

# Why terrorism doesn't work

by Agner Fog. Draft article, 2002-04-07

## Abstract

The article identifies some important reasons why terrorism conflicts tend to go into long-lasting deadlocks. Insurgents tend to use terrorism only as a last resort when no other efficient weapons are available. This indicates a severe imbalance of power between the two parts, which makes it impossible to reach a fair compromise by negotiation. The violence of terrorism and counter-terrorism has a strong psychological effect which, according to the cultural r/k theory, influences the cultures of both parts in the direction of strong nationalism or group identity, intolerance and bellicosity. The mass media amplify both the psychological effect and the imbalance of power by emphasizing fear and drama and by giving unequal coverage of the two sides. Examples and suggestions for mitigating these problems are given.

## Scientific neutrality

The general standards of scientific neutrality are difficult to live up to in the study of terrorism where often there are no unbiased information sources. It has been found that most studies of terrorism are based on biased information sources such as news media and government sources, and in fact the bulk of the literature on the relationship between terrorism and the media has been characterized as dismaying (Reid 1997, Paletz and Boiney 1992, Irvin 1992). In the present study, I am attempting to take the role of a neutral observer. In the absence of unbiased information sources I have attempted to gather information from both parts in the conflicts, admitting that the scarce sources from the terrorist side may not be representative.

## Definition of terrorism

Before we start our analysis, we may need a definition of terrorism. Definitions of terrorism have often been arbitrary and *ad hoc*. Mass media and political leaders have used the label of terrorism very selectively to target their enemies (Lee and Solomon 1990), and the alleged terrorists have challenged this categorization. It has often been argued that one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter. The most workable definition of terrorism that has been published is *the intentional use of, or threat to use violence against civilians or against civilian targets, in order to attain political aims* (Ganor, n.d.). But even this definition has a problem because it includes nonhuman targets and thus may be interpreted to include, for example, flag-burning as terrorism. Since there are more than a hundred different definitions of terrorism (Ganor, n.d.) we have to admit that the concept of terrorism is a rhetoric device used for condemning one's enemies rather than a scientifically definable category. Consequently, the scientific analysis may as well use the constructionist approach of defining terrorism as whatever people so considers. These definitional quibbles are of minor importance, however, to the purpose of this article. What matters to the application of the cultural r/k theory (see below) is that terrorism is terrifying. Any attack that evokes strong feelings of terror - whether intended or not - may thus be relevant to the discussion of this article. The major focus of the article is on the kind of terrorism that we see in connection with insurgency.

## Cultural r/k theory

The cultural r/k theory is a theory of how cultures adapt to peaceful or belligerent environments (Fog 1999). The *Zeitgeist*, or spirit of a society will, according to this theory,

adapt to the environment in which a society finds itself. A belligerent neighbor state that threatens the nation or social group will give rise to a kind of psychological armament in the citizens who see their nation or tribe as threatened. The solidarity and feeling of group identity will be strengthened (Hogg and Abrams 1988). It has been discovered that these social psychological reactions give rise to a whole series of emergent cultural phenomena. The political structure will be more hierarchical because people feel the need for a strong leader. The ideology will go in the direction of saying that individuals exist for the sake of the society, rather than vice versa. Religious life will be stricter. Discipline will be harsh and the tolerance for deviants will go down. Sexual morals will also be stricter, and the birthrate will go up. Interestingly, it has been found that these cultural changes are also reflected in the artistic production. Architecture, pictorial art, fiction, and even music becomes more formalistic, embellished and perfectionist so as to achieve a cognitive congruence between the art and the social system where political and religious leaders have a grandiose and majestic status.

A culture that exhibits these characteristics is called *regal*. The opposite tendencies are called *kalyptic*. A kalyptic culture is typified by peacefulness, tolerance and individualism. You may imagine a continuous scale going from the extremely regal to the extremely kalyptic, where most cultures and their individual members fluctuate somewhere around the middle of this scale.

A culture can be pushed in the regal direction not only by war, but also by the threat of war. If people perceive the likelihood of being involved in a war as high, then they will feel the need for a strong political leadership, and the culture will drift in the regal direction. Other dangers that are perceived as threatening to the social order and to the nation as a whole can have a regal influence as well. This effect has been exploited by despots throughout history who have created witch-hunts and fictitious enemies in order to boost social solidarity and thereby consolidate their dwindling power. The regalization (i.e. regal development) not only makes a social group better armed to resist violent attacks, but also more likely to *initiate* a violent conflict, even against other enemies than those who caused the regalization.

A culture will drift in the kalyptic direction in the absence of any serious threat to the nation and to the social order. People will not accept a tyrannical rule when nothing legitimizes the need for a strong leadership and nothing justifies the requirement that people make great sacrifices for the sake of their nation.

The reader is referred to the original literature for a more detailed account of the theoretical and empirical basis of the cultural r/k model (Fog 1999).

The concept of regality has a noteworthy resemblance with the concept of authoritarianism (Adorno et al. 1950). The latter concept has been widely used in social psychology for half a century despite the fact that it is strongly criticized for being vaguely defined and politically biased (Eckhardt 1991). The cultural r/k theory may thus be seen as providing an alternative to the theory of authoritarianism, and a model that is based on evolutionary psychology, social psychology and cultural adaptation rather than on implicit accusations of psychopathology.

### **The regalizing effect of terrorism**

Terrorism has its name from the emotion it evokes, and for good reasons. The terrorizing effect is particularly strong because it comes unexpectedly, and can hit anybody so that nobody can feel safe. Thus, the terrorists can produce a strong effect with smaller means than conventional warfare. The strong psychological effect of terrorism also means a strong regalizing effect, although not as strong as the effect of a full-fledged war. The society being attacked will gradually become more regal and therefore more inclined to retaliate violently and disproportionately. Reviews of the literature finds considerable support for the claim that terrorism makes the attacked population more stern and militant (Paletz and Boiney 1992, Hewitt 1992).

A traditional analysis may say that people fight because they hate each other. But the cultural r/k theory has revealed that there is no less truth in the opposite statement, that people gradually develop more and more hostility because they fight. Likewise, when a conflict is said to be caused by growing nationalism, we may as well say that the nationalism is caused by the conflict. This two-way causality indicates that we may have a vicious circle whenever there is inter-group violence. The social psychological phenomenon of regalization thus plays an important role in the continued spiral of violence that characterizes many terrorism conflicts (Fog 1999).

### **The imbalance of power**

The terrorist attack on USA in September 2001 has prompted the famous French philosopher Jean Baudrillard to make the following comment, which has attracted international attention:

*When the situation is thus monopolized by global power, when one deals with this formidable concentration of all functions through technocratic machinery and unification of thought, what other way is there, than a terrorist transferal of the situation? It is the system itself that has created the objective conditions for this brutal retort. By taking all the cards to itself, it forces the other to change the rules of the game.*

(Baudrillard 2001, my translation). This analysis catches in a nutshell the reason why somebody will use the weapon of terrorism. They simply have no other weapon. It simply doesn't make sense to use conventional warfare in a situation where the imbalance of power is so extreme as in the case of Osama bin Laden and his network against the USA. Such an imbalance of power between the two parts is seen in many terrorism conflicts.

As implied by Baudrillard, the USA has superior power in at least five areas: military technology, economy, political alliances, ideological power, and access to mass media. The last two aspects, which are not the least important ones, need further explanation. The ideological power is the ability to influence ideological discussions to one's advantage. It is the ability to define the situation, place interpretations within a particular frame of reference, and set the agenda. The power of discursive dominance is widely recognized (Foucault 1980, Altheide 1995). A strong influence on the mass media can of course facilitate such an ideological dominance.

A country that has superior ideological power in a conflict may thus be able to condemn the actions of their enemy as cowardly terrorism, while exalting their own actions as heroic. Obviously, it is easy to find ideological arguments for condemning terrorism, but even if the strong part uses methods that the weak part considers terrorism, the strong part may still be able to control the ideological discussions to their advantage and thereby evoke international sympathy for themselves.

As an extension of Baudrillard's analysis, I will put forth the hypothesis that a significant imbalance of power is a contributory factor to many cases of terrorism. The *weapon of the weak*, as terrorism is sometimes called, is simply the last resort when other, more acceptable, weapons are not available. When one part has taken all the cards to himself, he forces the other to change the rules of the game.

Unfortunately for the weak part, the weapon of terrorism often turns out to be counter-productive for two reasons. Firstly, because it is more regalizing than other weapons and thus makes the strong part more likely to retaliate by violent means than to negotiate. And, secondly, because it implies an ideological disadvantage when neutral third parties condemn terrorism.

### **The failure of negotiations**

A successful peace negotiation is often the only thing that can stop a terrorism conflict. But history shows that the motivation to negotiate and make sacrifices for the sake of peace may be very low in both parties. An important cause behind this uncompromising attitude is

the psychological effect of the violent conflict. Terrorism has a stronger regaling effect than other violent weapons because it puts everybody in the society at danger rather than just the soldiers, and because of the heavy and highly emotional media coverage.

The strong part often refuses to negotiate with terrorists, or demands a ceasefire before initiating negotiations. This makes negotiation unattractive to the weak part because terrorism is the only effective weapon they have, and if they give up this weapon for the sake of making negotiations possible, then they have nothing to negotiate with. It has been found that conflicts in general tend to last longer if one or both parts are weak. The weak part has too much at stake to give up, but doesn't have the resources to change the situation (Thies 2001).

Psychology plays an important role in enduring conflicts, and it has even been theorized that the more a state's behavior is sanctioned against, the less likely its leadership is to change their minds (Thies 2001). Another psychological peculiarity that makes negotiations difficult is the tendency of negotiators to evaluate losses higher than gains. Using the status quo as a point of reference, negotiators tend to regard what they have as more valuable than what they can get in return, so that they will be unwilling to make concessions (Lau and Levy 1998).

### **The effect of the mass media**

If anybody benefits from terrorism it is the news media. Terrorism fits perfectly into the scheme of what is newsworthy and what sells newspapers, because it provides powerful pictures and dramatic stories about good and evil. The media stories are highly sensational and selective and have a strong emotional effect (Weimann and Winn 1994, Crelinsten 1989, Slone 2000). We all have an innate drive to seek information about everything that is dangerous so that we can know how to avoid dangers. This drive makes us buy the stories about crime, disaster and terrorism. And the news media have certainly learned to exploit our appetite for bad news which make us perceive the world as more dangerous than it is (Shoemaker 1996, Altheide 1991, 1997).

While it is almost certain that the news media profit from terrorism, it is more uncertain whether terrorists benefit from the news media. It is often claimed that terrorists seek media attention (Weimann and Winn 1994), and in some cases they obviously do, as when Arab terrorists attacked the Olympic games in Munich in 1972. However, the media stories are mostly unfavorable to the terrorists, and their spokespersons are often frustrated that the media attention they get focus on violence rather than on politics (Irvin 1992). Thus, many scholars doubt that the media attention benefits the terrorists (Dowling 1989, Altheide 1991).

It has been found that large-scale terrorist actions for the purpose of propaganda are committed mostly by small emerging groups who seek recognition of their existence and importance. If the group grows bigger and receives more recognition, it may reduce the use of violence in order to avoid bad publicity. This process can, however, lead to small hard-line breakaway groups that employ more violent tactics (Picard 1989, Irvin 1992).

When discussing the effect of media coverage, we have to distinguish at least three different audiences: the constituency of the terrorists, the population they attack, and the international community (Picard 1989, Irvin 1992). Terrorists may expect favorable media coverage only if the population they are fighting for have their own media. In the case of insurgency, the terrorists may not have their own media, or their media may be under heavy censorship. The question of whether media attention helps terrorists gain support in their home population or in the international community lacks a clear answer. The belief that terrorism can be an effective propaganda weapon has considerable support among terrorist organizations as well as among the strategists of counter-terrorism (Kingston 1995). But this is a belief in lack of strong evidence. In fact, most studies indicate that the terrorism-as-propaganda strategy may be futile or counterproductive (Alonso 2001, Paletz and Boiney 1992). Not all insurgent groups seek publicity. In fact, some groups avoid publicity as they regard the media as agents of their enemy (Picard 1989).

The effect of the mass media on the population targeted by terrorism is easier to assess. The media coverage is mostly unfavorable to the terrorists and the population they represent,

and has a heavy influence on the policy against them (Altheide 1991). The fear mongering of the media contributes strongly to an increasing hatred and regality which may make the attacked population unwilling to engage in peaceful negotiations.

The influence of the media on the international audience is important because pressure from a third party may be the only means that can stop the conflict. The organization behind the terrorists is often the weak part in the conflict, not only in terms of military power, but also in terms of media access. They may not have their own media and news agencies, or if they do, they may have fewer international contacts. Typically, the international media will get most of their news from the part that has the most efficient news organization; and several commentators have maintained that the news coverage is biased in favor of the strong part in the conflict (Crelinsten 1989). Official as well as unofficial censorship and self-censorship are very common (Simon 2002, Kingston 1995, Hocking 1992, Paletz and Tawney 1992).

Unfortunately, an unbiased reporting free of sensationalism is not profitable to the media. People like to hear statements that they already agree with so that they don't have to revise their worldview. They don't like to make value trade-offs (Lau and Levy 1998). Thus, the international news media have no economic incentive to seek alternative sources in order to produce fair and unbiased reports. A consistent bias in international news media contributes further to the imbalance of power that drove the insurgents to use the weapon of terrorism in the first hand.

We must understand that while the role of the mass media in terrorist thinking is undeniably great, sincerely felt anger about what the insurgents consider unjust is a far more important factor in their choice of strategy (Gerrits 1992).

We may thus conclude that media coverage may contribute to the prolonging of a terrorism conflict in three ways: 1) The heavy and over-dramatizing coverage spreads fear and hatred and contributes to a general regalization of both parts. This increases the propensity of both parts to use violence rather than negotiation. 2) A media bias in favor of the strong part aggravates the imbalance of power that made the weak part choose the weapon of terrorism in the first hand. 3) A bias in the international media makes it less likely that third parties will intervene in a way that makes negotiation an attractive option for the weak part.

## **EXAMPLES**

### **Northern Ireland**

The conflict in Northern Ireland has been particularly long lasting. It has lasted for so long, indeed, that people tend to forget why it started. The political scientist John Soule, who has studied this conflict intensively using first-hand observations and interviews with participants on both sides, has characterized the violence as a ritualistic dance that both parties are locked in. New recruits to the terrorism movement are motivated more by hatred and appetite for revenge than by the original political purpose (Soule 1989).

When seeking the reason why this conflict has come into a deadlock, we first have to analyze the psychological effect of the mass media. The scene is dominated by British media, while the unionist-republican media have a very limited readership. Varying degrees of official censorship has been imposed on the media between 1972 and 1994 in addition to a widespread self-censorship (Kingston 1995, Paletz and Tawney 1992). The bias has been particularly profound in the international media, which have relied heavily on British news agencies without telling their audience that they were conveying censored news. Thus, the arguments of the insurgents were rarely heard by anybody outside their own ranks.

The IRA and Sinn Fein have not been good strategists when it comes to influencing an international audience. They do have a small but dedicated news organization and there is evidence that they have discussed the desirability of influencing the international opinion (Gerrits 1992, Irvin 1992), but apparently they have done little to bypass the British censorship and distribute propaganda abroad. Consequently, there has been very little support for the IRA outside their home area and hardly any impetus for third party intervention. It has

taken many years for the terrorists to realize that terrorism is not an efficient propaganda weapon (Alonso 2001).

The imbalance of power is particularly striking here. The insurgents have very limited resources. Their military power is miniscule compared with the British, their support in the general population is not overwhelming, their ability to justify their actions ideologically to outsiders is small, and they have not succeeded in using the mass media and the international opinion to their advantage. The only effective, or apparently effective, weapon they have is terrorism.

The psychology of regality is seen clearly in the actions of both parties in the conflict. The insurgents have continued to use violence for many years although the desired effect has never come into sight. The only thing they have obtained by the use of violence is to satisfy their appetite for revenge and to provoke counter-attacks. The same can be said about the British government. They have applied such draconian laws and violent attacks with little regard for generally accepted principles of justice that it has given rise to severe criticism from Amnesty International and the European Human Rights Court (Soule 1989). It is thus clear that both parties have used weapons and tactics that were counter-productive in the sense that they have had no deterring effect, but, on the contrary, have contributed to a heightened combative zeal on the opposite side.

### **The Middle East**

The imbalance of power plays an important role in the Palestinian conflict as well. Israel has the dominating position in terms of both economy and military technology, thanks to lavish support from the USA. The PLO has allies too, in the Islamic world, but they are weaker than the USA and reluctant to intervene for fear of starting a major war that they are bound to lose. The Palestinians have their strongest card in terms of ideological power. They may not have the same level of intellectual sophistication as the Israelis, but they do have strong ideological arguments because they are being expelled from their own land. This brings them considerable sympathy in large parts of the world. The Israelis do, however, have a strong ideological dominance in the USA where the mass media almost unanimously support the Zionist side. And the tactic of calling the PLO a terrorist organization has had considerable merit in the rest of the world as well. For more than half a century, the North American media have seen the problems almost exclusively from the Jewish side and ignored the problems of the Palestinians, according to a CIA analyst (Christison 1997). This media bias has made it possible for the US government to support Israel and veto numerous UN resolutions that condemn the Israeli occupation. The difference in media focus between the USA and other parts of the world is thus an important factor contributing to the conflict.

The effects of social psychology also play an important role. Both the Israelis and the Palestinians have developed their feelings of national identity as the conflict unfolded. Without any conflict they would not have developed the strong feelings of national identity that they have today (Peretz 1996, Brand 1995). The regaling effect of the violent conflict is evidenced by the appearance of religious and political fanaticism on both sides. A study among Israelis shows that while the hate towards Arabs is not universal, there is a strong correlation between religiosity and xenophobia (Pedahzur and Yishai 1999). Another study suggests that while the use of violence by the Palestinians has been necessary for drawing international attention to the conflict, it has also made the Israelis as well as Jews in the USA more hostile (Hubbard 1994).

Several ceasefires have been negotiated through the years, but none of them have led to lasting peace. The reason why many ceasefires are broken may be found in the cultural r/k theory which predicts that the prolonged effect of regularization makes both parts more prone to use violence (Fog 1999). Observing that the Palestinians have no defense as long as a ceasefire is in effect, the Israelis may be tempted to take advantage of the situation and expand their settlements on occupied territory or otherwise provoke the Palestinians. Seeing their standing deteriorate, the Palestinians have no other option than to break the ceasefire in

order to defend their territory. Likewise, extremist subgroups among the Palestinians may be tempted to provoke the Israelis and thus start a new spiral of violence. In other words, a ceasefire is very vulnerable when both parts still have a regal culture as a result of the recent violent conflict. The situation is a catch-22 when the Israelis refuse to negotiate unless there is a ceasefire and the Palestinians know that they have nothing to negotiate with as long as they respect a ceasefire.

As this conflict gives rise to global tensions between the religions, there is a strong impetus for the international community to intervene and put pressure on both parties. A strong international pressure is probably the only thing that can stop the conflict.

### **The al-Qaeda network**

The attack on New York and Pentagon in September 2001 that killed approximately 3000 people was the most dramatic terrorist action yet seen and an event that shocked the entire USA. Behind this powerful event was an obscure network named al-Qaeda.

Al-Qaeda was a loosely knit network of Muslim organizations around the world led by Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan. The network was established around 1988 and its goal was to defend Muslim states against what it saw as the enemies of Islam, primarily USA and the Jews. It has launched or attempted violent attacks since 1992, mostly against US interests (ICT, n.d.).

The imbalance of power in this case could hardly be more extreme. Osama bin Laden was admittedly very rich and his organization had connections in many countries, but what is the wealth of one man against the greatest superpower in the world? The fact that a small group of young men armed with pocketknives could cause so much damage to a country that has the most advanced weapon technology in the world just shows how vulnerable everybody is to terrorism.

A further aspect in the imbalance of power is the utter incompetence of the al-Qaeda in terms of ideological warfare. The al-Qaeda did not seek international publicity and did not even have its own public information outlet. Few news organizations wanted to give the terrorists a voice, and those who did had a hard time finding Osama bin Laden and his associates to get a comment. The only effective outlet was the Qatar-based TV station al-Jazeera which was not entirely pro al-Qaeda. And the few speeches that were transmitted were not very sophisticated in terms of explaining their criticism of US foreign policy. In contrast to this stands the massive and worldwide media coverage of the events from the American point of view and the ensuing American battle against terrorism. Al-Qaeda and its affiliated organizations have done little throughout the years to influence non-Muslims. Most of their political publications were in Arabic and full of quotations from the Quran which are unlikely to convince non-Muslims. The tiny news organization Azzam Publications which is sympathetic to al-Qaeda and occasionally used by Osama bin Laden issued a statement in October 2000 maintaining that demonstrations, negotiations and protests against Israel were futile and that an armed battle was the only way (Azzam 2000). If this view was shared by al-Qaeda it may explain the lack of propaganda efforts directed at non-Muslims. The bellicosity of the statement attests to the regaling effect of the long battle of Muslims versus Christians and Jews, although it represents only a small extremist fraction of Muslims.

For many years the USA has interfered in or caused conflicts all over the world in ways that some see as egoist and arrogant. Add to this the worldwide economic and cultural dominance of the USA, and it is easy to see why somebody would hate this country - except for an American. The American news media have always been very nationalistic and the dissenting voice is seldom heard. The dramatic event therefore came as a shock to everybody, and few Americans understood why it happened.

The regaling effect of the event on US culture was very strong. There was an intense and very emotional media focus on mourning victims, heroic firefighters, and sentimental presidential speeches calling for revenge. People in many countries see the USA as an idol and an important ally. The massive transmission of the events in mass media throughout the

world therefore had a marked regaling effect outside the USA as well, and many countries soon declared their readiness to support the USA in the fight against these terrorists that were simply seen as evil.

The severe damage that the terrorists afflicted notwithstanding, it cannot be denied that the USA retaliated disproportionately. The terrorists destroyed a few buildings, and the USA and its allies destroyed a whole country in return. The dedicated effort to wipe out terrorism networks after September 2001 has not reduced the likelihood of future terrorism actions. The military actions may have wiped out significant parts of the al-Qaeda network but not its *raison d'être*. The US foreign policy has been adjusted, but not in a direction that is more sensitive to poor and oppressed peoples. The conflict in the Middle East, which the USA has a major influence on, has become more violent than it has been for many years and the Palestinians are more suppressed than ever at the time of writing (February 2002). The American nationalism has risen to new heights and the freedom of the media has been reduced (Institute of Social Research 2001, Simon 2002).

Half a year before the attack, an analyst wrote of the capabilities of Osama bin Laden's network (Johnson 2001):

*Although protected by the Taliban in Afghanistan, Bin Laden has had no success in mounting follow-up attacks since the bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in August 1998. One would be hard pressed to argue that Bin Laden's ire at the United States has cooled. In the wake of U.S. retaliatory strikes, he may in fact have more reasons to attack Americans. Conceding that the motives for his actions probably remain unchanged, we can only conclude that his capabilities have eroded, that countermeasures have denied him opportunities, or some combination of the two.*

Now he has been given a higher dose of the same medicine that obviously failed to stop his terrorist activities. Will it stop him this time? Most probably not. The root causes of the terrorism have only been aggravated by the immense operation to root out the terrorist organization. The US foreign policy has become more imperialistic, the situation in the Middle East has worsened, and the US mass media have become less sensitive to criticism of US foreign policy.

The next terrorist attack on the USA may come from another group with another name, but with the same motives. The destructive effect of the use of hijacked airplanes as terrorist bombs was far beyond anybody's expectations. Moreover, it shook the entire stock market and gave rise to massive media coverage all over the world. All this apparent success is almost certain to inspire copycat actions. The US government has done a huge effort to prevent future terrorist attacks, but the strategy it has applied will most certainly turn out to be counterproductive. The same can be said about the al-Qaeda. If their goal was to make the USA less oppressive to Palestinians and other Muslims, then their strategy has certainly been counterproductive as well. This example shows all too well that the regaling psychological effect makes terrorism and counter-terrorism activities benefit neither part in the conflict.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The times when international conflicts could be settled by means of violence are almost over. International wars are becoming more seldom because of the deterrent effects of strong alliances, powerful weapons and international interventions, and because modern nations are so dependent on international trade and technology that they cannot afford to isolate themselves.

Violence does still play a role in *intranational* conflicts, although these seem to be decreasing as well (Johnson 2001, Volgy and Imwalle 1997). Insurgent groups do not want to use terrorism because it is difficult to justify ideologically. But some groups do use terrorism as a last resort when no other effective means are available. Terrorist actions are thus seen mainly in conflicts where there is a strong imbalance of power. Terrorism is a cheap weapon with a strong effect and is therefore tempting to use for the weak part in a conflict. As the



present analysis shows, however, the effect of terrorism actions does not go in the direction that the terrorists desire.

Both terrorism and traditional counter-terrorism measures have an overall effect that worsens and prolongs the conflict, and thus benefits neither part. An important reason for this counterproductive effect is the psychological phenomenon of regularization. The violence that threatens everybody has a psychological effect on the ideology and cultural sentiments of a culture that makes both parts more intolerant and more prone to use violence. These regular sentiments can persist for many years after a ceasefire so that even a small provocation can make the violence flare up again. These mechanisms play an important role in the well-known spiral of violence, and they are strongly amplified by the news media that exploit people's fears by publishing over-dramatizing and highly emotional stories about the violence.

Another reason why the use of terrorism turns out to be counterproductive is that it weakens the ideological standing of the weak part. The ideological condemnation of terrorism for harming innocents is hard to argue against. The use of terrorism thus ruins the only truly efficient weapon that the weak part has: ideological warfare. The only hope for the weak part in the conflict is to gain the sympathy of the international community so that third parties will intervene and put pressure on the strong part.

There is no general agreement on the definition of terrorism, and the definition has often been expanded to make it more inclusive, for example by the American government, which has revised its statistics after an expansion of the definition (Reid 1997). Expanding the definitions of evil is characteristic of a witch hunt (Fog 1999), and although the fight against terrorism does not necessarily qualify as a witch hunt, a further widening of the definitions is likely to lead in that direction. It is very tempting for a part in a conflict to redefine the concept of terrorism in order to be able to blame their opponent for terrorism. Likewise, it is of vital importance for the opposite part to avoid the label of terrorist in this ideological warfare.

The most efficacious strategy for the weak part in a conflict would therefore be to hit only the most ideologically appropriate targets and preferably by nonviolent means with a strong symbolic value. An efficient media organization and the use of spectacular media stunts to attract international attention are also necessary means for an insurgent group to gain momentum.

The best thing that the strong part in a conflict can do to avoid a deadlock is to ignore terrorist attacks and refrain from escalating the violence. The widespread and often explicitly expressed policy of never conceding to terrorists may be necessary for deterring terrorism, but this policy has the drawback that it may make peaceful negotiations impossible. Thus, there may be situations where the only solution is to set no preconditions for going into peace negotiations.

Negotiations between unequal parts in a situation where there is a strong imbalance of power can never reach a compromise that is acceptable to both parts without the intervention of a third party. It is therefore necessary that the international community intervene in such conflicts and put more pressure on the strong part than on the weak part in order to offset the imbalance of power that made the weak part turn to terrorism in the first hand. This does not mean, of course, that there should be no sanctions against the terrorists.

The international community may not pay much attention to a conflict unless there is media focus on the issue, and the news media are unlikely to pay attention unless there is violence and havoc. The hesitancy of the international community of intervening in developing conflicts is thus an important reason why insurgents may turn to dramatic terrorist actions in order to get media attention.

In ideological discussions, the media are often blamed for not being sufficiently sensitive to this or that issue, but we must not forget that most news media are controlled by the logic of economic competition. An editor who is more concerned with saving the world than with ratings may very well see his enterprise dwindle in the merciless *survival of the fittest*-game of a free market economy. The problem of the entertainment-centered media strategies is thus rooted not in ethical flaws of individual editors, but in the fundamental economic structure of the media industry. It is therefore necessary to establish alternative non-profit news

organizations to focus on dangerous conflicts and to offset the imbalance caused by the unequal access of the two parts to international news media and to remedy the problem that biased reporting is more profitable than balanced reporting.

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