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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. 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. It goes almost without saying that every terrorist group is

unique and must be considered within its wider context, yet 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, the use asymmetric methods, coercion, psychology, intent to communicate a message, symbolism and indiscriminate use of violence endure.

Terrorism has and continues to be asymmetric: a weapon 'for the weak' to be used against 'the strong'. 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-men) 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'īn) 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.

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. 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's 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. 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.

Most recently some analysts have portrayed Jihadist terrorism as being 'non-coercive' but rather 'catastrophic'. While Osama Bin Laden's oft-quoted comment that he did not want to come to the negotiating table but "smash it" is grounded in fact, closer analysis of his objectives and speeches demonstrate that, at least to some extent, specific demands including the removal of

US presence from Saudi Arabia exist. Indeed the Al Qaeda-inspired cell that carried out the Madrid Bombings in 2004 contained a coercive function and succeeded in coercing the withdrawal of Spanish forces from Iraq.

Another enduring aspect of terrorism is that it profoundly psychological. 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. However the psychological component's presence in terrorism is more pronounced. 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. .

Increasingly from the mid-twentieth century disturbing images of terror have the ability to trigger a visceral response irrespective of physical proximity to the event. Advances in technology, the popularity of the Internet, and proliferation of twenty-four hour news coverage have only exacerbated the scale of the psychological impact. The harrowing images of people jumping from the burning towers in New York on September 11, 2001 circulated the world and have even been reported to have caused in some cases psychological trauma brought upon indirect viewing. Today Al Qaeda is considered to exploit Westerners desire to live in an unattainable state of 'absolute security'. Indeed it is from recognition of this apparent modern psychological phenomenon that the large majority of citizens across the world appear to be ambivalent in sacrificing 'freedom for security'. It is arguable that with the advent of the possibility of the use nuclear weapons by non-state actors has an unprecedented psychological impact not only civilians but, in some circumstances, the state itself.

Another enduring aspect of terrorism is the communication of meaning. Indeed while terrorism is a specific tactic that necessitates victims, and while civilians remain the prime targets, those victims are not the intended end recipients of the terrorist's message. Most commonly the intended audience of the message has been the state (or a group or community of states). With this in mind, in 1970 Rubin remarked that 'you can't be a revolutionary without a color TV: it's as necessary as a gun'. However, ancient forms of terrorism found powerful ways by which to communicate. The Assassins' use of assassination had high utility in this respect. Dramatically-staged assassinations drew a lot of attention to the cause in the manner of which they came. In the Muslim context, the basis of power was immensely personal. Hodgson argued that 'when a Sultan died his troops were automatically dispersed. When an Amir died his lands were in disorder'. In the time of the Zealots and Assassins, the most effective medium of communication was by word of mouth. Therefore terrorist acts were planned for venerated sites or on holy days thereby increasing the effectiveness of communication.

In many ways terrorist groups' ability to fulfil their needs to communicate has become somewhat easier. In the 1950s Carlos Marighella declared that 'the media are important instruments of

propaganda for the simple reason that they find terrorist actions newsworthy'. Since the industrial revolution, technology has increasingly shrunk time and space. In today's extremely complex world, Nacos argues that, 'without massive news coverage the terrorist act would resemble the proverbial tree falling in the forest.' In the early 1980s, Yonah Alexander, referring to the enigmatic Symbionese Liberation Army, asserted that 'for several years, the media have continued to magnify the case out of proportion to its real significance', and through this have transformed it into an internationally recognised movement possessing power and posing an insurmountable problem to the authorities.

In the absence of an outlet there have been a few cases where terrorist groups have been forced to take it upon themselves to become disseminators of their 'message'. For instance, the Russian anarchist group, Zemla I Volya, set up its own print shop in St. Petersburg to act as a medium for communication of its struggle in the knowledge that without its creation communication would be thwarted. In an attempt to find exceptions to the rule, a number of commentators point to Sendero Luminoso: the group largely avoided the media, relying on terrorist actions rather than words. However this example only serves in demonstrating that words are not necessarily required—in this case, solely actions were used to communicate what was a clear message. It should also be of note that terrorist acts have always been designed to communicate to a range of audiences, sometimes different messages. For instance, many terrorist acts have and continue to be directed at recruiting and training new members and communicating through inspiring support and coordinating an emerging network of followers.

Allied to this concept is the issue of symbolism which has been an enduring aspect of terrorism. The significance of symbolism was recognised by the Assassins as early as the first century where they employed terror against figures associated with power solely because they were figureheads. Scholars argue that the assassins' assault patterns were so uniform that they were likely to have been prescribed by religious ritual. In the words of a 12th century Western author, the weapon was "always a dagger; never poison, never missiles – though there must have been occasions when those would have been easier and safer". Similarly Narodnaya Volya targeted symbolic high-level officials, including police chiefs, government agency heads, members of the royal family and tsar itself. Most recently, the attack on the twin towers, an internationally recognised symbol of US financial power was not a conventional military goal but in being instantly recognisable provided symbolic significance. In the last case, the symbolic target was profoundly visual which served to further the communication needs of the terrorist group at a time when dissemination of news by providers has become predominantly imaged-based.

Another enduring feature of terrorism is the existence of a degree of indiscriminateness. Most famously Emile Henry declared in 1894: 'Il n'y a pas d'innocents.' The term 'indiscriminate' has, in recent years, been subject to much debate. No clear consensus as to its critical value has yet appeared. Although, it is important to recognise that there are very few acts of terrorism that have intended to appear indiscriminate. Terrorists have generally wanted to appear selective. From ancient Assassins' use of assassinations of particular leaders to the Continuity IRA's recent murder of a policeman in Armagh as a member of a specific group—a degree of selectivity can be interpreted. And yet, even from these choices of targets, an element of indiscriminateness persists. Any person that finds themselves a member of a targeted position or group is at risk. At the other end of the scale some terrorist groups have tended to be

selective in their choice of physical targets—government buildings or the airliners of a specific national carrier, for instance—but again they are not concerned about potential victims, and thus their violence becomes indiscriminate. For instance, the 1998 United States Embassy bombings in the East African capital cities of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and Nairobi by the Egyptian Islamic Jihad killed hundreds of people which shared nothing more than physical proximity to US government property.

In recent years this enduring aspect has become more pronounced. The argument goes that in the past, 'terrorists wanted a lot of people watching, not a lot of people dead'. However commentators today assert that terrorists also want lots of casualties. It is true that in the past, civilians usually became victims of terrorist operations either because they were captives of hostage-taking events or because they happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. A statistical survey has shown that during the 1980s hostages would survive the event 96 per cent of the time. Since the large majority of terrorist attacks since 2001 have been conducted in the global south this has resulted in a significant number of indiscriminate Muslim deaths—and interestingly as a result of this it is believed that Al Qaeda's intention to specifically target the West will grow. Unsurprisingly much of this evidence for lethality has come directly after the events of September 11, 2001 and with the invasion of Iraq. Notably in analyses of the thousands of Al Qaeda tapes that were recovered from Afghanistan, Schuster highlighted the group's fascination with assassinations, and suggested that this seemingly more discriminate tactic should not be ruled out as having disappeared. In any case, the enduring element of indiscrimination within terrorism continues.

To some extent the history of terrorism offers no clear-cut lessons simply because conditions vary from age to age and country to country—terrorism has and always will occur within a wider context. Moreover terrorist acts that in the future are likely to be successful are also likely to be novel. As one commentator recently quipped, "if you imagine that Osama bin Laden is going to evolve into Nelson Mandela, you need a psychiatrist, rather than a historian" However study of the enduring features of terrorism clearly demonstrates that terrorism was not born in the nineteenth century— as many terrorist experts would have us believe—but rather has been a feature of civilisation as early as ancient historical relics record. As such, a solid historical understanding of terrorism clearly demonstrates that terrorism per se cannot be eliminated.

Terrorism is too complex, too diverse and too diffuse to ever be eradicated by diligent application of the 'right' strategies. Indeed while Jihadist terrorism, for instance, is likely to be the main purveyor of terrorist attacks in the near future, there is every likelihood that it will eventually be supplanted. Terrorism as a phenomenon needs to be contained.

Editor's note : the U K Defence Forum published its first paper of asymmetric threats in 1999