in a hole behind a farm house.

Secondly, the Peruvian experience underlines the importance of winning hearts and minds in the areas where terrorists are most active. The years 1983-4, when Peruvian soldiers occupied these areas brutally and indiscriminately, killing thousands of innocent people, were disastrous. Terrorist flames were fanned, not subdued. Unfortunately it appears that U.S. troops in Iraq have similarly insufficiently understood the country they occupy, have similarly applied force clumsily, and are similarly losing the struggle for hearts and minds.

More optimistically, if the Peruvian army was eventually able to modify its strategy, and even arm potential opponents to good effect, the US army should be able to do the same. It helped Peru that by the time the *rondas* were re-established Sendero's own brutality had already alienated much of the general public. In Iraq, hopefully, increasing insurgent violence will do the same; at the same time the US should make ever-greater efforts to recruit, train and support the new Iraqi police. The timing of such efforts, the Peruvian experience suggests, is vital: governments should keep close track of public attitudes, so as to know if and when giving civilians the means to defend themselves is likely to succeed.

Third, Sendoro's history underlines the delicate balance governments must strike between over-lax and over-harsh anti-terrorism legislation. Until 1992, Peru's legislation was absurdly weak. Thereafter it was tightened severely, to the point that the right to a fair trial was obliterated. For a period, in the context of the intensity of Sendero's challenge to the Peruvian state in the early '90s, this was perhaps justifiable. Although imprisonment with the uncertain prospect of a fair trial at a later date was undesirable, it was certainly better than the wanton killing of suspects by rogue and not-so-rogue forces, which was in practice the alternative, and indeed occurring.

Concomitantly, in the months immediately following 9/11, when U.S. intelligence on al-Qaeda was still limited, it was arguably understandable that large numbers of suspects were arrested without customary due process. Over the medium and long term, however, the right to a fair trial cannot be denied without serious damage to fundamental human rights; the violation of these rights in turn undermines the legitimacy of a war on terror. In Peru death-squad killings and the imprisonment of hundreds of innocent people were among the catalysts for Fujimori's eventual overthrow. In the US, the government's holding and abuse of suspects – many now acknowledged to be innocent – at Guantánamo Bay and Abu Ghraib is similarly causing disquiet. As in Peru, closed military tribunals for terrorist trials would be an extreme, unwarranted measure that would likely alienate broad swathes of domestic and global public opinion.

Finally, success against terrorism requires not only the implementation of effective anti-terror policies, but open-mindedness and adaptability in deciding what policies are likely to prove effective in the first place. Prior to policy implementation, authorities must develop a process of correct policy choice. Peru went through a process of trial and error, as governments pondered what had and had not worked for themselves and their predecessors. Today, facing radical Islamic fundamentalism, we must also carefully and candidly assess our mistakes and our achievements, and change our policies accordingly.

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Appendix

Years most active	Ideology	Level of support at peak	Numbers killed	Security and military cou
Boxers: 1899-1901	Anti-foreign, anti-Christian, animist.	tens of thousands.	Boxers kill est. 30,000 Chinese Christians and 350 foreign soldiers and civilians. Allied Armies kill several thousand Boxers, plus large numbers of Imperial troops and North Chinese villagers.	Occupation of Peking and northern China by Ameri German, Austrian, French Russian and Japanese tro
Red Brigades: 1970-1985	Marxist-Leninist.	300 active members, plus widespread support on the far left.	est. 90.	Carabiniere given extensi Traditionally civilian adm posts taken by army offic
Sendero Luminoso: 1980-1992	Maoist.	25,000 active followers.	Sendero kills >25,000 and security forces another est. 25,000.	Highlands occupied by ar peasant self-defence units turning-point capture of specially-created dedicate
November 17th: 1975-2002	Revolutionary, anti-American.	15 active members.	21.	Police and intelligence se corrupt and ineffective.
Aum Shinriykō: 1988-1995	Apocalyptic.	500 full-time members, plus 1,100 lay followers.	est. 58.	Police given greater surve

unter-measures	Judicial counter-measures	Social/economic counter-measures	Overall assessment
nd parts of rican, British, h, Italian, oops.	n/a.	China forced to pay heavy indemnities to Allied governments.	Failure. Invasion preserves trading-stations in the short term but Qing Dynasty falls ten years later and relations with China poisoned for decades. May also have indirectly encouraged subsequent rise of militarism in Germany and Japan.
ive powers. ministrative cers.	Search, seizure and arrest powers extended; interrogation without the presence of a lawyer allowed; a 'repentance' law introduced.	Background economic growth.	Eventual success. After six years of confusion and hesitation, state galvanised into action by Aldo Moro's murder. Italian democracy preserved and terrorists defeated.
rmy, and s created. Key f leadership by ed police unit.	Closed military trials in front of hooded judges, 20-year minimum sentences, censorship and a 'repentance' law introduced. Due process severely curtailed.	Public-works programmes and subsidised loans in rebel areas. Macro-economic stabilisation.	Eventual success, at high cost. Tens of thousands killed; army initially allowed to get out of control; hundreds of unsafe convictions; democracy briefly suspended.
ervices remain	Attempt at media censorship.	Background economic growth.	Failure: a tiny group that survived much longer than it need have, thanks to policing blunders and political prevarication.
eillance powers.	None.	Recovery from 1990s recession.	Initial intelligence failure, followed by speedy clean-up following the Tokyo subway attack.

Taming Terrorism is the second in a series of Policy Exchange publications that draw from past experience in analysing how best to tackle foreign policy challenges today. The first, *Regime Change*, looked at state-building efforts abroad; *Taming Terrorism* does the same with terrorist movements, from the Boxer rebels to Japan's Aum Shinrikyo cult.

Case-studies by five distinguished academics come to some expected and unexpected conclusions: that security agencies must learn to look forwards rather than back; that the countries most likely to under-fund their security agencies are those with a history of militarism; that tough anti-terrorism legislation is hard to sustain; and that economic growth often does more than political reform to tackle terrorism's root causes. Military occupation of terrorist-producing territories only succeeds if armies are held accountable for their actions, and political wrangling and bureaucratic bungles can allow even a tiny, unpopular group to survive for decades.

Taming Terrorism reminds us that despite al-Qaeda's global reach and use of modern technology, today's struggle is not unprecedented. We have beaten similar groups before and can do so again.

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