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ON THE CAUSES OF TERRORISM AND THEIR REMOVAL

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To discuss terrorism--causes, consequences and possible remedies--conceptualization, typologies, and an effort to place the phenomenon of terrorism inside a theory of the world system are indispensable. We cannot just start with a journalistic, vague idea that terrorism is what happens when somebody innocent, of our own kind, is taken hostage or killed by unknown people in unpredictable ways and with motives either do not understand or do not accept. And if "our side" does the same thing, are they just "freedom fighters"?

So let us start with the point of departure of traditional social science as the study of who does what to whom, where, when and how, and why. Seven small words that cover it all relatively well: those who act and those who are acted upon, the content of the act, the space and time coordinates and further circumstances, and the motivation. Change the only action word in the sentence, "does", to "says" and we get the study of communication;[1] change to "thinks", while also changing the preposition "to" to "of", and we are in the field of individualizing psychology (if who = whom even introspective psychology).

But which of these seven words holds the key to the understanding of terrorism? Obviously no single word, but some combination. As a start let us specify the "what" to something destructive and the "whom" to individuals. One of the milder forms of terrorism would be to limit the freedom to move of the individual, by taking him or her prisoner, hostage. Then there is a scale from hitting and hurting mind and/or body to killing. But in all of these cases the target we are most concerned with will tend to be the human beings. A passenger plane may be destroyed; but the target will be the passengers, not the plane. Perhaps we should add that this may not remain so in the future. Terrorism may also be extended to more material objects, things, and it may be argued that this is already the case like in the many actions carried out against U.S. military installations in Western Germany and Italy. But even so there is a difference between terrorism and regular warfare: the destructive act is more specific, this and that particular military or police installation, governmental or corporate office. If anything is indiscriminate violence it is not terrorism but state-sanctioned carpet or nuclear bombing.[2] Relative to this terrorism has pin-point accuracy and specificity.

We get, however, more insight into the nature of terrorism looking at the where, when and how. One key to the understanding of terrorism is the element of surprise, unpredictability. This breaks down for fixed objects since the where is already given; surprise would then be limited to when and how. But it does not break down for human beings for they have a tendency to move around, themselves providing the full range of unpredictability in the where, when and how simply by travelling. Individuals targeted should feel safe nowhere, at no time--that is a key aspect of terrorism as terror.

The individual whom should not be predictable however. Under the rule of law the state administers evil in the form of something destructive, in the now traditional forms, in western law, of fines and imprisonment. Occasionally evil takes the form of maiming the human body (Islam) or killing it (Islam and Christianity). But there should be a high element of predictability. The where and the when, and how punishment is carried out is prescribed by the law;

the *why* is defined by the illegal act, and the *whom* is in principle knowable to the *individual(s)* transgressing the fine lines of law *in advance*. *The rule of law is predictable; the rule of terror unpredictable*. A typical rule of terror technique against a group of people, for instance lawyers in the early periods of the Nazi regime, might be to single out every ten of them for punishment including imprisonment, possibly execution.[4] But there would be nothing specific about that ten percent, no way in which those individuals might know in advance, through their own reading of their own action relative to the terrorists, that *they* would be singled out for destruction. By this method the terrorist wants to control a whole group--a profession, an entire country--into exercising internal control so that no individual will incur the wrath of the terrorists against the group as a whole. That is the essence of terrorism.

We are now left with the first and the last words in the sentence: the *who*, and the *why*. Since the *why* becomes very evident the moment one studies the *who* let us start with the former. For that purpose we need a typology of actors in world space. The simplest typology would be to divide them into state and non-state actors, and strong and weak:

TABLE 1. *A typology of world space actors*

	strong	weak
state		
non-state		

This division is logical rather than empirical, and in no way excludes combinations, e.g. alliances, between state and non-state actors--very important in the field of terrorism.

Strong states would of course include those that are strong at the world level, such as the super-powers, but also those that are strong only in a regional context, such as Israel and Iran, Libya and South Africa. Weak states are weak relative to the strong essentially meaning that there is no context in which they can win in open warfare.

The non-state actors are much more complicated. First of all there is a basic division between national and transnational non-state actors. Among the latter would be not only transnational corporations, but also the numerous international peoples' (or non-governmental) organizations and, as we shall see later, Terrorism International (TI). Most non-state actors would, however, be intra-state, such as national corporations and national organizations in general. This is the "private sector", including private terrorism.

Let us then go one step further on the basis of these four types of actors, looking at the 16 inter-relations, using them both as the who and the whom in conflict, to see where terrorism emerges.

Inside this Table some indications of possible meaning are given. The Table divides into four regions (A, B, C and D) and each region has its own logic. Proceeding from the upper left through upper right to lower left, and then to lower right, all combinations are covered.

In region A we are dealing with conventional inter-state relations. They are reasonably clear-cut and territorial, and the

TABLE 2. A typology of world space relations

who ↱ to whom	strong state	weak state	strong non-state	weak non-state
strong state	super-power conflict	conquest: bullying (ST)	penetration; co-optation	repression STATE TERRORISM
		A		B
weak state	insub-ordination (ST)	conventional conflict	accommodated; penetrated; co-opted	penetration; co-optation
strong non-state	internal war; accommodation	penetrated; coopted; accomodated		
		C		D
weak non-state	guerrilla TERRORISM	internal war; accomodation		

territorial system owes much of its present sub-division, configuration, to the exercise of violence for the sake of moving territorial borders, or removing political obstacles, in other states. But the methods may sometimes be state terrorist (ST) and I suggest that this is particularly true when the power relations are asymmetric, strong vs. weak. Symmetry makes for battles, for open warfare; asymmetry for more covert methods.

In region B we are again on a well-known turf: the states trying to control non-state actors. If they are of comparable strength some kind of bargain may be struck whereby the non-state actor is co-opted into the state by being suitably penetrated--the assumption being that in doing so the state is able to maintain its monopoly on coercive power. If they are of different strengths the situation becomes more complex. There is little the weak state can put up against the strong non-state, such as very strong corporate forces opposed to the state, or a military non co-opted and non-penetrated, pitting itself against the governmental structure. If there is penetration and co-optation to be done it is likely to be the other way around: the weak state will accommodate and then be penetrated and co-opted by corporated, land-owning and/or military forces. Many states in the world of today are alreadv of that type.

The strong state will not give in to weak non-state actors, so this is where the repression takes hold, eventually resulting in State Terrorism--the Jacobin state against French opposition. If Terrorism goes international State Terrorism would also do so by major state terrorist states banding together in State Terrorism International (STI). This was US policy at the Tokyo 1986 Summit and relative to the Western "allies" in NATO and the EC; purportedly as a reaction to Libyan co-ordination of international terrorism.

In region C what has just been said is seen from the other angle, with the non-state actors taking the initiative. Again the distinction would be between comparable power and asymmetry. Symmetry, created by a major popular revolt, leads to internal war (as opposed to the external war of region A, particularly its main diagonal) and ultimately toward accommodation, possibly after a change in the composition of the major powers in the state. Asymmetry in region C, as for region B, is seen as leading to very different situations. The strong non-state will penetrate and co-opt the weak state. The weak non-state will not be able to do anything similar relative to the strong state. The weapons of weak people inside a strong state will be civil disobedience and riots. Terrorism is a further step along that line--against military,economic, cultural and/or political penetration (called "integration" by the strong). People's defense.

Thus we get, in Table 2, the two basic types of terrorism. from below and from above, terrorism (proper) and state terrorism, diametrically opposed to each other, in opposite corners. Terrorism is the weapon of the weak against the strong state; state terrorism is the weapon of the strong state against the weak. That they are dialectically related goes without saying. Who started becomes a chicken-egg problem. The two terreurs, private and state, are simply aspects of the same world space system as it is presently structured. Terrorism is related to asymmetry of power, including section A of the Table. But it is not only the weapon of the weak; it is also the weapon of the strong.

According to somebody war is the continuation of politics by other means. Presumably this can be understood in a more precise fashion whereby external wars are the continuation of international politics and diplomacy by other means, and internal wars are the continuation of domestic politics by other means. This way of thinking handles analytically the main diagonal cells in regions A and C, and perhaps also in region B. But it offers no insight into the slower, more silent form of violence: the structural violence[5] identified as penetration/co-optation, and in some cases eventually as institutionalization of highly asymmetric situations, leading to the diametrically opposed extremes of terrorism and state terrorism. Neither does it shed light on region D which is more subtle, possibly also more for the future. But, as we shall see, that future may already be here, with private bands of terrorists fighting each other rather than weak or strong states all over the place.

So, let us continue where Clausewitz left us: terrorism, by definition directly violent, is the continuation of violence by other means. It is a very particular form of warfare, popular terrorism being a further elaboration of guerrilla warfare to which it is intimately related, and state terrorism being a further elaboration of state repression to which it is equally intimately related. Like regular war it is fought for political ends. It maims, kills and destroys. But it is less predictable in space and time. And less predictable in the individual choice of victims, however precise it may be in the political choice.

What, then, is the continuation of terrorism by other means? I have no name or term to suggest. All I can do is to point to region D for a possible explication of that phenomenon which may already be present among us. In a sense it is a situation of total anarchy, of bellum omnium contra omnes, the war of all against all, without any organizing, monopolizing power of the state. That power may still be present, only that all these other things go on discouraged or encouraged by powerless states. As an indication of what it might mean consider Arab and Jewish terrorist organizations fighting each other all over the world, being each others' who and to whom, keeping the unpredictability of the where and the when and the how at the maximum, being about equally convinced where the why is concerned, trying to outdo each other as to the destructiveness of the what. Or-- the contras against the Sendero Luminoso all over South America?

Let us now leave the typologies and turn to more concrete analysis asking the simple question: what is new about (state) terrorism as a dialectic between the strong state and the weak non-state? Or, put differently, why do we have so much of either terrorism today? The following is a first attempt at a catalogue of decisive factors.

(1) The strong state has become stronger, and even more repressive

At this point I will distinguish between three ways in which the strong state has become more repressive and I would tend to see these as the three major causes of the rise in terrorism/state terrorism, in other words as being the soil out of which both phenomena, right now arise, and of course reenforce each other. Common theme: increased asymmetry between ruler and ruled.

a) There is an increase in structural violence. Let us only look at two types: depriving people of land, and depriving them of soil. The former is what happened to Palestinians in West Asia and to Africans driven out by the whites in the southern part of Africa. In both cases the victims became non-citizens or second class citizens in their own lands. The latter is what happens when rich land owners, transnational corporations and others buy up soil and deprive people of the basic production factor for subsistence. This is what happened in Central/South America and South/East Asia. In short: terrorism as response to increased structural repression.

b) There is an increase in direct violence. Torturism is reported to be more widespread today than ever before; it is not only our perception of the phenomenon that has expanded due to the excellent documentation by Amnesty International and other organizations. Torturism always was one of the classical instruments of repression, and is on the continuum between repression and state terrorism. Related to torturism comes the changing character of the state in the twentieth century along Orwellian dimensions, with the state trying to imitate God by being omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent catching all dissidents through the surveillance techniques of the secret agencies, and imposing their power on them by various means. In short: terrorism as response to increased torturism.

c) There is an increase in the threat of direct violence. The ultimate direct violence at the disposal of the state are the weapons of mass destruction, atomic, biological, chemical, ecological and radiological and, later on, laser and particle beams. With a capability of destroying everything within large areas those who want to fight the strong state evidently have to disperse their forces. Guerrilla is one such example of dispersion down to small groups. Terrorism takes this dispersion one step further, down to the unit of one person, the individual terrorist equipped with his or her means of destruction. In short: terrorism as response to nuclearism.

(2) Transnationalization takes place more quickly than ever before due to better means of communication and transportation.

This applies not only to terrorism from above, but also from below. As indicated above both TI and STI can make use of highly improved interaction. the states presumably having the upper hand by being more able than the non-states to control transnational communication and transportation. I say "presumably" because non-state actors might respond by infiltrating, having its agents deep inside the corporations running communication and transportation, for instance air companies. Thus, if terrorism takes place more often in connection with one air company than others it may not be because that air company is in the "to whom" category but because it is in the "who" category--only not at the managerial level. The same applies to airports.

(3) The means of violence on either side are improving, with higher quality, better availability and at lower price.

Thus, there seems to be an increase both in emphasis on hostage taking, which is a relatively mild form of violence on the used by the terrorists, on taking prisoners as so often done by the state terrorists and killing; by both sides. Terrorists at airports may proceed directly to killing gents supervising the airports do the same and not only to save the lives of innocent bystanders, but also to kill the terrorists before they disappear into due process of law as run by some states. This presents the strong states with a dilemma. They possess very strong means of destruction indeed, but they are more suitable to territorial warfare with a high level of indiscriminate killing of everybody, including everything within a certain area than more finely tuned terrorism, focussing on specific targets.

The state can resolve this dilemma in two rather different ways. Terrorism can be redefined as coming out of another state, and in that case the preference for weak states is obvious since they are less in a position to hit back. The raids of the major strong terrorist states today, United States on shiite villages in Lebanon and on civilian living quarters in Tripoli; Israel on Southern Lebanon (killing 20,000 Palestinians and Lebanese in connection with the 1982 invasion) and on Tunis; South Africa in its air raid on three neighboring states (Zimbabwe, Zambia and Botswana); and Soviet Union in its long lasting war on the people of Afghanistan are some examples.[6] They hit more or less well, usually less, in addition to contributing to the vicious circle described under point 1 above. The other approach would be to adjust the violence machineries of the state to the more dispersed nature of terrorism as is done under the doctrine of low intensity conflict (LIC), with death squads, etc.[7] This is the US technique as increasingly revealed by the Tower Commission, the Iran-Contra hearings and The Christic Institute reports.

To assume that there will not be a terrorist response with corresponding escalation in means of destruction is to attribute to the other side an extremely low level of intelligence, an attribution only understandable as arising from the same deplorable condition. One possible prediction would be that terrorism in a relatively short span of years will go nuclear[8] as a response to US, Israel and South African nuclear capabilities. Suitcases and backpacks rather than cumbersome missiles would be delivery "vehicles".[9] The targets would be buildings and concrete people, not the structural phenomena, that are the real problems rather than particular people and a certain use of buildings above and under-ground. Violence is destructive, not sophisticated. All very different from the subtlety of nonviolent civil disobedience in making structures inoperative, bringing in new ones.

(4) The means of delivery of violence are improving with higher quality, better availability and at lower price.

The ability to hit wherever, whenever and in any way, whatever essentially depends upon human imagination, and that is an open, not a closed system. The use made by the Japanese terrorist group Chukahuha of rockets in Osaka in September 1984, in Tokyo one year later, and in May 1986 in Tokyo (against the summit meeting) of home made rockets, gives some insight in the future of terrorist technology in general and integrated circuits in particular. That Japanese terrorists should be ahead of others in the use of electronics should surprise nobody. Through the networks of

TI it is only to be expected that the technology will be well disseminated. If the rocket is nuclear tipped the situation will become rather intolerable. A first prediction of what is coming.

It will not be more intolerable, however, than it is already for the victims of state terrorism, as any detailed study of what the Soviet Union does in Afghanistan, the United States in Central America and earlier in Indo-China, Israel in Lebanon, and South Africa in the front line states and inside South African territory, would indicate.[11] Drawing on the way in which the modern strong state sees itself as the successor or instrument of God in its push for omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence. satellite surveillance with dissolution powers sufficient to spot what passes for individual terrorists could be combined with extremely precise laser beams reflected from outer space in an impulse sufficient to eliminate, like God's lightning bolt, that very same individual terrorist.[12] A second prediction of what is coming.

(5) A general increase in religious/ideological fundamentalism partly as a cause, partly as a consequence of the other four conditions.

The prospects are omnious, to put it mildly. In these five points I have tried to spell out the basic why as originating in the increasingly repressive character of the modernizing state, the who and to whom in the phenomenon of transnationalization of both terrorism and state terrorism, the what in the escalation of violence and the where, when and how in the escalation of the surprise factor. All of this is a very far cry away from the Hague Convention of 1907 that stipulates that states are supposed to declare war before any such act is engaged in. Law and order, even in the execution of violence! That very same system. the inter-state system, is by no means to be extolled for its virtues. On the contrary, it was and is replete with direct and structural violence. That system is to-day threatened, particularly the part of the system which more than other parts is at the very center of structural violence and more than other parts is capable of direct violence and threats of direct violence. So, how do they react, the power-wielders in the state system?

In addition to trying to turn the clock of history backwards by acting as if terrorism is an act of war of one state against another state, and not also of people against states and states against people, there is another effort to redefine the terrorists. Instead of being a rational, calculating head-of-state (currently Qhadafi, Assam and Khomeini of Libya, Syria and Iran are favorites) the terrorist is seen as crazy, criminal, sub-human. He comes out of nowhere, has no face. All that can be said about him is that he is totally violent to totally innocent people in a totally unpredictable way. He has no grievance or motivation except one: that of exercising evil, simply because he is evil. He represents terrorism without a cause. He is mad, a mad dog, and like a dog suffering from rabies not to be killed--that would be to promote him to rank of human beings--but to be wasted, destroyed. There is no shadow of reason why Americans should be targets except for one reason: that Evil always selects its victims among the Good. Infinite Evil against infinite Good, the eternal battle in a dualistic universe, fueled by hatred and envy, and by religious/ideological fundamentalism.[13]

Needless to say, this approach to understanding terrorism, constructed as driven by sub-human actors does not exclude an approach in terms of super-human actors, the state actors above. The connecting link is found in the definition of, for instance, Qhadafi as a "mad dog", precisely to be destroyed or wasted. The craziness is then also attributed to "Muslim fanaticism", assuming that a person who holds onto his faith come what may, does not engage in cost-benefit analysis and for that reason cannot be bought by any exercise of economic power, is irrational. This may be true, but then certainly applies to very many terrorists, state terrorists and others. And who is to say that cost-benefit analysis is the criterion of rationality, and rationality the criterion of being human?[14] Who is to say that it is human to be unprincipled?

Thus, the obvious prediction in connection with the phenomenon of terrorism is its continuation and escalation. It is very hard to believe that any effort of the terrorists will not intensify the efforts of the state terrorists to beat them, which again will intensify the efforts of the terrorists to beat the state terrorists. The state terrorists increasingly use the methods of the terrorists. And the terrorists will increasingly have to organize themselves as if they were a state, equipped with omniscience/omnipotence/omnipresence. Which leads to the obvious question: is there no way out of this?

Let us return to the opening sentence in this paper. The state terrorist approach is to attack the who, containing them, eliminating them. But if they are the result of certain objective conditions that are even strengthened through state terrorism this will not work. A more modest approach would be to control the what and the where/when/how through an immense effort to control the means of violence and to limit the range of unpredictability. The security screening devices at the airports are good examples. The assumption is that means of violence are opaque to x-rays, an assumption that obviously does not hold for a molotov cocktail in a plastic bottle. Neither does it hold for a gun with many of the parts made of plastic (the Austrian state-made gun). Dogs capable of smelling plastic explosives may be fooled by coating those explosives with something with stronger smells. Super-dogs capable of detecting explosives in spite of this may be fooled by super-coating, and so on. Those who refuse to think are condemned to this spiral.

Conclusion: there is no other way than trying to approach the why of the dilemma, the causes translated into motivations. Given the way the issue has been cut here this means nothing less, but also nothing more, than reduction of structural violence, direct violence and threats of direct violence. In other words, these being the three major components of violence it simply means moving towards peace. That, of course, is unacceptable to particularly exploitative and aggressive regimes, and even more so to those who see themselves as chosen peoples who do not only have the right to impose their will on others, but indeed the duty to do so. Not quite by coincidence, the (descendants of the) Puritans in the United States, the (orthodox) Jews in Israel and the Boers in South Africa combine state terrorism with a sense of being chosen people--and so do Khomeini, Qhadafi and Abu Nidal, and the Soviet Union leaders to some extent.[15]

However, I see no reason why only the state terrorists should be seen as initiators of a more desirable state of affairs. The major causes are in their hands, for which reason the major responsibility for a reduction of terrorism along rational lines as opposed to the two types of irrationality indicated above, is theirs. But the escalation in use of violence, taking hostages in order to release captives, or taking captives with a hope that this may detain terrorists from taking more hostages, killing to avenge killing to avenge killing and so on is an actio-reactio phenomenon between two actors. This vicious circle can be redefined from either side.

What if the weak non-state actor turned to non-violence instead?[16] It is another of the weapons of the weak. And there are still others: riots that are dispersed in time in an unpredictable manner as sudden bursts, much like terrorism which in addition is dispersed in space. Religious/ideological fundamentalism also belong, partly as a cause, partly as a consequence of all these phenomena.

The basic point about non-violence is that in order to be effective it has to be massive--a phenomenon Gandhi understood so well. There is a transition from quantity to quality in these matters. For ages acts of civil disobedience by one, ten, one hundred, even one thousand people may have been important. But when the magnitude enters higher orders such as 10^4, 10^5 not to mention 10^6-10^7 even the strong state is shattered in its foundations. The Pentagon Papers talk about the fear of massive civil disobedience in the United States as a major constraining factor on the war machine unleashed upon the unfortunate Vietnamese.[17] Personally I have experienced both in Rhodesia before it became Zimbabwe, and in India in its fight with the Sikh community, top police officers telling me that they would have relatively little difficulty handling violence but no idea what to do if "100,000 Africans should march non-violently on Salisbury" or "the Sikhs should turn themselves into a massive civil disobedience campaign with millions of participants".[18]

What we simply do not know, or at least do not know sufficiently well, is how to increase the quantity of non-violence without decreasing its quality until the point of no return for the exercise of illegitimate state power, of the structural or direct kinds. Nor is it obvious that this would work against the most self-righteous of the state terrorist states today, the United States, Israel and South Africa. In fact, I could imagine all of them using nuclear arms against massive disobedience. To the extent this is anticipated terrorism and riots--informed and inspired by fundamentalism--will be more likely forms of resistance.

Terrorism is a fundamental challenge to the Weberian state as the wielder of ultimate power monopoly in a given territory.[19] Terrorism and state terrorism, national and international will tend to make the rule of law, municipal as well as international, backed up by the ultimo ratio regis of national or world governments, less realistic than ever. It is not obvious that order can be restored, or obtained internationally, through the old formula of power monopoly to the center, the government, under anything like the present circumstances. The five factors mentioned are too conducive to terrorism, in turn conducive to state terrorism. It is also possible that the mode of governance has to be compatible with the means of destruction, to use an old formula a new way. In short, we may be at the end of an era, and terrorism is only one of the causes and consequences.

And that points to a less controlled, more decentralized national order as well as world order; because more centralized control, with direct and structural violence, makes the system less, not more, controllable.[20]