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TERRORISM:
TOWARD AN ANALYTIC FOUNDATION

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TERRORISM:
TOWARD AN ANALYTIC FOUNDATION

Terrorism The word packs a high-caliber emotional punch For most Americans, it evokes images of mangled bodies and shadowy killers President Clinton and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Shalikashvili have both identified terrorism as a high priority trans-millenial national security issue Preceded by a proscriptive verb like combat, or counter, it ranks high in the list of American foreign policy objectives Military strategists, planning for the twenty-first century, concede without enthusiasm that instruments to counter terrorism must figure prominently among essential military capabilities International affairs experts agree Noting the current asymmetry of military power between the U S and other states in the world and the growing number of non-state actors potentially eager to make their mark, these experts project the possibility of increased use of terrorism and express deep concern that future attacks will use more lethal materials

However, while there is wide agreement that terrorism is a growing challenge to the United States and the world community, there is less agreement on what, exactly, constitutes an act of terrorism Popular usage and news parlance have stretched the term to cover everything from attempts at extortion by lacing consumer products with harmful substances, to placing obscene telephone calls to harass someone, and even to currency speculation [1] Admittedly, most thoughtful people would not consider the cases cited above typical terrorist attacks Yet, the fact that the term is stretched to

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[1] Adrian Guelke provides a well researched and entertaining discussion of the elasticity with which terrorism is applied to a growing variety of incidents in the introductory chapter of *The Age of Terrorism and the International Political System* (London Tauris Academic Studies, 1995), pp 1-3

include them at all suggests these cases share, in one way or other, some characteristics of terrorism, or, in other words, that both writer and reader could conceive of these as terrorist incidents, albeit marginal ones One might conclude, then, that a careful review of incidents widely considered to be typical of terrorism would reveal which features define or describe the core group of acts we consider terrorist, and, at the same time, differentiate that core from other, non-terrorist uses of force

Unfortunately, it is not that simple In fact, a review of only two or three cases quickly demonstrates that there is little agreement about the essential features of terrorism The public generally understands it in terms of stereotypes Politicians and policymakers often rely on implicit definitions that claim the moral high ground and capture political advantage Admittedly, fuzzy definitions prove exceedingly useful in some contexts Definitions unable to withstand close scrutiny, however, can provide neither the clarity nor the predictive capability required for solid analysis They cannot provide a foundation for the kind of hard-edged tactical and operational planning necessary to evaluate the potential for terrorism -- from any source -- to constitute a fundamental challenge to American security or values over the next twenty years, nor do they suggest appropriate mechanisms for responding to that challenge

This essay sets out to evaluate just what questions need to be answered to take that cold, hard look at terrorism It is first and foremost an examination of definitions In the first section, a review of several incidents widely considered to be terrorist demonstrates the lack of definitional clarity in our current thinking about terrorism and how it differs from other uses of force Insights offered by that review suggest which questions must be addressed by a more satisfactory definition A second section proposes an alternate approach to terrorism, one based on the premise that terrorism fits at some point within a spectrum of all uses of force This evaluation of terrorism --

as a military maneuver, if you will -- offers a rewarding set of criteria for determining

which specific features distinguish terrorism from its neighbors on that spectrum

Finally, a concluding section examines this proposed definition of terrorism as

maneuver within a broader context of politics, legitimacy, and state use of coercive

force

A MAZE OF CONTRADICTORY FEATURES[2]

As noted in the introduction, most informed people would not exclude the

possibility that currency speculation with intent to damage a country's economy,

tampering with baby food with intent to extort, and telephone harassment with intent to

intimidate *could* be some type of terrorism, although they would consider none of these

a typical terrorist attack   Typical terrorist incidents, they would likely respond, involve

a surprise attack by Middle East terrorists on innocent civilians who happened to be on

the wrong bus or plane at the wrong time   If they cited examples, incidents such as the

1988 bombing of Pan Am 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, the 1983 bombing of the

Marine barracks in Beirut, and the more recent bombing of the Khobar Towers in

Saudi Arabia would probably figure near the center of most people's perception of

typical terrorism

Yet, a partial and rather superficial review of these three cases quickly demonstrates

that even incidents generally understood as typical of terrorism offer conflicting notions

of what specific features differentiate terrorism from other acts of violence or uses of

coercion or force   The two attacks in Beirut and Saudi Arabia offer the first

definitional paradox, for, although terrorism is generally considered as violence directed

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[2]Cardinal Wolsey s wickedly intricate boxwood maze at Hampton Court provides the metaphor for my attempt
to trace the logic that makes us consider an incident terrorism -- or makes us certain it is not

at civilians, we accept without much question that these two attacks were, in fact, terrorist acts Yet, in both cases, the victims were U S military personnel, deployed on official orders, conducting official U S business when they were attacked What makes these two attacks terrorism? What differentiates them, for example, from acts of war?

By anyone's account, the bombing of Pan Am 103 was a quintessential act of terrorism Yet, a review of the event to try to extract the logic that defines it as terrorism and not some other kind of use of violence leads down a number of tangled pathways [3] First, terrorism is frequently described as an effort to "terrorize" victims, often in an attempt to reach a secondary, usually political, objective Yet, if we reflect briefly on the tragic 1988 bombing of Pan Am 103, it is clear the perpetrator's intent in this case was to kill the plane's unfortunate passengers, and not simply to frighten them Terror, then, seems to have had no part in this incident, unless it was aimed in the most general way at international travelers who use air service Even accepting that possibility, however, for what purpose would one frighten international travelers? One cannot really be certain the perpetrators' agenda went beyond the bombing to a secondary political goal, for none was ever stated Thus, since neither "terror" nor "political agenda" is apparent in this case, we either have to conclude (a) that the bombing of Pan Am 103 was not terrorism -- an unacceptable conclusion by anyone's standards, or (b) that neither terror, nor a secondary political agenda is an essential, defining feature of terrorism

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[3]Throughout this section the reader will almost certainly find a number of disingenuous propositions Accusation admitted. However, in an effort to probe the validity of our assumptions about what terrorism is, and what it is not, I have insisted on some almost quixotic patterns of logic Yes, the author does think that Pan Am 103 was terrorism The point here is not, however, whether, but why

If, however, the answer is (b), as indeed it must be, we are even farther from a definition than we were when we started we now seem to be saying that terrorism can attack military targets as well as civilians, that it does not have to include a particular "terror" component, and that it need not carry with it a political objective However, if terrorism is, then, simply an unexpected attack on unsuspecting people, what differentiates the bombing of Pan Am 103 from, for example, the wanton killing of customers happily downing hamburgers and fries in a fast food restaurant who are suddenly gunned down by a hooded assailant wielding an automatic rifle?

This is a case of *reductio ad absurdum*, you say, these acts *are* somehow fundamentally different, and the difference is the perpetrator Surely, thinking logically about the perpetrator will lead us away from this ridiculous conclusion In fact, as we shall see, the identity of the perpetrator is a critical element in much of our intuitive understanding of what differentiates terrorism from other uses of force and coercion -- a point that bears further examination

In the case of our hypothetical[4] fast food restaurant, the gunman is a criminal, presumably working alone In the case of the bombing of Pan Am 103, the United States has accused specific Libyan agents and suggested that they acted with complicity of the Libyan government If we extract, then, a definitional formula from the Pan Am 103 bombing, it would be something like:

"state" + "agents" + "bombing" + "innocent civilians" + "purpose unknown" = "terrorism."

At first this appears to be a reasonable suggestion for defining terrorism On reflection, however, we find we have still not worked our way out of the maze For, were we to accept the formula as it stands, we would have to consider Allied strategic

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[4]Although we are all familiar with cases of this kind, I am not referring here to any specific incident hence the characterization as "hypothetical " It will appear again as a kind of "control" definition later in the essay

bombing of civilian targets in Germany and the nuclear bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki during the second world war as terrorist incidents In fact. some would argue that the World War II attacks on civilian targets were a most effective use of terrorism since there was clear intent to kill a large number of people in order to create terror in the general surviving population as a way of generating pressure for political change, i e , to stop the German and Japanese war effort [5] Most people do not, however, see the bombing of civilian targets during war as analogous to the bombing of Pan Am 103 We conclude, then, that our definitional formula is still not adequate Back again at the charred wreckage of Pan Am 103, we need to think more precisely about how and why it differs from those devastated German and Japanese cities

The real issue, perhaps, is that Libya is not just *any* state, but a state that sponsors terrorism, *a terrorist state* Hopeful that we can now finish this tedious process of definitions, we change the formula

"terrorist state" + "agents" + "bombing" + "civilians" + "no apparent cause" = "terrorism."
This formula probably approximates what most Americans believe As a definition, though, it is a dismal failure A tautology, it simply leads us around a circle, telling us that there is such a thing as terrorism, and that it is the kind of violence sponsored by states that sponsor terrorism Were we to try to work through this definition, we would be left wondering whether states that sponsor terrorism are always terrorist That is, would it be terrorism if they used violence to defend their homeland from an attack by another country? This particular path of inquiry will most certainly not lead us to a clear track out of the definitional maze, we will not pursue it further For all our effort, we still have been unable to determine what essential characteristics define

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[5]See for example. *The Economist* (London), March 2, 1996, p 23

terrorism and set it apart from other types of violence   A green hedge looms, we are still stuck

Before trudging down another grassy corridor, however, we would do well to stop and reflect briefly on the nature of the formula just proposed   Despite its failure to define terrorism, it does offer insights   It suggests that the *essence* of our understanding of terrorism resides not in the act of violence, nor its intended consequences   Rather, it focuses primarily, perhaps almost exclusively, on the identity of the perpetrator and his relationship to us   By extension, this definition suggests that acts of violence against civilians committed by states inimical to our interests are terrorism, whereas violence against civilians undertaken by the United States or our allies would not be understood in the same way

Official American pronouncements about terrorism have tended to derive from a formula which focuses on the perpetrator, whether state or sub-national group, and the relationship of the perpetrator to the United States as the key determinant in whether or not a violent act against civilians constitutes terrorism or some other kind of violence States appearing on the U S terrorism list are, in significant ways other than their support for terrorism, inimical to U S interests and values   Moreover, I would argue, publicizing such lists serves a positive and exceedingly powerful political purpose for the United States   It deprives these states of many types of U S assistance, although not of basic diplomatic recognition   It publicly cautions international vigilance about the nature of these states' activities throughout the world   And, by serving constant public notice that the United States will respond to any new attack with determination, it probably acts as a deterrent   Thus, the formula defining terrorism in terms linked primarily with the identity of the perpetrator is extremely useful for political purposes

But this formula also has serious flaws   First, it suggests that terrorism is a discrete formula of violence, structurally different from other, legitimate or illegitimate uses of coercive force   It suggests that terrorism is practiced only, or at least primarily, by certain groups or states   It also suggests that an attack against civilians can probably be dealt with by "rounding up the usual suspects," an approach that initially led down the wrong path in the Oklahoma City bombing incident   Most important, a narrow focus on the perpetrator -- or, the usual suspects -- leads us away from reflecting on what constitutes an act of terrorism, what it can "buy" for the group or state that chooses to use it, and at what price   That is, a definition that focuses primarily on the *who*, limits our ability to understand the *how* and *why*   Ultimately, because it narrows our scope of questioning, it could limit our ability to discern changes in the world that may make terrorism a more valuable tool and, in effect, undermine our ability to respond

What do we need to know?   First, we need an analytic framework that will finally spring us out of the maze, a definitional structure that will tell us whether there is a discrete category of force or violence that can be clearly identified as terrorism   If so, we need to know what distinguishes it from other uses of force and / or violence   We need to have some ability to predict who might tend to use terrorism and why   Is religion or ideology a critical factor?   Is relative power or weakness a key factor?   How can we gain insight about how to prevent it, or, if it cannot be prevented, to defend against it   In short, we need a Baron Antoine Henri Jomini to define it, to codify the maneuver so to speak   And, we need a Carl von Clausewitz to help us understand how this maneuver, a form of coercive force long perceived as alien to western notions of proper, civilized warfare, may find an unwelcome place in a world in

which traditional political power structures are seriously eroded and the very order of human society and existence is rapidly changing

It is not accidental that I invoke two of the great military theorists of modern western warfare as a way out of our definitional conundrum [6] Rather, it is to suggest that, just as Jomini painstakingly codified the maneuver he believed made Napoleon the world's greatest general, and just as Clausewitz described the fundamental relation between military operations at all levels and the political environment of the western nation state which generated them, we need to consider both "military maneuver" and "political context" if we are to have a crack at understanding what terrorism is and how it differs from any other uses of force and forms of violence

TERRORISM AS MANEUVER: A WAY OUT OF THE MAZE?

Our efforts to extract a definition of terrorism from consideration of three terrorist incidents has amply demonstrated the inadequacy of much of our traditional thinking Moreover, although many of the questions raised by those incidents remain critical to a final definition, they do not yield it   In the following sections, I propose a different approach, based on the premise that terrorism must fit someplace along a broad spectrum of use of force   I will assume that terrorism, like any tactical military maneuver, is only one of many moves or instruments a leader might choose from a toolbox of coercive tactics   Moreover, I assume that terrorism, like other maneuvers, can be deconstructed into analysis of capabilities and calculated vectors of attack toward objectives   Thus, it is by comparing this "deconstructed" analysis with those of other uses of force that we can begin seriously to differentiate terrorism from its

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[6]Nor, I must add, is it hubris this essay is not intended as a marker in military theory, but rather as a call for those markers to be laid down

neighbors on that spectrum   This process of analysis will ultimately describe a

framework to serve as a starting point for a more defensible definition of terrorism   At

the very least, it will catapult us out of the shadowy passageways of the definitional

maze and into a bit more sunshine

I begin from the premise that there are three components to a typical terrorist

attack (1) the act of violence or coercion itself, (2) the intended recipient and the

intended result of that violence, a complex component of the definition that I will refer

to simply as "object / victim," and finally (3) the perpetrator of the violence   Each

deserves serious analysis

The Attack

There is little disagreement about the type of violence or coercion most commonly

used in attacks considered to be terrorist   For the limited purpose of laying out a basic

framework, I shall simply adopt those catalogued in a previous study and note concerns

about ways in which that violence could become more lethal   A comprehensive study

published in 1989 and based on 286 terrorist incidents taking place between July 1968

and October 1988 came up with the following tally

> Bombings and attempted bombings of various kinds account for 39 per
> cent of the total   Assassinations and attempted assassinations
> constitute 24 per cent of the total, while kidnapping and hostage-taking
> account for 14 per cent   Finally, hijackings feature in 8 per cent of the
> items   If one looks at frequencies from another angle, attacks on
> diplomats of all kinds feature in 9 per cent of the items and attacks on
> airliners in 17 per cent [7]

While this catalog may well represent the lethal scope of past terrorists, there is

widespread concern that future incidents could involve infinitely more lethal weapons

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[7]Christopher Dobson and Ronald Payne, *The Never-Ending War Terrorism in the 80's* (New York Facts on File, 1989), pp 307-353   Quoted in Adrien Guelke, *op cit* , p 32

As is widely reported, chemical and biological weapons can be produced with relatively low technical skill levels. Lack of adequate delivery systems will probably continue to limit the circumstances in which chemical weapons could be used effectively; unfortunately, the same constraints do not apply to delivery systems for biological weapons. Although there is wide debate about the ease with which would be terrorists could avail themselves of nuclear technology, particularly the capability to construct and deliver a bomb,[8] there are numerous potential scenarios in which terrorists could effectively utilize the threat of nuclear capability or contamination even without a fully capable bomb or delivery mechanism[9] Furthermore, there is growing concern that terrorists might use "stand-off" weapons such as the American Stinger or Russian SA-7 stand-off missiles[10]

As we have seen in our preliminary discussion, however, the nature of violence or type of weapon, in isolation from other factors, seems to have relatively little to do with whether an incident is considered terrorism or some other use of force or coercion. For the purposes of an analytic framework, therefore, it is adequate to note the type of violence used, the patterns that may distinguish one group's fingerprint from that of another, and the growing concern that potential terrorists may have access to increasingly lethal tools in the future

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[8]See, for example, Karl-Heinz Kamp "Nuclear Terrorism--Hysterical Concern or Real Risk." *Aussenpolitik* Vol 46, No 3, pp 211-219

[9]See, for example, Charles J Dunlap Jr , "How We Lost the High-TechWar A Warning from the Future." *The Weekly Standard*, January 19, 1996, pp 22-28 for a chilling hypothetical account of unusual use of nuclear technology

[10]Steven Metz, "To Insure Domestic Tranquillity Terrorism and the Price of Global Engagement," in Stephen C Pelletiere, ed , *Terrorism National Security Policy and the Home Front* (U S Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, May, 1995) pp 80, 81

Object / Victim

If the type of violence is relatively insignificant in determining whether or not an act is terrorism, the category I have termed "object / victim," is certainly not   The identification of the key components within this category, and the relationships between them is, I will argue, a key factor in differentiating terrorism from other violence Somewhat awkwardly, I will refer to three components, or "objects," within this "object/victim" category   I define the first object as the immediate victim(s) of violence, the second object as a specific, larger group of civilian bystanders or onlookers whom the perpetrator intends to affect by the terrorist act, and a third object as the specific action or response the terrorist hopes the second group will take These are clearly not three equal objects, rather they outline a sequence of vectors, each of which is intended to set the following in motion

Unfortunately, the first object is generally clear enough the victims of the violence itself   In the case of Pan Am 103, they were the passengers who boarded a fateful flight in London, in Beirut and Saudi Arabia, they were the American Marines, soldiers and airmen who happened to be deployed at those duty posts   Because victims in the first category, or, what I am calling the "first object," are being set up as an object lesson -- simply a point to be made, if you will -- their profession, or current disposition (i e , deployed military or military on leave status) may be important, but only insofar as it relates, or fails to relate, to the specifics of the second and third objects of the violence   Thus, in this category, the victims may be civilian or military, political figures, diplomats, or anyone else whose status as victim will serve the point the perpetrators intend to make

In contrast, understanding the identity and relationships of the second and third objects of terrorism -- that is, the larger group of civilian bystanders or onlookers

(Object 2) whom the perpetrator hopes to persuade to take some kind of action (Object 3) -- is often exceedingly difficult   As we shall see, however, it is these two objects and their relationship to each other that is central to defining what is and what is not terrorism   In some incidents we think of as terrorist the identity and relationship between these are clear, in others, the relationship is ambiguous, in yet others, there appears to be no second or third object at all   To clarify the centrality of the "object/victim" category, it is worth reviewing several cases in some detail   I will present four groups of cases, each of which depicts a different kind of relationship among the three objects or raises an issue that must be addressed

Case 1--Former Yugoslavia.   In the former Yugoslavia, as Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Serbs have struggled to retain, or to gain, what they consider their place on the land, Serbs have committed mass murders, torched property and systematically raped Bosnian women   In this case, the immediate victims of the violence are dead, or physically tormented and abused   The purpose of Serbian atrocities is not, however, directed toward this group, but toward a larger community of Bosnian Muslims (Object 2)   The Serbs clearly intended that the Bosnian Muslims would take specific action (Object 3) in response to the violence, by leaving their lands and villages and effectively turning them over to Serbian control [11]

Case 2--Israeli / Palestinian peace process   Several examples drawn from the Israeli / Palestinian context demonstrate more sophisticated relationships within the "object/victim" category   When Yigal Amir assassinated Israeli Prime Minster Itzhak

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[11] In this particular case neither side represented a fully constituted state authority   However, some scholars point out that this particular pattern of violence with the intention to intimidate is most commonly used by states, often against their own populations   David Claridge, "State Terrorism? Applying a Definitional Model " *Terrorism and Political Violence* Vol 8 No 3 (Autumn 1996), pp 47-63 provides an excellent definitional framework for this type of coercive force

Rabin in November, 1995, he intended not only to kill his victim, but to influence the
Israeli political establishment and Israeli public opinion (Object 2) to stop the peace
process (Object 3)   Ironically, two Palestinian suicide attacks on Israeli buses in
Jerusalem the following February and March shared the same goal   The terrorists
killed multiple victims, including themselves, they identified Israeli public opinion as a
second object   The ultimate object of violence in all these cases seems to have been to
persuade Israeli public opinion that the peace process was not tenable   Their intent
was to kill the process of dialogue and accommodation to which both the Israeli
government and Palestinian Authority were committed

Case 3--Failed Palestinian Raid in Tel Aviv   In cases where there is no explicit
statement regarding the intended outcome of the violence, it becomes much more
difficult, and risky, to tease out the relations among the three objects in the
"object/victim" category [12]   Yet, as we see in considering this case, the pressures to
make decisions and the risk inherent in incorrectly identifying relations within the
"object/victim" category can be enormous   Consider, for example, the rather
flamboyant Palestinian attempt in 1989 to attack Israel by landing a small number of
boats directly on Tel Aviv's beaches   In this case, the presumed primary object would
have been those unfortunate civilians on Tel Aviv's waterfront within weapon range as
the assault started .Arguably, however -- and at this stage we hypothesize, since there
was not a clear statement of intent -- there were at least two, quite different but equally
plausible scenarios with regard to secondary objects either Palestinian public opinion,
on one hand, or the U S government on the other   Why? At the time, the United

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[12]If a group makes no statement about its goals in a specific incident, but it has a known clearly stated.
overriding purpose. one might deduce the probable intentions regarding victims   However, as we come to we
analyze the significance of this category below, it will become clear that such hypotheses should not
automatically be assumed

States had recently agreed to an official dialogue with the PLO, but only after Chairman Arafat had pirouetted for months to present a convincing statement that his group had recognized Israel and renounced violence   If we follow the logic of the first suggestion, that Palestinian public opinion was the intended second object of the attack, we might conclude that a renegade faction of the PLO staged the incident to show the strength and vitality of the "rejectionist" stream, embarrass Arafat, and gain Palestinian support for the rejectionists   If, on the other hand, we assume that the United States was the intended second object, we would analyze the incident along very different lines   For example, we might argue that the PLO, in a corporate capacity, had really not given up its commitment to terrorism, and by staging a raid that could be attributed to renegade factions, the PLO tried to back away from, or "test" the limits of maneuver room within its dialogue with the United States   In the second scenario, the United States, then, would have been the second object, and the U S /PLO dialogue the third   As events unfolded, of course, Chairman Arafat's failure to condemn the attempted assault made the hypothetical distinction moot   The U S   scuttled the dialogue with the PLO

Case 4--Eged Bus   A final example demonstrates a quite different pattern   In July, 1989, a Palestinian from Gaza grabbed the wheel of an Eged bus as it descended the mountainous road from Jerusalem toward Tel Aviv   The bus careened off the road into a ravine, killing and wounding a number of passengers   As the Palestinian acted, he shouted the name of a friend who had been crippled by Israeli military fire during the early days of the Palestinian uprising, or *intifada*   In this case, there was no apparent intent to identify a secondary group or any action that might, in our analysis, be considered a second or third object   We will return to this case for further analysis below

What becomes clear from reviewing these cases is that thorough analysis of the object/victim category is not always possible In some cases there is no clear indication about intended object/victims, no statement outlining ultimate intended goals, nor sometimes even an indication about which, if any group, perpetrated the act Nonetheless, the very process of careful and methodical examination of the three possible "objects" clarifies some of the key dividing lines between terrorism and other acts of violence This is illustrated in the following chart

	VIOLENCE	OBJECT / VICTIM CATEGORY		
	violent act ---------	victim of the violence -----	bystander -----	action
1 Bosnia	x	x	x	intimidation
2 Israel/ Pal	x	x	x	kill peace process
3 Tel Aviv raid	x (intended)	x (intended)	x	?
4 Bus attack	x	x	None (?)	None (?)
5 Fast food restaurant	x (as baseline case)	x	None	None

The Bosnian and Israeli / Palestinian examples (Cases 1 and 2), demonstrate a fully articulated set of intended "object/victims," a pattern that places these incidents squarely within the parameters of violent acts we can consider terrorism In contrast, the attack on a hypothetical fast food restaurant (Case 5), which I have recalled from a previous section as a non-terrorist criminal baseline for comparison, shows a very

simple relation between act of violence and first object only   But what about the intended raid on a Tel Aviv beach (Cases 3), and the Eged bus incident caused by a Gazan Palestinian (Case 4)?   Clearly, on a spectrum of less to greater sophistication in the "object/victim" category, they fall someplace between the Bosnian and Israeli / Palestinian cases, on one hand, and the hypothetical restaurant case, on the other   In Case 3, the intended Tel Aviv raid, either of the two object/victim scenarios (or perhaps others we have not come up with) would make the object / victim category as sophisticated as any cited in Cases 1 or 2, thus it is safe to conclude that it also falls within the parameters of terrorism

The Eged bus incident, Case 4, on the other hand, is the most ambiguous   In my view, the uncertainty about the identity and relationships between second and third objects strongly suggests that it lies on the dividing line between terrorist and non-terrorist uses of violence   Official U S and Israeli responses to this incident, in fact, represented some ambivalence about whether it was terrorism or not   With no indication that the Gazan Palestinian had a second and third object in this case, the United States initially refrained from characterizing it as terrorism, while Israel insisted that it was   U S and Israeli understanding of the facts of the case did not differ, they simply, at least initially, used different criteria to decide where to draw the dividing line between terrorism and non-terrorist criminal activity [13]

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[13]In a superb analysis of this incident, Victor Levine discusses the non-definitional, political and legal -- pressures that can compel a government to label an incident terrorism Although the particulars of his argument are not within the scope of this paper, Levine's essay clearly demonstrates that lack of clear criteria for defining what is. and what is not, terrorism has significant political benefits, as well as analytic risks Victor T Levine "The Logomachy of Terrorism On the Political Uses and Abuses of Definition " *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol 7, No 4 (Winter 1995) pp 45-49   Guelke also cites this case as significant, *op cit* , p 10

However one labels them, ambiguous cases like the aborted Tel Aviv raid (No 3) and borderline cases like the Eged bus incident (No 4) present tremendous, high-risk analytic challenges   As the assumptions one has to make about the intended second and third objects and the relations between them become more hypothetical or conjectural, the risks of miscalculation -- and a counterproductive response -- increase exponentially   Assume for a moment that the Gazan's only intent in commandeering the Eged bus (Case 4) and driving it into a ravine was to avenge the maiming of his friend   If the incident was not terrorism, but a revenge killing, the perpetrator himself should have been tried accordingly and fully punished under the law, treating it as terrorism (if it is not), would have generated harsh collective punishment of other Palestinians, a response which, to some extent, lets the perpetrator off the hook and, more important, instead of stopping the cycle of violence, provokes more confrontation, the potential for more maiming and killing, and yet another round of revenge killings   If, on the other hand, the incident was terrorism -- that is an act of violence calculated to have an impact beyond the first set of victims -- the response should have been calibrated to deter anyone else from taking another bus off the road   The acute ambiguity inherent in Case 3 offers an equally daunting analytic challenge, one in which the high risk of miscalculation created a high political risk

Examination of the object/victim category so far has shown that a key feature distinguishing terrorism from other acts of violence relates to the existence of a fully articulated set of objects within the "object/victim" category   That is, those cases showing clear use of violence against one group as a way of influencing another group to take (or avoid taking) specific action, appear clearly to be terrorism, while our baseline incident, without any articulation of second and third objects seems clearly not to be   Moreover, this analysis has suggested that incidents between these two ends of

the spectrum, i e , those in which the second and third objects are either not present or unclear, raise particularly challenging analytic problems as well as high risks   We have begun to discern one of the distinctions between terrorism and non-terrorist criminality   But there is another set of questions we must consider

To do so, consider the following hypothetical cases   Case 6 A five year old boy is abducted from his front yard   His parents receive an anonymous letter demanding ransom of five million dollars   Case 7 A shopkeeper in a large city receives a visitor who demands payment of protection money at gun point   The shopkeeper pays   Case 8 A large-scale drug baron sends his men to use money and threat of death to "persuade" an important border guard official to look the other way while a large cocaine shipment crosses the border   The official assumes he "cannot refuse " The cocaine passes

In each of these cases, all of which we consider to be criminal and not terrorist activities, we observe the same pattern of object/victim we have seen in the Bosnia and Israeli / Palestinian examples (Cases 1-3) the intent to use violence against one person or group as a way of influencing them, or another person or group to take (or refrain from taking) a specific course of action   What is it, then, that differentiates the object/victim relations typical of terrorism from the object/victim relations typical of other criminal activity? I propose the distinction is in the composition of the second object and the nature of the specific action demanded as a third object   In non-terrorist criminal cases the second object tends to be individuals or small groups, and the third object related in some way to pecuniary interests   In the case of terrorism, however, the second object is almost always a group of civilians who, acting as a corporate or collective entity of some kind -- ethnic group, nation-state -- are to bring about a third object defined in political terms   That is, in the case of terrorism,

the perpetrator has clearly identified the thinking of the civilian group (second object) -- the "will of the people," to use a Clausewitzian term -- as a "center of gravity" for achieving his political objective   If we have correctly identified this second dividing line between criminal activity and its subset of terrorism, Case 8, the feeble description of a hypothetical "narco-terrorism" case, should impress us as borderline between the two categories   It does

As we analyze what distinguishes an act of terrorism from any other act of violence, we have drawn some important conclusions so far   The type of violence used appears not to be critical to distinguishing terrorism from any other use of force or coercive action   We have identified the "object/victim" category as central to the definition But what about the perpetrator?

The Actor / Perpetrator

If we accept the argument that terrorism is, essentially, a coercive maneuver that follows somewhat predictable patterns, we must then ask who chooses to adopt that particular maneuver   While the answer to that question seems easy, we will see that it raises, in fact, some of the most difficult definitional questions relating to terrorism For, as hinted in the introductory section to this paper, we need also to ask in what circumstances a leader chooses to use terrorism, and, particularly if we are thinking about the future, we must examine why   First things first

Who uses terrorism? Examples cited earlier in the essay give us part of the answer

- -- an individual, acting alone[14]
- -- an individual, acting on behalf of a collective
- -- a group of individuals acting on behalf of an ethnic group
- -- sub-national organization acting on its own
- -- "terrorist" state, through individuals or sub-national groups

These actors all fall within our intuitive definition of "who" commits terrorism Our earlier discussion suggests that cases in which an individual acts alone, without ties to a larger group or collective interest, probably lie in the border area between terrorism and criminal activity [15] If we further examine the remaining actors listed above, however, it becomes clear that the critical question is not who, precisely, committed the violent act, but on behalf of whom they committed it There are two possibilities (a) perpetrators, in whatever combination of the above, acting on behalf of themselves as a collective, or on behalf of a sub-national group, (b) perpetrators acting as agents of a state

If the perpetrators are acting on behalf of a sub-national group or interest, their violence is almost certainly linked in some way to an insurgent, or potentially insurgent, group, fighting on behalf of a collective for political goals that will alter their collective status within a larger political structure, usually a state For these groups, effective use of terrorism is calculated as a maneuver to achieve specific goals within a larger

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[14]An act by an individual acting alone is probably not a terrorist incident, although some might consider it to be For example, the incident in which the Gazan drove the bus off the highway may have been terrorism, but as we have seen, the case was ambiguous and probably lies on the dividing line between what is and what is not terrorism A more typical case of an individual terrorist would be Yigal Amir, the assassin of the late Prime Minister Rabin who whether acting officially as part of a collective or not, clearly *believed* himself to be acting on behalf of his people, and, in his case, at God's behest

[15]It is possible, of course, that more than one individual, that is a small group might also act on their own and without second and third objectives, in that case, the incident should also be carefully reviewed to decide whether it is non-terrorist criminal activity, or terrorism

campaign strategy [16] Why they choose terrorism and how it fits within their broader objectives is best analyzed by adopting a framework such as that proposed by Bard O'Neill in his comprehensive work on terrorism and insurgency [17]

The second possibility, perpetrators acting on behalf of a state, is more complex A state may sponsor terrorism directly, on its own behalf, or it may use any of a number of shadowy agents or intermediaries to act for it Whatever the configuration of actors, however, and all our clarifications of terrorism as maneuver notwithstanding, this brings us inevitably back to the tautology presented earlier in this essay

"terrorist state" + "attack" + "first object" + "second object" + "third object+ = "terrorism."

If we are to complete our definition of terrorism in a way that differentiates it clearly from other types of coercive force, we obviously have to return to several difficult and still unanswered questions How does terrorism, or coercive force, committed by a "terrorist state" differ from coercive force used by states we generally do not consider terrorist? If the coercive maneuver is the same -- that is, if both are based on the formula **"attack" + "first object" + "second (civilian) object" + "third object"** as we have defined them above, what makes one case terrorism, and the other not? Moreover, what motivates states to resort to terrorism? Is it an ends-means calculus, or simply the result of wild-eyed fanaticism? To complete our definition, we must find at least a tentative dividing line to differentiate among these cases At this point, however, we are no longer describing a maneuver, we are trying to understand its political context

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[16]This assertion, while rationally correct, will often be challenged by real-case analysis In many cases insurgent groups, though they have long-term goals, do not articulate and pursue a coherent strategy for reaching those goals

[17]To understand terrorism of these groups in the political context of these groups, one can turn to the analytic framework outlined in Bard O'Neill. *Insurgency and Terrorism Inside Modern Revolutionary Warfare* (Washington Brassey's, 1990)

TERRORIST MANEUVER IN POLITICAL CONTEXT

Public opinion has it that terrorist states and their agents are irrational actors,

stealthy demons stalking the earth, bringing their horrible violence on unsuspecting

victims Yet, as we have seen, the maneuver outlined by terrorism seems to be a

well-constructed calculation of capabilities and vectors aimed at particular objectives

We must consider, then, whether the overall political calculus within which a state

resorts to terrorism might also be the result of broader, and quite rational, political

considerations

Arguably, it is Returning for a moment to the maneuver itself, we see that it

outlines an intent to leverage minimal force for maximum gain, using as its fulcrum the

group we have identified as the second object Two other broader considerations also

enter the calculus, it is these, I propose, that ultimately determine whether the

maneuver is successful or not They are the relative importance of the national

interest at stake to both parties, and, to a certain extent, their relative power To

examine these two factors, let's reconsider the example of the 1983 bombing of the

Marine barracks in Beirut [18] In this case, the perpetrators' goal was the withdrawal of

U S forces from Lebanon, an objective that presumably ranked as vital in their order of

national interests On the other hand, American interests in Lebanon at that point,

while important, could not be considered vital One can assume, then, that there was

ample motivation (from the perspective of the group undertaking the bombing) to

move against the United States At the same time, however, no rational calculation on

their part could have resulted in a decision to counter the U S with an announced war

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[18] This analysis is drawn from my unpublished paper "Terrorism The Ultimate Challenge to von Clausewitz' Theory of War," written for NDU core course. autumn, 1996

and direct military force Logically, then, the perpetrators would have concluded that the best method for achieving their national interest, the withdrawal of U S forces from Lebanon, required a secret maneuver that would leverage minimal force for maximum benefit, without incurring a direct full-scale military response from the U S   The perpetrators of the Marine barracks bombing were sworn enemies of the U S , their use of minimal force to achieve their political objectives was not only successful, but, I would suggest, totally rational Thus, though not all terrorist attacks will succeed in reaching their objectives, it seems clear that many result from a rational process of weighing national interests, objectives, ways and means

This brings us back to the most difficult question what, then, differentiates state-sponsored terrorism from other, non-terrorist uses of force? The concept of *legitimacy* is, I propose, one of the principle differentiating lines   That is, in the case of a "terrorist" state, we are convinced that use of "terrorism" is not legitimate In the case of a state using the same maneuver against its own citizens, our vote would probably be mixed [19] In the case of a non-terrorist state using the same maneuver against citizens of another state, we would probably insist that, even if coercive force is used in a pattern mirroring the one we have associated with terrorism, it is legitimate use of force, in this case we would strongly object even to associating the maneuver with terrorism, a term we reserve for condemning "illegitimate" acts of coercion Clearly, our concept of legitimacy is critical to the way we differentiate among these

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[19] I will not discuss a state's use of terrorism against its own citizens at length in this essay However, I assume that our intuitive understanding of this formula of terrorism tracks with the ambivalence of our age on one hand, we still sense that sovereign states should control events within their own territories, a claim put forward forcefully by China for example, when it resists U S "meddling" in its human rights practices At the same time increasingly militant groups the world over, with wide support from public opinion in the U S , strongly support active intervention on behalf of human rights in other countries As noted earlier, David Claridge (*op cit*) provides a good definitional framework for analyzing these cases

cases   Having come that far, however, we obviously need to explore what we mean by legitimacy

In its most fundamental formulation, legitimacy in the context of applying force answers the simple question "under what conditions am I absolved from moral accountability for killing, maiming, or coercing another human being "   And, I would argue, several steps in the evolution of the western concepts of war have a direct bearing on the way we now understand legitimacy and terrorism [20]   To get at the issue of legitimacy, we need to take a quick detour into military history

Western notions of the legitimate use of force are based on precedents established by rules of chivalry clear distinctions between those who fought and those who did not, the duty to protect civilians outside the scope of battle, and parameters of appropriate battle conduct, including the requirement that war be announced   The mid-seventeenth century created a new order, represented by the Treaty of Westphalia, in which the nation-state gained the right to legitimate use of force in defense of its own borders and citizens, and the sovereign right to deal with those matters internal to its borders   These distinctions continue to inform our basic notions about the legitimate use of force and the distinction between combatants and non-combatants to this day

The *practice* of war, in contrast, quickly challenged, and eventually undermined, these same distinctions   Napoleonic warfare championed the right of the nation-state to *extend* its own territory, ostensibly in defense of liberty and freedom for citizens of other countries   Moreover, to bolster fighting effectiveness, Napoleon harnessed the

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[20] I am indebted here to Adrian Guelke, *op cit* , for an excellent examination of issues of legitimacy and its relation to ends and means, particularly in the context of terrorism   Moreover I acknowledge a great debt to extensive readings included in the core curriculum at the National War College, a wealth of information so great it would be difficult to recall how each author influenced and informed the analysis I present here

nationalism and fighting capacity of the citizen to his professional military machine by introducing the *levee en masse* Once unleashed as a fighting force, the population at large -- that is, civilians and their potential demographic and industrial capacity -- became, whether intended or not, an integral part of the calculation of waging and winning war The great nineteenth-century military strategist, Carl von Clausewitz, who captured the essence of Napoleonic warfare in his brilliant analysis *On War*, identified the "will of the people" as a key "center of gravity" in the enemy population, and, as such, a legitimate, essential target in total war As events unfolded, military machines eventually completely absorbed, and eventually negated, the citizen's ability to "add value" to a country's military might, resulting, by the end of the first world war, in a terrible stalemate along demarcating front lines As a result, military strategists began to look for new ways to get at the enemy's center of gravity by moving around, or over, the front lines

Among those arguing for ways around the stalemate, the arguments of Giulio Douhet[21] are particularly relevant to our discussion of terrorism as maneuver In his enthusiasm for the military potential of the airplane, Douhet explored the possibility of air attacks on enemy centers of gravity The airplane, he suggested, would provide a tremendous advantage by allowing a surprise attack on enemy centers of gravity, which would, in turn, persuade the enemy to give up the fight Here, then, we find the theoretical precedent, and implicit justification, for the strategic bombing of German cities and the use of nuclear weapons on Japanese cities

We also find a formula for coercive maneuver that parallels the formula we earlier identified as defining terrorism the use of force against one segment of the population

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[21]Giulio Douhet, The Command of the Air. trans Dino Ferrari (New York Coward-McCann, Inc , 1942, rpt Washington. D C Office of Air Force History, 1983) pp 3-61

(Object 1), to persuade a second group (Object 2), to give up fighting (Object 3) We also note that, in finding a way around the stalemate of mass-on-mass ground warfare, Douhet and others also implicitly espoused the notion that limited expenditure of force could effectively breach the enemy's territorial sanctuary, reach his critical center of gravity, i e , the will of the people to fight, and ultimately leverage this minimal investment into victory

On reflection, then, we realize that by the first part of the twentieth century, many of the fundamental principles traditionally used to differente between legitimate and illegitimate use of force were, in effect, largely erased by the practice of war   During the Cold War, traditional distinctions were further eroded, as the U S and Russian camps regularly used coercive maneuver -- without a declaration of war or clear distinction between combatant and non-combatant -- as a means of fighting ideological expansion   The proxy and insurgent wars of the cold war years made traditional concepts of legitimacy in use of force seem quite antiquated   Thus, although we still theoretically hold these lofty principles in high esteem -- and we intuitively apply them to differentiate between terrorism and other uses of coercive force -- the fact is they provide little basis for cold, analytic differentiation

What does this tell us, then, about the difference between state-sponsored terrorism and what we have generally considered to be legitimate use of force?   Can we identify a clean dividing line between the two?   Is it adequate simply to state that "a formal declaration of war" is the correct, or at least an adequate, dividing line?   Or, to go back to the beginning of the essay, are we essentially forced to say that terrorism is not, after all, a discrete maneuver, but simply a politically powerful way of defining "us" and "them?"

Or, to pursue another suggestion raised earlier in this essay, should we simply acknowledge that the very basis of war has changed in such a way that coercive maneuver -- that is, the formula we have identified as fundamental to terrorism -- is, in fact, a key component of modern warfare   Were we to take the second course, we would have to re-think our approach to terrorism   We would consider it not only on the political level   We would also have to consider it as a military maneuver, an option to be chosen by any antagonist who believed that, by using it, he could achieve operational goals with minimal investment   An antagonist could choose this kind of maneuver to contribute to a broader campaign along traditional lines, or, in a situation of limited objectives, he might simply use coercive maneuver as an economic means of achieving limited goals [22]

If we choose to acknowledge that coercive maneuver is simply another entry in the lexicon of warfighting, we will also have to come to terms with identifying appropriate and proportionate responses to its use   Given the inherent ambiguities in many terrorist attacks -- and the high-risks inherent in miscalculating the relations among the parts of the maneuver we have described -- this will undoubtedly be the most difficult challenge of all in analytic and military terms

However we decide to relate to terrorism -- considering it either a political label to distinguish "us" from "them," as a military challenge to identify and confront. or as some combination of the two -- it seems unlikely that the issue will disappear in the next two decades   In a world increasingly characterized by asymmetry of military power between the United States and any other power, it is not realistic to assume that

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[22]In an unpublished paper examining the bombing of the Beirut Marine barracks, I have argued, in fact, that the terrorists did precisely that using a minimum investment tool, they managed to persuade the United States essentially to withdraw from Lebanon

a weaker state or sub-national group would willingly choose automatic defeat in a conventional confrontation replete with a formal declaration of war and other niceties traditionally used to bestow the distinction of legitimacy on war when he could, with minimum investment of force try to achieve the same end through some kind of coercive maneuver

Unfortunately, terrorism and its twin, coercive maneuver, will not disappear Whether we wish it or not, we will have to re-evaluate terrorism and its relation to other forms of criminal behavior Even more importantly, we will have to re-evaluate its relation to our long-held principles of what constitutes legitimacy in using force It is a deeply sobering prospect, but we will still have to decide where to place that last defining line between terrorism and legitimate force

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