

At a time when many scholars, government analysts and politicians proclaim the emergence of a 'new terrorism', an examination into those aspects of terrorism that have endured is necessary. Indeed academic contributors have, in recent years, focused their work upon identifying the 'novel' and the 'contemporary' elements of terrorism and, in most cases, dedicated no more than a few lines to analysis of its enduring features. To some extent this is understandable given the absence of any universally agreed definition as to what constitutes terrorism. Definitional uncertainty can render any attempt to analyse terrorism historically somewhat challenging: to identify enduring features, is to say what terrorism is, and it is not incidental that many of the aspects identified within this essay duplicate those found in definitional attempts. Since definitional

clarity is beyond the scope of this essay, for the purposes of this investigation terrorism will be defined as '...the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change' It goes without saying that every terrorist group is unique and must be considered within its wider context, yet this essay will argue that in spite of changes in its manifestations, enduring features of the phenomenon can be identified. From the appearance of terrorism in first-century Palestine to the Jihadist terrorism of the present day, this essay will argue that the following aspects have endured: the use asymmetric methods, coercion, psychology, intent to communicate a message, symbolism and indiscriminate use of violence. The second part of the essay will focus on extracting policy recommendations from the analysis.

An enduring aspect of terrorism has been the nature of its method. It has and continues to be asymmetric: a weapon 'for the weak' to be used against 'the strong'. Sun Tzu explored the problem in the Art of War: 'If you are equal, then fight if you are able. If you are fewer, then keep away if you are able. If you are not so good, then flee if you are able'. For Bruce Hoffman, the method of terrorism is determined by this asymmetry: 'the bomb in the rubbish bin...is merely a circumstantially imposed "poor man's air force"'. As evidenced by their designation as sicarii (dagger-man) by the Roman authorities, the Zealot's decision to assassinate in the midst of crowds such as market places came about from this recognition. Lacquer used Hassan Sibai, the first leader of the Assassins, to illustrate this point—'Hassan Sibai seems to have realized early on that his group was too small to confront the enemy in open battle but that a planned, systematic, long-term campaign of terror carried out by a small, disciplined force could be most effective political weapon'. Due to their asymmetry the terrorist fighters (fida'ín) operated in complete secrecy, often disguising themselves as Christians or strangers. In the nineteenth and up until the mid-twentieth century, assassination was the weapon of choice in the asymmetrical struggle.

For Carlos Marighella a militant non-state actor was doomed to failure if it attempts to defend itself conventionally on the state's own terms and ground: 'defensive action means death for us since we are inferior to the enemy'. However it has long been believed that a conventionally superior side possesses its own inherent vulnerabilities that as by-product of its main strengths

are open to exploitation by the asymmetrically 'weaker' opponent. Stepanova argues that the ability to turn a direct, top-down one-way asymmetry into an essentially bottom-up asymmetry has consistently been a method used by terrorists. The terrorist mode of operation that attacks the enemy's weakest points involves attacking its civilians and non-combatants, acting as a 'force multiplier'. For instance, it is virtually impossible to locate an assassin in a crowd and the ubiquitous bomb has become a *bête noire* of the code of ethics in liberal democracies due to the difficulty of detecting a bomb carrier in time unless it is already suspected. Indeed without the use of electronic and animal detection technologies in every public space it has been effectively impossible to eradicate this weakness.

However it is also important to recognise that the conventionally weaker opponent has genuine strengths that are not merely a distorted mirrored image of the stronger party. Scholars argue that reverse asymmetry has strongly favoured the 'weak' on the ideological front throughout the history of terrorism. Indeed Carlos Marighella noted that 'from a moral point of view' the weaker opponent enjoys 'an undeniable superiority'. The advantage is a comparative one since mobilisation and indoctrination is likely to result in the asymmetrically 'weaker' party more readily taking up arms. Indeed reverse ideological asymmetry has been a notable enduring feature of terrorism and asymmetrical confrontation. For instance, a source of the Zealot's strength in the first century was their willingness to confront the enemy at great risk to themselves. The Roman army are recorded to have captured, tortured and killed hundreds of rebels which only served to galvanise the men and women fighters left behind. Such ideological fervour is considered to what have sustained the thousand fighters after the destruction of a temple in AD70 where they resisted capture in a fortress for three years at Masada. Encircled by Roman troops, they chose to kill themselves rather than fall into their enemy's hands. Similarly the moral strength of the FLN in Algeria against the French has repeatedly been elevated as proving significant in their struggle and most recently, the ideological determination of Jihadist terrorists has attracted attention.

The enduring coercive nature of terrorism has also been frequently cited by commentators as featuring within the history of terrorism. Coercive terrorism involves: demoralising of the civilian population; weakening its confidence in the government and instilling fear of the terrorists and, by making examples of well-publicized victims, enforcing obedience to the terrorist leaders. In many cases terrorists have attempted and, at times, succeeded in intimidating targeted categories of people, such as judges and jurors through techniques of assassination, maiming and kidnapping. Indeed the creation of Diplock courts during 'the troubles' were recognition of terrorist groups in Northern Ireland successes with coercing jury members. Notably some terrorist groups in the past have widened the net, and targeted all those who cooperated with the authorities and refused to assist them in pursuing their aim. For instance, the murders of both actual and presumed 'collaborators' were coercive strategies employed the FLN in Algeria, the Palestinian "Shock Committees" in the Israeli Occupied Territories and the Vietminh and Vietcong in Vietnam.

However the purpose of such activities has not always been to coerce real opponents but rather to coerce the great majority of the public into taking a stand. For example, it has been calculated that the FLN murdered nearly six times as many Muslims compared to Europeans. Moreover coercion has also been used simply to demonstrate power and control. During the

1930s Arab rebellion in Palestine, it was demanded to the urban Arab population that they desist from wearing the tarboosh to prevent severe punishment. The use 'provocation' within coercive strategy continues to be employed throughout history by terrorist groups—Carlos Marighella has been the most famous proponent of the method. Indeed many terrorist groups continue to subscribe to the idea that terrorism evokes repressive responses by any regime or authority, which necessarily impacts upon sections of the population not associated with terrorists. In turn, these repressive measures are considered to make the authority or government unpopular and increase public support of the terrorists and their cause. Notably this aspect has been less successful than other coercive tactics.

Another enduring aspect of terrorism is that it profoundly psychological. In the Art of War, Sun Tzu suggested 'kill one, frighten ten thousand' Indeed all forms of warfare contain a significant psychological component in pursuit of damaging the opponent's morale through sowing fear in their ranks and in strengthening one's own forces' self-confidence and will to fight. Sir Basil Liddell Hart went as far as to remark that in all great battles in history, 'the victor had his opponent at a psychological disadvantage before the clash took place.' However the psychological component's presence in terrorism is more pronounced. In emphasising this point, Merari felt compelled to state that 'psychological impact is the most essential element in terrorism as a strategy'. Repeatedly commentators have acknowledged the significance of the psychological element of terrorism, and as a characteristic it has been consistently been recognised in official definitions of the term.

Terrorists use psychological leverage (albeit that obtained from fear) to gain the attention of a target audience, and in optimal conditions, enact change. In many ways terrorists exploit the psychological vulnerabilities among both the enemy and friendly populations as a means of compensating for physical or material disadvantages. The psychological implications of an enemy that is willing to ignore the rules of war help to put terrorist acts on the public stage as well as heightening the creation and exploitation of fear. The fundamental elements of the psychological basis of terrorism have changed very little since the 19th century, when anarchist writings first devised the principles of this strategy.