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THE CONTRASTING ETHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF TERRORISM IN THE 1980S*

Despite many other disagreements, experts on terrorism agree that during the 1980s there has been an increase not only in the total volume of terrorist incidents worldwide, but in the number of fatalities caused by terrorists as well. Indeed, terrorist operations claimed more than twice as many lives between 1980 and 1986 as in the previous seven years.[1]

A variety of reasons account for these increases. The most obvious explanation, perhaps, is the proliferation of terrorist groups and the attendant increases in the number of operations carried out and casualties caused. ~~Ironically,~~ another explanation might be the success of counterterrorist measures taken by the international community: heightened security measures have made earlier terrorist tactics, such as embassy takeovers and airline hijackings, more difficult to accomplish. Moreover, public attention is not as readily claimed as it once was. Terrorists have been forced to undertake more spectacular and, unfortunately, bloodier deeds in order to achieve the same effect. Another explanation might be that state-sponsorship has given some terrorists access to greater resources and thus the ability to mount increasingly destructive attacks.

But these explanations go only so far. Many of the terrorist organizations active throughout the 1970s are still active today. Groups such as the Red Army Faction, the Red Brigades, the IRA, ETA, and

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[1]A total of 3,225 persons were killed by terrorists between 1980 and 1986 as compared with the 1,573 killed between 1973 and 1979. Statistics compiled in The RAND Corporation Chronology of International Terrorism.

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the PLO, to name but a few, have neither significantly altered their strategy and tactics nor embarked on bloodier or more destructive terrorist campaigns than a decade ago.

This paper argues that the nature and character of the ethical foundations of terrorism have changed and that this change more accurately accounts for terrorism's growing lethality. In what appears to be an emerging trend, terrorism is increasingly perpetrated by groups with a dominant religious component in contrast to the largely politically oriented groups of the past two decades. Terrorism motivated by a religious imperative has shown itself to be considerably less discriminate than terrorism motivated by ostensibly political aims; consequently, it encompasses a far wider choice of targets and, indeed, of victims as well. Distinctions based on ideological polarity (e.g., left versus right) or on nationalist or irredentist aims no longer usefully describe the way terrorists justify their violent campaigns. The causal link between the predominance of religion-based terrorism and terrorism's growing lethality is reinforced by the fact that although Shi'a Islamic groups committed only seven percent of all international terrorist incidents since 1982, those incidents are responsible for 21 percent of the total number of deaths.[2]

Certainly, any inquiry that attempts to match ethics with terrorist violence rests on tenuous moral ground. Terrorism is in itself widely regarded as fundamentally immoral, and the violence wrought against civilian targets, causing death and injury to innocent persons, vitiates any conception of an ethical terrorist code of conduct. But at the same time, it is impossible to ignore the proposition that the targets and tactics of various terrorist movements are in some--however idiosyncratic--way a reflection of ethical choices or considerations on the part of the terrorists.

This discussion admittedly involves a simplification that reduces a range of varied and complex phenomena to a few very general

[2]A total of 2,367 international terrorist incidents were recorded in The RAND Corporation Chronology of International Terrorism between 1982 and 1987. Shi'a terrorist groups committed only 160 of these incidents but were responsible for 592 deaths.

observations. However, in so doing, it attempts to delineate the contrasting ethical foundations of what, for purposes of polemical clarity, I broadly define as "secular political" terrorism and "religious political" terrorism. It further assumes that the justification and, more important, the legitimization of terrorist violence are fundamentally different in the two types of organizations.

The "secular political" category embraces terrorist organizations such as nationalist or irredentist groups and left-wing and right-wing groups, whose aims are primarily political. Their campaigns are characterized in simplest terms by the quest for power, be it in a separate nation-state, a socialist state, or an authoritarian state. Another characteristic of this type of terrorist movement is the desire to attain sociopolitical changes *within* the existing world order and the use of terrorism as a means to that end.

"Religious political" terrorists also seek to realize wide-ranging changes in the existing world order based on a religious or theological imperative. Rather than regarding violence as a means to an end, these groups often view violence as an end in itself. The "religious political" category includes Shi'a Islamic terrorist organizations, such as Islamic Jihad, Islamic Amal, *Hezbollah, Jundallah,* and *al-Dawa,* as well as American white supremacist groups, such as the Aryan Nations; The Order; The Covenant, the Sword and the Arm of the Lord; and, the Posse Comitatus. I am by no means arguing that Shi'a Islamic terrorists are at all like American white supremacist terrorists. Rather, I am indicating that there are similarities in their mindset, world view, and ethics which are useful not only for comparative purposes but also for underscoring the fact that "religious political" terrorism is not restricted solely to Muslims in the Middle East.

In sum, whereas terrorism in the 1970s was characterized by groups with a "secular political" ideology, today it is being carried forward by groups with a "religious political" ideology--groups that, moreover, have a radically different perception of their constituencies and target audience and thus a very different ethic concerning the infliction of widespread destruction and bloodshed. The juxtaposition of these two types of terrorists makes for an interesting study of the contrasting

ethical foundations of "secular political" terrorism and "religious political" terrorism since justification or legitimization of "religious political" terrorism in the latter category is derived not from a secular political ideological framework, but from a religious political ideological one.

SECULAR POLITICAL TERRORISM

For years, terrorism has been characterized by attacks on a limited number of individuals.[3] Even though terrorists have had the capability to inflict large numbers of casualties with bombs in public areas, they have rarely done so or--perhaps more tellingly--even attempted to do so. Terrorists appear to act under self-imposed restraints. Mass, indiscriminate murder would alienate the very audience they wish to recruit or at least influence. Moreover, terrorists have generally been able to achieve publicity and other objectives through relatively more discreet acts of violence, without inflicting widespread casualties.[4]

This pattern has been observed consistently in the activities of the types of terrorist organizations that comprise the "secular political" category. None of them commits acts randomly. For them, terrorism--like efficient warfare in general--seeks the maximum effect with the minimum of effort or sacrifice. This is not simply a product of sound tactics, but a reflection of ethical considerations. The ethical values embraced by this type of terrorist are directly related to the ethics of either their perceived constituents or their target audience. The terrorists appear to be cognizant of the likelihood that acts of mass destruction or bloodshed may result in public revulsion, alienating potential sympathizers, and triggering severe government measures.

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[3]Brian M. Jenkins, "Is Nuclear Terrorism Plausible?" in Paul Leventhal and Yonah Alexander (eds.), *Nuclear Terrorism: Defining the Threat* (New York: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1986), p. 29.

[4]See, for example, Brian M. Jenkins, *International Terrorism: The Other World War* (Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, R-3302-AF, November 1985), p. 23.

The overriding tactical and ethical imperative for "secular political" terrorists has been the deliberate tailoring of their violent acts to appeal to their perceived constituents. At the same time, they have use of violence to impress, intimidate, coerce, or otherwise embarrass their target audience--most often, the ruling government the terrorists are fighting against. In this respect, acts of terrorism are carried out in a way that situates them within the ethics of the terrorists' constituents or target audience.

This is especially true of left-wing terrorist organizations such as the Red Army Faction, Red Brigades, Direct Action, and Communist Combatting Cells. For example, Michael "Bommi" Baumann, a member of the West German 2nd of June Movement, a less militant splinter group of the Red Army Faction, once explained that the 1978 hijacking of a Lufthansa jet by terrorists seeking the release of imprisoned RAF members was "madness . . . you can't take your life and place it above that of children and Majorca holiday-makers and say: *My* life is more valuable! That is elitarian madness, bordering on Fascism."[5]

For Baumann, the deliberate involvement of innocent civilians in that terrorist operation was not only counterproductive, but wrong. It was counterproductive in that it tarnished the left-wing terrorists' self-image of a "revolutionary vanguard"--using violence both to draw attention to themselves and their cause and to "educate" the public about what the terrorists perceive as the inequities of the democratic-capitalist state. It was also wrong in itself because innocent persons--no matter what the political justification--should not be the victims of terrorist acts directed against the state.

For this reason, left-wing terrorists' use of violence is narrowly proscribed. Their self-styled crusade for social justice is typically directed against governmental or commercial institutions or persons whom they believe represent capitalist exploitation and repression. Accordingly, the terrorists are careful not to undertake actions that might alienate potential supporters or their perceived constituency.

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[5]"The Mind of a German Terrorist: Interview with Michael 'Bommi' Baumann," *Encounter*, Vol. LI, No. 3, September 1978, p. 81.

Specific individuals--wealthy industrialists like Hanns Martin Schleyer, parliamentarians like Aldo Moro, or, more recently, businessmen or government officials connected with the arms industry--are targeted for assassination. When bombs are used the violence is often "symbolic." Although the damage and destruction that result are certainly not symbolic, the bombings are meant to dramatize or call attention to a political cause.[6]

The left-wing terrorists' role as a revolutionary vanguard, using symbolic acts of violence to "educate" the masses, is apparent in the ongoing campaign against the United States military presence in Europe and NATO and the positioning of U.S. nuclear missiles on European soil. The decision to base Pershing II and cruise missiles in Western Europe afforded the left-wing terrorists a new opportunity to broaden their base of support and appeal to new constituencies, i.e., composed of persons opposed to the arms race. As a communique issued by Direct Action explained,

> Attacks on the multinational structures of NATO, on its bases and strategists, on its plans and propaganda, are bringing about a transformation of the awareness and practices of the proletariat, going beyond its national characteristics and bringing about an international organization advance.[7]

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[6]For example, as a statement of the RAF's revolutionary "philosophy" declared, "Our original conception of the organization implied a connection between the urban guerrilla and the work at the base. We would like it if each and all of us could work at the neighborhoods and factories, in socialist groups that already exist, influence discussion, experience and learn. This has proved impossible . . . . Some say that the possibilities for agitation, propaganda and organization are far from being eradicated and that only when they are, should we pose the question of arms. We say: it will not really be possible to profit from any political actions as long as armed struggle does not appear clearly as the goal of the policisation [sic]." (See "RAF Philosophy," in *The German Guerrilla: Terror, Reaction, and Resistance* (London: Cienfuegos Press, undated), p. 98).

[7]Communique from Direct Action, claiming credit for the assassination of French General Rene Audran, 25 January 1985.

This approach is not so different from that of nationalist/irredentist terrorist groups like the PLO, IRA, and ETA. Although acts of terrorism committed by groups in this category have frequently been more destructive and have caused more casualties than those of their left-wing counterparts, many of the same aims and ethics are nevertheless present. The nationalist/irredentists also see themselves as a revolutionary vanguard--perhaps, not in classic Marxist-Leninist terms--but still as a spearhead, using violence to "educate" their fellow nationals about the inequities imposed upon them by the ruling government, to underscore the powerlessness of the government and thereby embarrass and coerce it into acceding to the group's separatist/nationalist demands. In a broader sense, unlike left-wing terrorism, nationalist/irredentist terrorism is often designed to appeal to international opinion in support of the terrorists' separatist claims.

Even if nationalist/irredentist terrorists' violence is greater than that of left-wing terrorists, "the 'enemy' seems well identified, namely a member of the rival or dominant nationality."[8] But, more important, to continue to receive the support of their constituency, generate sympathy among the international community, and forestall massive governmental countermeasures, the terrorists must also tightly control and direct their operations. The vast majority of victims of nationalist/irredentist terrorists, therefore, are low-ranking government officials, ordinary soldiers or policemen, other "agents of the state," and members of rival communities or "traitors" within their own community.

However, when these more "typical" targets fail to sustain the momentum of a terrorist campaign or when other, unrelated events overshadow the terrorists and shunt their cause out of the public eye, the terrorists resort to more violent acts to dramatically refocus attention back upon themselves. But it would be a mistake to see these

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[8]Peter H. Merkl, "Prologue," in Peter H. Merkl (ed.), *Political Violence and Terror* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 8.

acts--which often involve the bombing of public gathering places or the hijacking of airliners--as random or senseless. For example, following the Palestinian terrorists' failure to mount a concerted guerrilla campaign against Israel on the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip after the 1967 Six Day War, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine began hijacking international airliners. The purpose of these operations was not to kill innocent persons, but to use them as pawns in the pursuit of publicity. One of the group's most famous hijackers, Leila Khaled said, "Look, I had orders to seize the plane, not to blow it up . . . . I care about people. If I had wanted to blow up the plane no one could have prevented me."[9]

Even when terrorist actions are not so deliberate or discriminate, and when their purpose is in fact to kill innocent civilians, the target is still regarded as "justified" because it represents the terrorists' "enemy." Although incidents may be *quantitatively* different in the volume of death or destruction caused, they are still *qualitatively* identical in that a defined "enemy" is being targeted. This distinction is often accepted by the terrorists' constituents, and at times it is accepted by the international community as well. The premier example of this was the killing of 11 Israeli athletes seized by Palestinian terrorists at the 1972 Munich Olympic Games. The terrorists declared, "We are neither killers nor bandits. We are a persecuted people who have no land and no homeland."[10] It is perhaps not coincidental that two years later, PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat was invited to address the United Nations General Assembly, and shortly afterwards the PLO was accorded observer status in that organization. In fact, the PLO now has diplomatic relations with 86 countries, while Israel has relations with only 78).

As a spokesman for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine once explained,

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[9]Quoted in Gerald McKnight, *The Mind of the Terrorist* (London: Michael Joseph, 1974), p. 26.

[10]Christopher Dobson, *Black September* (London: Robert Hale, 1974), p. 95.

> You must differentiate between the kind [of violence] used to exploit people and that used in self-defense: legitimate violence. The bullets that I shoot are not bullets used to exploit or subdue. They are just the opposite. They will remove exploitation inflicted upon me . . . . For violence to become fruitful, for it to get us to our aims, it should not be undertaken without a proper political base and intention. These should equip the movement with the right sources from which to draw its recruits.[11]

The ethical considerations in such a case may well be contrived, but nonetheless there is an appreciation that violence has its limits and, moreover, if it is used properly, it can result in significant dividends. In other words, the level of violence must be kept within the bounds of what the terrorists' constituents will accept. This is why "secular political" terrorists, though capable of inflicting massive destruction and indiscriminate killing, generally avoid doing so.

But acts of terrorism, like battles in conventional wars, are difficult to limit and control once they are started, and they often result in tragedy to civilians who are inadvertently caught up in the violence. One example is the tragic bombing that occurred at Enniskillen, Northern Ireland, in November 1987, causing the deaths of 11 persons who were attending a memorial ceremony. The IRA was quick to describe the incident as an accident resulting from the "catastrophic consequences" of an operation against British troops gone awry.[12] In this respect, an ethical distinction is still present, although self-serving justifications of "catastrophic consequences" and "accidents" are used to highlight that distinction.

Right-wing terrorism, on the other hand, has often been characterized as the most indiscriminate type of "secular political" terrorism, primarily as a result of bombings in Italy, West Germany, and France during the summer and fall of 1980. These incidents took place at the Bologna train station (where 84 persons were killed and 180

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[11]Bassam Abu Sharif quoted in McKnight, *The Mind of the Terrorist*, p. 26.

[12]Quoted in *New York Times*, 15 November 1987.

wounded), the Munich Oktoberfest celebration (where 14 were killed and 215 were injured), and a Paris synagogue (where four persons were killed and 14 were wounded.[13] They seemed to herald a new and lethally indiscriminate campaign of terrorism. In the years since the bombings, however, these fears have not been confirmed by events. More significantly, many of the differences that were thought to exist between the aims and methods of right-wing and left-wing terrorists do not appear as vast today.

There has, in fact, been no sustained campaign of right-wing terrorism on any level comparable to that of European left-wing organizations or the various nationalist/irredentist groups throughout the world. Nor--with one exception--have right-wing terrorists carried out any further indiscriminate bombings. The lone incident occurred in December 1984, when a bomb exploded on the Naples-Milan express as it traveled through a tunnel between Florence and Bologna, killing 15 persons and wounding 100 others. Thus, although right-wing terrorism is at times indiscriminate, it is not always so. Except for the Oktoberfest bombing, neo-fascist terrorism in Germany has been directed against specific targets--primarily refugee shelters and immigrant workers' hostels. In France, every attack has been directed against either Jewish-owned property or businesses or Arab and African student or workers' associations. Italy's record is spottier. But apart from the Bologna and express train bombings and an earlier incident that occurred at Milan's Piazza Fontana in 1969 (which killed 16 persons and wounded 88 others), right-wing extremists in that country have mostly attacked leftist targets, banks, political party offices, and policemen and police stations.

Accordingly, right-wing terrorism is based not on some pathological obsession to kill as many innocent people as possible, but on a deliberate policy of intimidating the general public into acceding to specific demands or pressure. The right-wing terrorists see themselves, if not as a revolutionary vanguard, then as a catalyst of events that

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[13]A French neo-Nazi group claimed responsibility for the synagogue bombing, but suspicion has also focused on Palestinian, Armenian, and domestic left-wing terrorist organizations.

will lead to the imposition of an authoritarian form of government. Thus, they tailor their violence to appeal to their perceived constituency--be it extreme nationalists, intransigent xenophobes, reactionary conservatives, or militant anti-communists--and, with the exception of a few indiscriminate bombings, they seek to keep it within the bounds of what the ruling government will tolerate without undertaking massive repressive actions against the terrorists themselves.

The basic aim of right-wing terrorists has long been the destruction of the liberal-democratic state to clear the way for a National Socialist ("Nazi") or fascist state. However, in recent years there has been an unexpected confluence of right-wing and left-wing terrorism goals and tactics in both Italy and Germany. In Italy, for example, the right-wing terrorist group calling itself "Third Position," in reference to its hybrid ideology of "Nazi-Maoism,"[14] declares, "Neither capitalism nor communism, neither reds nor reaction."[15] And in Germany, a new right-wing ideology has emerged embodying a melange of "people's socialist," "anti-imperialist," "national revolutionary," and "ecological" dicta. As Henning Eichberg, a leading right-wing ideologue and lecturer in military history at the University of Stuttgart, explains, "In order to unite the German nation anew, we must get away from the Vodka-Cola headquarters, from the cities, the colonies and the superpowers."[16]

The objective of West German neo-Nazis has thus become, in the words of Manfred Roeder, leader of the "German Action Group," one of that country's most active right-wing terrorist groups, "the establishment of the first radical-democratic and anti-imperialist state on German soil."[17] This can only be accomplished, he argues, by

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[14]See Bruce Hoffman, "Right-Wing Terrorism In Europe," *Contemporary Affairs Briefing*, Vol. 2, No. 5, November 1982, pp. 8-9.

[15]Quoted in Thomas Sheehan, "Italy: Terror on the Right," *New York Review of Books*, 22 January 1981, p. 25.

[16]*Der Stern* (Hamburg), 4 March 1982.

[17]Quoted in *Der Stern,* 29 October 1981.

emulating left-wing revolutionary tactics[18]--and, presumably, by adhering to the ethical "code of conduct" of conduct" of selective, "public relations-oriented" terrorism pursued by the leftists. The symmetry between the right and the left has also been voiced by neo-Nazis in other groups.[19] "We have always said we are socialists," Michael Kuhnen, the leader of another right-wing terrorist group, stated. In addition, like its left-wing counterparts, his Action Front for National Socialists also opposes the deployment of United States nuclear missiles on German soil.[20]

The trend of both legal right-wing political parties and underground neo-Nazi organizations in this direction is also a reflection of their respective failures to attract large followings within the West German polity. The search for new constituencies and new sources of support is a familiar characteristic of terrorist organizations throughout the world. In this case, the pandering to causes which are ostensibly leftist represents a bid to broaden the rightists' appeal, impress a wider field of potential supporters, and acquire new popularity and strength. The emergence of popular, contentious issues such as the environment and the nuclear arms race is increasingly exploited by the neo-Nazi terrorists. As the West German Ministry of the Interior observed in its annual report on terrorism for 1985, these efforts "often go hand in hand with militant anti-Americanism."[21]

This shift in aims by right-wing terrorists has also manifested itself in attacks against the same targets favored today by the left: United States military facilities and personnel stationed in Germany. For the right-wing terrorists, there is yet another factor: envy of the

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[18] *Der Spiegel* (Hamburg), 11 January 1981.

[19] Additional expressions of "revolutionary solidarity" with the left have been expressed by other neo-Nazis as well. See Bruce Hoffman, "Right-Wing Terrorism in Europe Since 1980," *Orbis: A Journal of World Affairs*, Spring 1984, pp. 23-24.

[20] *The German Tribune*, 3 July 1983.

[21] *Das Parlament*, (Bonn) 28 June 1986.

attention, status, and occasional tactical victories won by left-wing terrorists in groups such as the RAF,[22] alongside of the realization that indiscriminate terrorist attacks will not result in the attainment of the right-wing groups' goals. Thus there is a confluence not only of ideals and tactics, but of ethics as well, if only to reap the benefits of support from new constituencies.

RELIGIOUS POLITICAL TERRORISM

Certainly, the relationship between terrorism and religion is not new. In fact, as David Rapoport points out in his seminal study of what he terms "holy terror," until the nineteenth century, "religion provided the only acceptable justifications for terror."[23] This form of terrorism has occurred throughout history, although in recent decades it has largely been overshadowed by the more common "secular political" terrorism. Admittedly, many contemporary "secular political" terrorist groups have a strong religious element: the IRA, the Sikhs, the Armenians, and perhaps the PLO as well. However, the political aspect is the predominant characteristic of these groups, as evinced by their nationalist or irredentist aims.

At the same time, it would be a mistake to see the contemporary religion-motivated terrorist groups, such as the various Iranian-backed Shi'a organizations as apolitical entities. Although religion is their predominant motivation, their struggle inherently involves a quest for power--to be used to defend the faith, to defeat their "enemies," and to establish a regional, if not global, hegemony. And the quest for power is, of course, at the heart of international politics.[24] In the Shi'a

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[22] *Stuttgarter Zeitung* (Stuttgart), 12 December 1981.

[23] David C. Rapoport, "Fear and Trembling: Terrorism in Three Religious Traditions," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 78, No. 3, September 1984, p. 659.

[24] H. J. Morgenthau and Kenneth W. Thompson, "Principles and Problems of International Politics," in Brian Porter (ed.), *The Aberystwyth Papers: International Politics, 1919-1969*. It should be noted that of the three religious terror groups studied by Rapoport--the Thugs, the Assassins, and the Zealots--only the Zealots had a political aim. See Rapoport, "Fear and Trembling: Terrorism in Three Religious Traditions," passim.

terrorist groups, Islam functions "not just as a religion but a religious polity."[25] Amir Taheri notes that the Shi'a terrorists who use "violence and terror to promote their causes [and political objectives], would be insulted if described as political organizations seeking political change. They recruit their members in the name of Islam and are led by religious officials."[26]

Most important for our purposes, there are a number of significant differences in the ethical foundations of "religious political" terrorism and "secular political" terrorism. For the "religious political" terrorist violence is viewed as a sacramental act or a divine duty. Terrorism thus assumes a transcendental dimension,[27] and its perpetrators have none of the political, moral, or practical constraints that affect other terrorists. Whereas "secular political" terrorists rarely attempt indiscriminate killing on a massive scale because such tactics are not consonant with their political aims,[28] the "religious political" terrorists often seek the elimination of broadly defined categories of "enemies." Whereas "secular political" terrorists generally consider indiscriminate violence immoral and counterproductive,[29] "religious political" terrorists regard such violence as both morally justified and expedient for the attainment of their goals.

Another crucial difference is that "religious political" terrorists do not have the kind of constituency or target audience the "secular political" groups have. "Religious political" terrorists are at once activists and constituents engaged in what they regard as a "total war."

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[25]Robin Wright, "Quiet Revolution: The Islamic Movement's New Phase," *Christian Science Monitor* (Washington, D.C.), 6 November 1987.

[26]Amir Taheri, *Holy Terror: The Inside Story of Islamic Terrorism* (London: Sphere Books, Ltd., 1987), p. 2.

[27]See, for example, Rapoport, "Fear and Trembling: Terrorism in Three Religious Traditions," p. 674.

[28]Brian M. Jenkins, *Will Terrorists Go Nuclear?* (Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, November 1975, P-5541), pp. 4-5.

[29]Brian M. Jenkins, *The Likelihood Of Nuclear Terrorism* (Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, July 1985, P-7119), pp. 4-5.

They seek to appeal to no other constituency but themselves. The absence of a constituency leads to a significant loosening of the ethics of violence. Religion is regarded as a legitimizing force, sanctioning wide-scale terrorism; moreover, it is open-ended in its range of targets. The restraints on terrorism that are imposed by the desire to appeal to a constituency are not relevant to the "religious political" terrorist.

Moreover, where the aims of the "secular political" terrorists can be described as utilitarian--seeking to bring about changes to achieve the greatest benefits for the greatest number--the aims of "religious political" terrorists are more narrowly defined as the attainment of the greatest benefits for themselves. There is also a significant disparity between ends and means. Where the "secular political" terrorist sees violence as a means to an end, violence is often an end in itself for the "religious political" terrorist.[30]

Finally, the "religious political" terrorists regard themselves not as components of a system, but as "outsiders," seeking vast changes in the existing order. This sense of alienation enables the "religious political" terrorist to contemplate far more destructive and deadly types of terrorist operations than "secular political" terrorists. Taheri, for example, points out three key differences between Islamic terrorism and other forms of terrorism:

> First, it rejects all the contemporary ideologies in their various forms; it sees itself as the total outsider with no option but to take control or to fall, gun in hand....
>
> The second characteristic that distinguishes the Islamic version from other forms of terrorism is that it is clearly conceived and conducted as a form of Holy War which can only end when total victory has been achieved....
>
> The third specific characteristic of Islamic terrorism is that it forms the basis of a whole theory both of individual conduct and of state policy. To kill the enemies of Allah and to offer the infidels the choice between converting to Islam or being put to death is the duty of every individual

[30]See Rapoport, "Fear and Trembling: Terrorism in Three Religious Traditions," p. 659.

> believer, as well as the supreme--if not the sole--task of the Islamic state.[31]

Indeed, at the root of the present Iranian-backed Islamic terrorist campaign is the desire to extend the fundamentalist interpretation of Islamic law in Iran and, indeed, to export the revolution to other Muslim countries. "We must strive," the Ayatollah Khomeini declared,

> to export our Revolution throughout the world, and must abandon all idea of not doing so, for not only does Islam refuse to recognize any difference between Muslim countries, it is the champion of all oppressed people . . . . We must make plain our stance toward the powers and superpowers and demonstrate to them despite the arduous problems that burden us. Our attitude to the world is dictated by our beliefs.[32]

These beliefs inherently embrace the notion that "religion and politics are indivisible."[33]

The revolution in Iran is held up as an example to Muslims throughout the world to reassert the fundamental teachings of the Koran and to resist the intrusion of Western--particularly United States--influence over the Middle East. This is also a reflection of the beliefs and history of Shi'a Islam as interpreted by Khomeini and subscribed to by his followers in Iran and other Middle Eastern countries. Three desiderata form the basis of this ideology:

> First, Shiites do not believe in the legitimate authority of secular governments. The 12th and last of the Shiite Imams, or successors to the Prophet Mohammed, is expected to reappear eventually to institute the rule of God's law on earth. Until then, all states are, on some level, inalienably illegitimate. Since Iran is the only state to have begun to implement 'true'

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[31]Taheri, *Holy Terror: The Inside Story of Islamic Terrorism*, pp. 7-8.

[32]Imam Khomeini, *Islam And Revolution* (Trans. by Hamid Algar) (London: KPI, Ltd., 1981), pp. 286-287.

[33]Hussein Ali Montazeri, Khomeini's hand-picked successor, quoted in Colin Legum, "Iran's Role in World Terrorism Depicted," *The Age* (Melbourne), 5 January 1984.

> Islam, however, it is thought to be the world's only legitimate state with a unique obligation of facilitating the worldwide implementation of Islamic law. Force and violence are not only acceptable but necessary means of doing so....
>
> Second, the Shiites see themselves as a persecuted minority. They believe that through their special knowledge of the Koran . . . passed on to them by the Prophet Mohammed and the 12 Imams, they are the righteous few dominated by an innately wrongful majority....
>
> Third, the Shiites view themselves as victims of injustice and oppression. Ayatollah Khomeini has interpreted this theme to make the Shiites the representatives, even vanguard, of the "oppressed and innocent masses crushed under foot all over the world."[34]

This sense of alienation and of the necessity for far-reaching changes in the world order is apparent in the works of a number of Shi'a theologians. "The world as it is today is how others shaped it," wrote Ayatollah Baqer al-Sadr. "We have two choices: either to accept it with submission, which means letting Islam die, or to destroy it, so that we can construct the world as Islam requires." Mustafa Chamran has stated, "We are not fighting within the rules of the world as it exists today. We reject all those rules." Hussein Mussawi, the leader of Lebanon's *Islamic Amal,* puts it: "We are not fighting so that the enemy recognizes us and offers us something. We are fighting to wipe out the enemy."[35]

Many of these characteristics--the legitimization of violence based on religious precepts, the sense of alienation, preoccupation with the elimination of a broadly defined category of "enemies," and the existence of a terrorist movement in which the activists are the constituents--are also apparent among militant white supremacists in the United States today. Although organized hate groups such as the Ku Klux Klan and various incarnations of Hitler's National Socialist (Nazi) party have existed in that country for decades, extremist white supremacist/paramilitary groups, oriented toward Christian

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[34]Marvin Zonis and Daniel Brumberg, "Behind Beirut Terrorism," *New York Times*, 8 October 1984.

[35]Quoted in Taheri, *Holy Terror*, pp. 7-8.

fundamentalism, "survivalism," outdoor skills, guerrilla training, and outright sedition--such as the Aryan Nations; the Order; the White Patriot Party; the Arizona Patriots; the Covenant, the Sword and the Arm of the Lord (CSA); and, the Posse Commitatus--are a newer phenomenon.[36] Indeed, whereas terrorism in the United States was once dominated by either ethnic/emigre or left-wing groups, in recent years, white supremacists have accounted for most of the United States' terrorist violence.

The magnitude of the threat posed by white supremacists in the United States is most clearly demonstrated by the wide-ranging geographical dimensions of the movement, the diversity of its adherents' causes, and their overlapping agendas. It is a movement with constituents, followers, and sympathizers stretching from Idaho, California, and Arizona in the west to North Carolina and Georgia in the east, from Texas to Canada and the Midwestern states in between. Moreover, their aims and motivations span a broad spectrum of anti-federalist and seditious beliefs, alongside racial and religious hatred cloaked in and justified by religious precepts. The white supremacists are bound together by their shared hostility to any form of government above the county level; their vilification of Jews and non-whites as "the literal children of Satan"; their obsession with achieving the religious and racial purification of the United States; their belief in a conspiracy theory of powerful Jewish interests controlling the government, banks, and the media; and their advocacy of the overthrow of the United States government or "Zionist Occupation Government" (ZOG), as they disparagingly refer to it.

The unifying thread in this patchwork ideology is the so-called Christian Identity movement.[37] The basic tenets of the Identity

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[36]For a detailed examination of many of these groups, see Bruce Hoffman, *Terrorism in the United States and the Potential Threat to Nuclear Facilities* (Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, R-3351-DOE, January 1986), pp. 37-52; and Bruce Hoffman, "Right-Wing Terrorism In The United States," *VAT Journal,* (Winter 1987).

[37]The Identity movement is based on the Anglo-Israelism movement which emerged in Great Britain during the mid-nineteenth century. Anglo-Israelism embraced the notion that the ten lost tribes of ancient Israel were in fact composed of Anglo-Saxons and not Jews. In contrast to the present-day movement in the United States, this earlier movement was a pacificistic movement.

movement include the beliefs that Jesus Christ was not a Semite, but an Aryan; that the Lost Tribes of Israel are composed not of Jews, but of "blue eyed Aryans"; that white Anglo-Saxons and not Jews are the true "Chosen People"; and, that the United States is the "Promised Land." In this context, Jews are viewed as imposters and children of Satan who must be exterminated.

At the center of the white supremacist movement is the organization known as the Aryan Nations and its Church of Jesus Christ-Christian. The ideology espoused by the organization is a mixture of racist and seditious dicta. *"WE BELIEVE,"* a brochure entitled *This is Aryan Nations* explains,

> there is a battle being fought this day between the children of darkness (today known as Jews) and the children of light (God), the Aryan race, the true Israel of the Bible....
>
> *WE BELIEVE* in the preservation of our race individually and collectively as a people as demanded and directed by God. We believe a racial nation has a right and is under obligation to preserve itself and its members....As His divine race, we have been commissioned to fulfill His divine purpose and plans....
>
> *WE BELIEVE* that there is a day of reckoning. The usurper will be thrown out by the terrible might of Yahweh's people as they return to their roots and their special destiny.[38]

Indeed, the "Aryan National State Platform" cites as Article VIII that "A ruthless war must be waged against any whose activities are injurious to the common interest."[39]

This "cleansing" of the United States forms an immutable point of reference for the white supremacists' ideology. "Aliens are pouring over as a flood into *each* of our ancestral lands," Aryan Nations founder and leader Richard Girnt Butler has written, "threatening dispossession of the heritage, culture, and very life blood of our posterity . . . . We know that as we return to our Father's natural Life Order, all power,

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[38] *This is Aryan Nations,* brochure distributed by the Aryan Nations (undated).

[39] Aryan Nations, *Calling Our Nation*, No. 53 (undated), p. 2.

prosperity, and liberty again comes to us as our possession, to establish justice forever on earth."[40] Robert Matthews, the leader of an Aryan Nations splinter group called The Order, has declared that in order to stem this tide, all Jews, blacks, Hispanics, other so-called "mud people," and white "race traitors" must be exterminated in what has been described as "a racial and religious Armageddon."[41]

It is particularly alarming that the white supremacists' expressed *raison d'etre*--racism, anti-Semitism and sedition--is justified and legitimized on theological grounds. It is at once a political and a grassroots religious movement. The leaders of the movement portray themselves as "pastors" and "reverends" and attempt to endow their organizations with a theological veneer that condones and justifies violence. In an article entitled, "An All White Nation?--Why Not?," Roy B. Masker has explained how Aryan Nations members "are in disobedience to our Father and God, Yahweh, for allowing the Nation He gave us to become the mongrelized cesspool in which we now find ourselves . . . . Indeed, it is incumbent upon us to BUILD A NEW, ALL-WHITE NATION! We are under command to do so! All scripture demands it! Masker concludes with the admonition, "Woe to those who stand in the way of the Aryan juggernaut!"[42]

The white supremacists do not appear to exhibit any of the political, moral, or practical considerations that constrain most other terrorist groups from causing mass-scale death and destruction. There are, in fact, striking parallels between these groups and religiously motivated Islamic Shi'a fanatics in the Middle East. Both groups transform abstract political ideologies and objectives into a religious imperative. Violence is not only sanctioned, it is viewed as a divine duty. Hence, the killing of persons described as "infidels" by the Shi'a or as "children of Satan" or "race traitors" by the white

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[40]"To Our New People," Open Letter from Richard G. Butler, Pastor, Aryan Nations (undated).

[41]Quoted in *Washington Post*, 26 December 1984.

[42]Roy B. Masker, "An All White Nation?--Why Not?," Aryan Nations, *Calling Our Nation*, No. 53, p. 23.

supremacists becomes a sacramental act. Indeed, the elimination of Jews, blacks, "mud people," and "race traitors" is viewed by the white supremacists as both morally justified and essential for the attainment of the religious and racial "purification" of the United States.

Although the white supremacists have thus far caused far less destruction and bloodshed than the Islamic Shi'a terrorists, evidence has come to light that at least some white supremacists have already laid plans to engage in indiscriminate, mass killing. According to a federal grand jury indictment recently handed down in Fort Smith, Arkansas, white supremacists from throughout the United States and Canada met at the Aryan Nations headquarters in Idaho in 1983 to plot the forcible overthrow of the federal government and the creation of a separate Aryan nation within the United States. The indictment states that they plan to

> finance their movement through robberies and counterfeiting. They agree to carry out assassinations of federal officials, politicians and Jews, *as well as bombings and polluting of municipal water supples.* [my emphasis].[43]

Any doubts of their seriousness of purpose were dispelled when police and federal agents who raided a white supremacist compound in rural Arkansas in April 1984, found a stockpile of some 30 gallons of cyanide to be used for this purpose.[44]

Such a scenario, in fact, is detailed in the novel, *The Turner Diaries,*[45] which has been cited as "the Bible" of the white supremacists.[46] It describes a chain of events that begins with a white supremacist revolution in 1991 and culminates two years later in "an all-

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[43]*Arkansas Gazette* (Little Rock), 27 April 1987.

[44]Joseph M. Melnichak, "A Chronicle of Hate: A Brief History Of The Radical Right In America," *TVI Report*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (undated), pp. 41-42. This was also confirmed to me by an FBI agent present at the raid.

[45]Andrew MacDonald, *The Turner Diaries* (Arlington, VA: The National Alliance/National Vanguard Books, 1985).

[46]*New York Times*, 27 December 1984.

out race war" and worldwide nuclear conflagration. In the book, a terrorist group called The Order embarks on a ruthless campaign of violence involving the assassination of public officials and prominent Jews, the shooting down of commercial airliners, the poisoning of water supplies, and bombings of public utilities. The book reaches its climax when the terrorists seize the U.S. nuclear arsenal and obliterate several American cities before turning the weapons against targets in Israel and the Soviet Union.[47]

As incredible and lunatic as the events in *The Turner Diaries* may seem,[48] the strategy of the inchoate terrorist campaign waged in the United States between 1983 and 1984 by Robert Matthews and the real-life Order was in fact based on the battle plan detailed in the book. Furthermore, this apocalyptic vision forms part of the beliefs of many white supremacists today. Whereas most people harbor deep fears of a nuclear war, many white supremacists appear to welcome the prospect since a nuclear war would eliminate their avowed "enemies" and permit the fulfillment of their objectives to create a world order peopled exclusively by the white race.

The self-described purpose of the Covenant, the Sword and the Arm of the Lord compound at Mountain Home, Arkansas (where the cyanide was discovered) is "to build an Ark for God's people during the coming tribulations on the earth."[49] Accordingly, the 100 or so men, women and children living in the compound have prepared themselves for the coming Armageddon by stockpiling weapons, food, and valuables, and undergoing training in survivalist techniques and guerrilla warfare. The group's journal describes the impending apocalypse as a limited nuclear war launched against the United States by "Russia and possibly China and

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[47]MacDonald, *The Turner Diaries,* pp. 38-39, 62, 174, and 190.

[48]Turner's tale, although fictional, is in many ways like kind with Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, which was not taken seriously at the time, only to be turned into terrible reality a mere ten years after its publication.

[49]Quoted in Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, *Hate Groups In America: A Record of Bigotry and Violence* (New York: Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1982), p. 52.

Japan." As Terry Noble, a pastor and spokesman for the group explained, "We are Christian survivalists who believe in preparing for the ultimate holocaust . . . . The coming war is a step toward God's government."[50]

CONCLUSION

As this paper has shown, the ethical values of "secular political" terrorists are significantly different from those of "religious political" terrorists. In this respect, distinctions among terrorist organizations based on ideological polarity or nationalist/irredentist aims no longer provide an adequate framework for explaining the contrasting ethical foundations of many contemporary terrorist movements. Terrorism today is increasingly being carried forward by "religious political" groups, and this is, in fact, one of the main reasons for terrorism's increasing lethality.

The ethical considerations of "secular political" terrorism are directly related to the constituency of the target audience to which the terrorists are appealing. Acts of "secular political" terrorism are deliberately situated within the ethic of the constituency at large. All of the terrorist movements in this category seek targets that they consider lucrative. Terrorism is not random or senseless, but meant to appeal to and attract supporters, to focus attention on the terrorists themselves, and to attain tangible aims. Hence, publicity and attention are paramount aims, and the terrorists recognize that only if their violence is calculated or regulated will they be able to obtain the support or win the victories they desire. As an IRA terrorist once put it, "You don't just bloody well kill people for the sake of killing them."[51]

This is not the position taken by "religious political" terrorists. Violence for them has a transcendent purpose and therefore becomes a sacramental act or divine duty. Religion is a legitimizing force, and terrorism becomes an end in itself. This is a direct reflection of the fact that "religious political" terrorists do not seek to appeal to any

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[50]Quoted in Ibid., pp. 51 and 53.
[51]Quoted in McKnight, *The Mind Of The Terrorist*, p. 179.

constituency but themselves, and the changes they want to make are not for any utilitarian purpose, but are only to benefit themselves. The "religious political" terrorist sees himself as an outsider from the society that he rejects, and this sense of alienation enables him to contemplate, and undertake, far more destructive and bloodier types of terrorist operations than his "secular political" counterpart.