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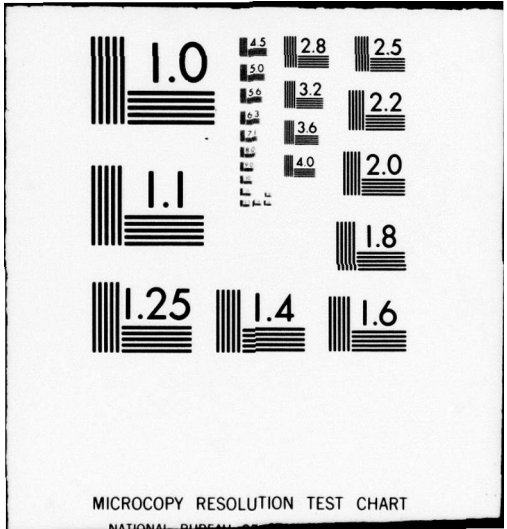
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6 INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM:
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10 Brian M. Jenkins

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INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM:
TRENDS AND POTENTIALITIES*

Brian M. Jenkins

The Rand Corporation, Santa Monica, California

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Political fanatics have demonstrated repeatedly in the last few years that by employing terrorist tactics they can achieve disproportionate effects in the world. They have attracted worldwide attention to themselves and their causes. They have caused worldwide alarm. They have compelled governments to negotiate with them and often to grant them concessions. Very much the phenomenon of the 1970s, will terrorism persist? Forecasts as to whether or not terrorism will persist depend largely on one's analysis of the origin and nature of modern international terrorism.

Some perceive today's terrorism as the outgrowth of unique political circumstances prevailing in the late 1960s: the Israeli defeat of the Arabs in 1967, which caused Palestinians to abandon their dependence on Arab military power and turn to terrorism; increasing emphasis on urban guerrilla warfare in Latin America, and with it, the resort to terrorist tactics; and the anti-Vietnam war and anti-government demonstrations in Western Europe, Japan, and the United States which ultimately spawned terrorist groups such as the Baader-Meinhof Gang and the Japanese Red Army. According to this view, terrorism will decline as political circumstances change, as original conflicts are resolved, as governments effectively combat terrorism.

If, on the other hand, the current wave of terrorism is seen as the result, not only of unique political circumstances, but also of recent technological developments -- international travel giving terrorists worldwide mobility; improved mass communications providing them with almost instantaneous access to a worldwide audience; the increasing availability of weapons and explosives; and new vulnerabilities

in a society increasingly dependent on fragile technology -- or if terrorism is seen as a new set of tactics whose use inspires other groups, then terrorism is likely to continue.

My own view is that the use of terrorist tactics will persist as a mode of political expression, of gaining international attention, and of achieving limited political goals. Although no terrorists have achieved their stated long-range goals, and in that sense have failed, their use of terrorist tactics has won them publicity and occasional concessions. These tactical successes probably will suffice to preclude the abandonment of terrorist tactics.

Bombing probably will remain the most common terrorist tactic. Explosives can be easily purchased, stolen, or manufactured from commercially-available materials. Knowledge of at least primitive explosives is widespread. Bombings require little organization; it can easily be a one-man operation. Seizing hostages whether by kidnapping individuals, hijacking airliners, or storming buildings also will continue to be a popular terrorist tactic owing to its demonstrated effectiveness. In dealing with hostage incidents, governments appear to be increasingly willing to respond to force. The last two years have seen the increasing use of special police and military commando units to storm airliners and buildings seized by terrorists. Fourteen of the 25 international hostage situations that have occurred since the beginning of 1976 were ended by force. This trend seems likely to continue.

Terrorists will remain mobile, able to strike targets anywhere in the world. They appear to be getting more sophisticated and strengthening their links with each other. "Freelance" terrorists may emerge.

It is also possible that some nations in the future may employ terrorist groups as a mode of surrogate warfare. Although we may foresee an era of formal peace between nations, at the same time we may be entering an era of increased political violence at lower levels.

Whether terrorism will increase largely depends on how one counts. The decade from the beginning of 1968 to the end of 1977 saw an increase in international terrorism if we simply go by the number of incidents. The increase is not steady. It traces a jagged line of peaks and valleys, but the trend is definitely upward.

These are incidents of international terrorism only, that is, incidents in which terrorists cross national frontiers to carry out their attacks, select victims or targets because of their connections to a foreign state (diplomats, executives of foreign corporations, embassies), attack airliners on international flights, or force airliners to fly to another country. It excludes the considerable amount of terrorist violence carried out by terrorists operating within their own country against their own nationals, and in many countries by governments against their own citizens. For example, Irish terrorists blowing up other Irishmen in Belfast would not be counted, nor would Italian terrorists kidnapping Italian officials in Italy.

Many of the incidents reported are symbolic bombings not intended to produce casualties but only to dramatize a grievance, publicize a protest, or commemorate some date significant in a political struggle. By type of incident, these bombings show the sharpest increase, which leads to the suspicion that at least part of the overall increase may

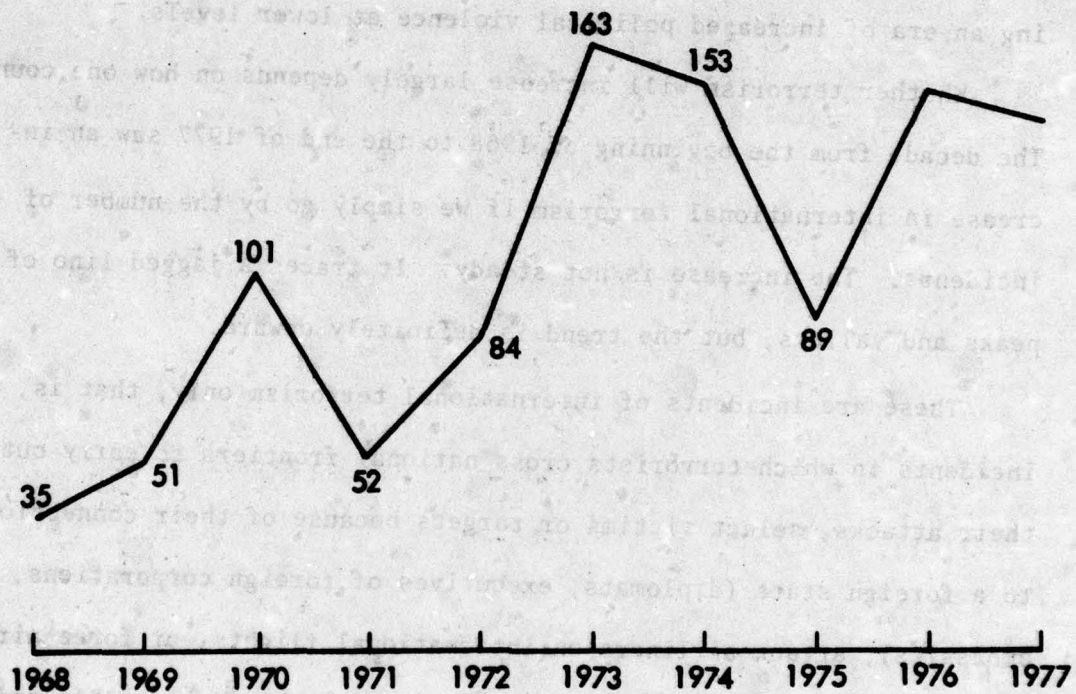


Fig. 1—Total number of incidents of international terrorism by year based upon author's chronology

be due to the existence of a chronology of terrorism and the demand for such information -- in short, better reporting. To get around this problem, it is useful to examine incidents with fatalities or injuries (Figure 2), the total number of fatalities (Figure 3), and

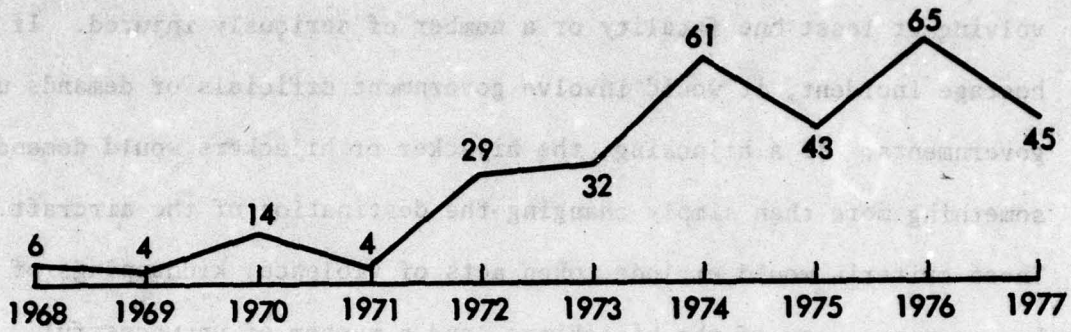


Fig. 2—Total number of incidents of international terrorism involving fatalities or injuries by year

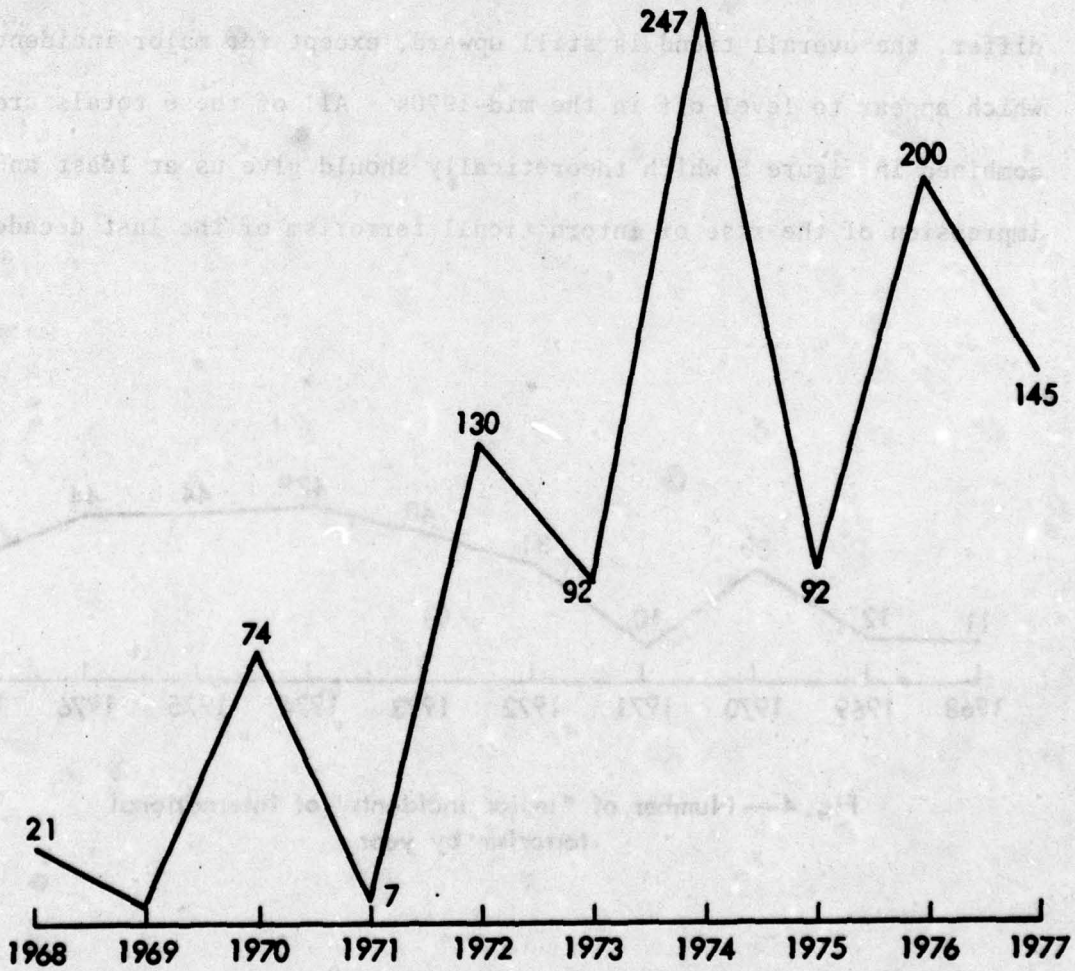


Fig. 3—Total number of fatalities in incidents of international terrorism by year

"major incidents" (Figure 4). Major incidents would include those involving at least one fatality or a number of seriously injured. If a hostage incident, it would involve government officials or demands upon governments. If a hijacking, the hijacker or hijackers would demand something more than simply changing the destination of the aircraft. These criteria would exclude token acts of violence, kidnappings of businessmen, many of the hijackings, and a number of unsuccessful assassinations, and kidnappings.

In each case, although the location of the peaks and valleys may differ, the overall trend is still upward, except for major incidents which appear to level off in the mid-1970s. All of these totals are combined in Figure 5 which theoretically should give us at least an impression of the rise of international terrorism of the last decade.

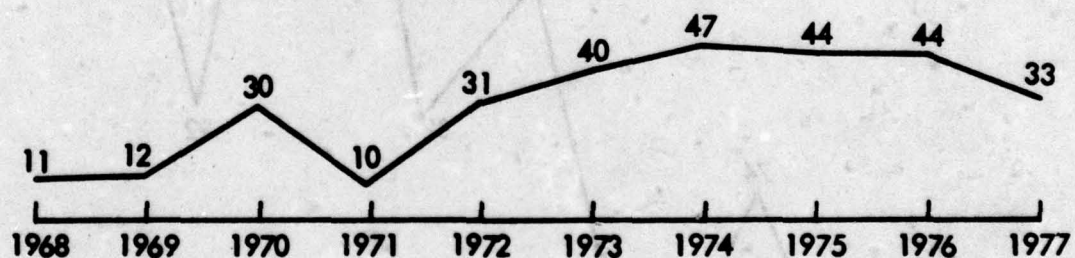


Fig. 4—Number of "major incidents" of international terrorism by year

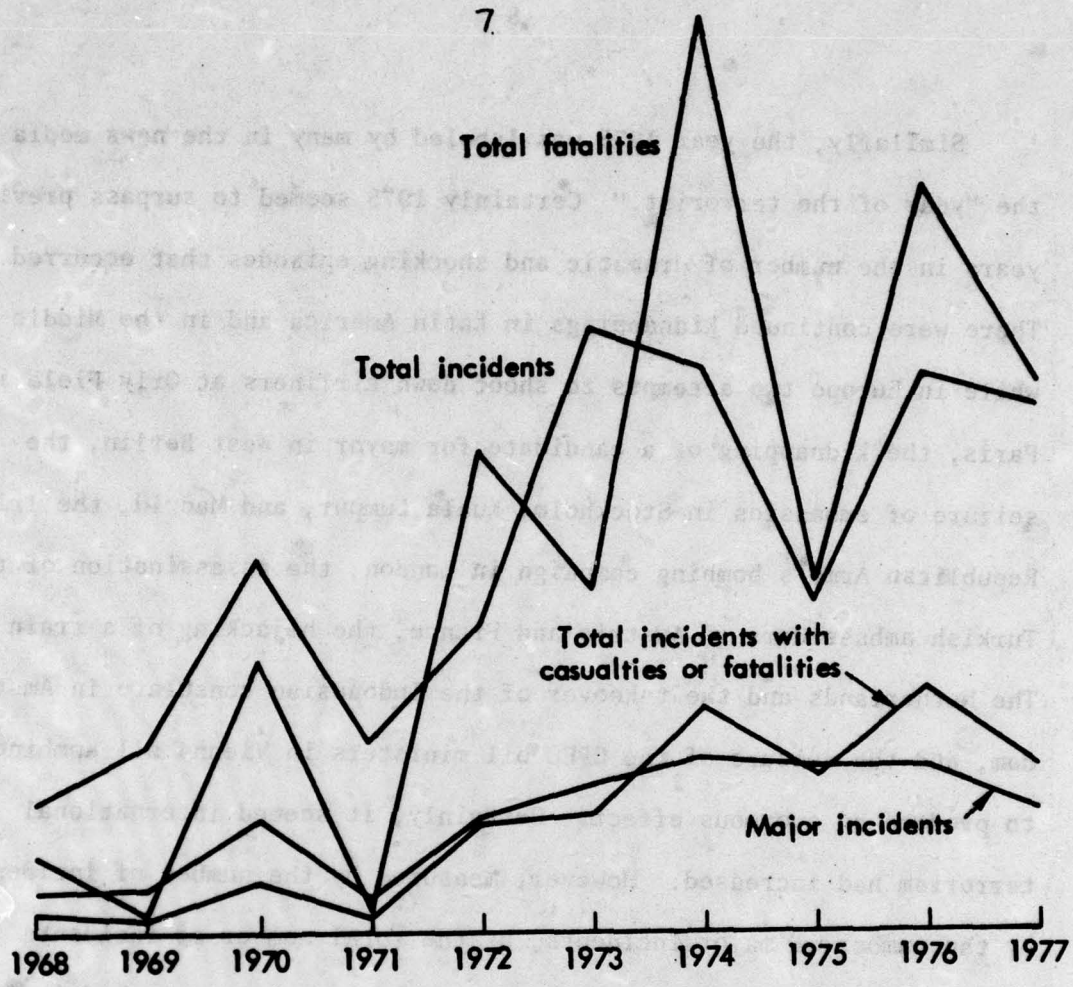


Fig. 5—Total number of incidents, incidents with casualties, "major incidents" of international terrorism, and number of casualties, by year

It is noteworthy that this representation does not exactly accord with the public's perceptions of the problem of terrorism nor with government reaction. To illustrate the point, the total number of incidents of international terrorism in 1972 was less than that of 1970, while the number of major incidents was about the same for the two years. Incidents with casualties and the number of deaths caused by terrorists were up in 1972. However, it was two particularly shocking incidents in 1972, the Lod Airport massacre in May and the Munich incident in September, that appalled the world and provoked many governments including the United States to undertake more serious measures to combat terrorism.

Similarly, the year 1975 was labeled by many in the news media as the "year of the terrorist." Certainly 1975 seemed to surpass previous years in the number of dramatic and shocking episodes that occurred. There were continued kidnappings in Latin America and in the Middle East, while in Europe two attempts to shoot down airliners at Orly Field in Paris, the kidnapping of a candidate for mayor in West Berlin, the seizure of embassies in Stockholm, Kuala Lumpur, and Madrid, the Irish Republican Army's bombing campaign in London, the assassination of the Turkish ambassadors in Austria and France, the hijacking of a train in The Netherlands and the takeover of the Indonesian consulate in Amsterdam, and the seizure of the OPEC oil ministers in Vienna all combined to produce an enormous effect. Certainly, it seemed international terrorism had increased. However, measured by the number of incidents, by the number of major incidents, by the total number of incidents with casualties, and by the total number of casualties, it had in fact declined.

Some observers found encouragement in the seeming "downward trend" in 1976. In fact, however, more incidents of terrorism took place in 1976 and 1976 was bloodier than 1975. There were more bombings, more assassinations, and hijackings, after declining, went up again.

Some continued to perceive a decline in the early months of 1977 but by the end of the year, judging by the number of news articles, television specials, and concern in government, virtually everyone agreed terrorism was on the rise. In fact, it was not. The figures for 1977 indeed show a slight decline.

How do we explain that terrorism often appears to be increasing when it is declining -- appears down when it is up? Perhaps we count the wrong things. More likely, the things we can count do not reflect our perceptions of the phenomenon. Terrorism is not simply what terrorists do, but the effect -- the publicity, the alarm -- they create by their actions.

Public perceptions of the level of terrorism in the world appear to be determined then not by the level of violence but rather by the quality of the incidents, the location, and the degree of media coverage. Hostage incidents seem to have greater impact than murder, barricade situations more than kidnappings. Hostage situations may last for days, possibly weeks. Human life hangs in the balance. The whole world watches, and waits. By contrast, a death, even many deaths, are news for only a few days. They lack suspense and are soon forgotten. More people recall the hijacking of a TWA airliner by Croatian extremists in September 1976 than recall the bomb placed aboard a Cubana airliner three weeks later. No one died aboard the TWA airliner (although a policeman was killed attempting to defuse a bomb planted on the ground by the hijackers). Seventy-three persons died in the crash of the Cubana plane.

The location of the incident is also important. Incidents that occur in cities have more impact than those that occur in the countryside. Incidents in Western Europe and North America seem more important, at least to the American public, than incidents in Latin America, Africa, or Asia. It is a matter of communications. An unseen and unheard terrorist incident produces no effect. The network of modern electronic communications laces Western Europe and North America more

thoroughly than the rest of the world. We also tend to exhibit a higher tolerance for terrorist violence in the Third World. Terrorist violence in modern industrial societies with democratic governments jars this bias.

Finally, timing is important. Terrorist violence is easily submerged by higher levels of conflict. Individual acts of violence lose their meaning in a war. It is hard to say how many individual acts of terrorism there were during the war in Indochina or how many individual murders, how many kidnappings there were during the civil war in Lebanon. Even a war in another part of the globe can drown out an act of terrorism. There is only so much time and space for news. Terrorist acts themselves in succession produce the effect of a wave of terrorism but must now crowd each other too closely for world attention lest their impact be diluted.

The past record of terrorism provides no basis for forecasting the future course of terrorism. The fact that international terrorism has increased fitfully during the last decade does not mean that it will continue to increase, or that it will not decline, however we assess the phenomenon. One can say simply that terrorism is likely to persist.

Will terrorists escalate their violence? By this, we mean not the volume of terrorist activity but the things that terrorists do. Measured against the world volume of "ordinary" violence, the amount of terrorist violence up to now has been trivial. Nevertheless, terrorists have been able to attract worldwide attention to themselves and to their causes and produce alarm, and they have achieved these results with tactics that, although shocking, have not killed hundreds or thousands. In the ten

years between 1968 and 1977, there were 1,019 incidents of international terrorism in which 1,017 persons were killed and 2,509 persons were wounded or injured, including terrorists. About one person per incident was the average. Actually, only 303 incidents involved any casualties. Putting aside the plane crashes and assaults like that at the Lod and Rome airports, it is apparent that terrorists for the most part have so far avoided indiscriminate attacks that cause widespread casualties. Although many terrorist attacks may have been indiscriminate, they were limited, and in only a few instances did they cause heavy casualties.

Terrorists bent upon mass murder can choose from a variety of means. ("Mass murder" is not a precise term. It is arbitrarily defined here as something approaching 100 or more potential deaths. Conceivably thousands could be imperiled by some of the actions described, but those actions would be extremely difficult to carry out successfully.) Chemical and biological weapons are generally seen as the easiest and most available way to kill a large number of people. A crude nuclear explosive device, depending on its yield and where and when it was detonated, could cause casualties of greater magnitude, but the acquisition of the requisite material and the fabrication of the device would require greater risks and technical skill than either chemical or biological weapons. The dispersal of radioactive material would involve fewer difficulties in the acquisition of the materials, and the fabrication of a dispersal device is far easier than an explosive device, but the probable effects are likely to be exceeded by an effective dispersal of chemical toxins or biological agents.

In the case of both chemical and biological weapons, apart from some difficulties involved with large-scale dissemination, the primary

constraints are not technical ones. Toxins can be obtained or manufactured; biological pathogens can be purchased or stolen and cultivated; home laboratories suffice; technical literature is widely available; and many persons possess the necessary skills.

Moral considerations and political utility provide the most important constraints. The fact that most nations have renounced chemical and biological warfare may suggest to any group considering their use that their action will provoke widespread revulsion. Of course, it can be argued that most terrorist acts provoke widespread revulsion anyway; therefore this cannot be considered a constraint.

The political utility of widespread casualties is not fully demonstrated or necessarily apparent. As a threat, chemical and biological weapons believed to be in the hands of terrorists would have considerable value. The actual use of such weapons, however, might be politically counterproductive. Except as an act of revenge or of extreme desperation where moral constraints and arguments based on political utility erode, it is hard to see why terrorists would believe that mass casualties would serve their cause. One can more easily imagine their use against a more limited target composed of some segment of the population or representative of the system despised by the terrorists -- a church, a police station, a government office, the boardroom of a major corporation.

The primary utility of a nuclear weapon would be as an instrument of coercion. With it, terrorists could create a mass hostage situation of unprecedented proportions. But, it is not clear what enormous demand might be made that would be commensurate with a threat of this

scale. Springing a handful of prisoners or collecting a few million dollars in ransom does not warrant the investment and risks necessary to fabricate a nuclear weapon. At the other end of the spectrum, certain demands are impossible to satisfy, no matter what the threat. A government, for example, would not agree to liquidate itself. Demands made by terrorists with a nuclear weapon would also have to be of a finite nature, that is, the authors of the threat would have to demand an action or a decision that could not be reversed once the threat had been removed and that could be carried out fairly quickly.

This does not overlook the fact that there are in the world lunatics and crazy political fanatics who might find blowing up a city, or threatening to blow up a city, an attractive undertaking. Their reasons for doing so might, by any other view of the world than their own, be totally bizarre. Fortunately, the requirements for fabricating a nuclear weapon are likely to exceed their capabilities, at least for now and the immediate future. We have not yet reached the time when any bright lunatic can make an atomic bomb, but as plutonium becomes more widely available and the opportunities for theft or diversion increase, and as the knowledge of how to use it in nuclear weapons becomes more widespread, it is conceivable that a small group, unconcerned for a large constituency, unhindered by the requirements of political logic, pursuing some mad goal, might be able to acquire a nuclear capability and be willing to use it.

When it comes to slaughter, however, terrorists actually have little need for exotic or sophisticated weapons. They have already demonstrated their knowledge of explosives. Bombings are the

principal form of terrorist activity. Detonated at places of assembly -- railroad and subway stations, bus terminals, aircraft -- conventional explosives can cause heavy casualties. But for all their bombings, terrorists thus far have seldom used explosives in ways calculated to kill great numbers of any civilian population. Nor have terrorists ordinarily used the primitive but potentially even more lethal weapon of fire against people. Finally, some of the individual weapons now being developed for tomorrow's infantrymen -- man-portable surface-to-air missiles, for example -- seem potentially useful to terrorists and, used against certain categories of targets, are capable of causing heavy casualties.

Several incidents have already occurred which suggest this is a real possibility. In 1973, Italian military police arrested five Arab terrorists who were planning to shoot down an El Al airliner at the Rome airport. The terrorists had two Soviet-made heat-seeking ground-to-air missiles. Another attempt involving ground-to-air missiles was foiled at the Nairobi airport in 1976. In the fall of 1977, West German terrorists threatened to shoot down or plant bombs aboard Lufthansa airliners in retaliation for the deaths of three of their comrades who had committed suicide in prison. Bombs planted by terrorists were responsible for several airliner crashes in the past decade. In one case, 88 persons died, in another, 73.

Thus, while the potential for mass violence involving the use of a nuclear device or chemical or biological weapons understandably causes the most concern, there is an intermediate level of violence where a few attacks could cause tremendous alarm. Bombs aboard aircraft, sabotage of trains, bombs in terminals and lobbies, and the

like could cause up to several hundred casualties. Such attacks pose no technical problems to terrorists, who have on a few occasions mounted attacks of this type. Several such incidents producing several hundred deaths each, although still trivial when compared with the world volume of violence, would bring terrorism into an entirely new dimension.

What other trends can we foresee? One possible development is the emergence of a semi-permanent subculture of terrorism. As succeeding generations of terrorists replace those arrested or killed and acquire a following of active supporters, groupies, sympathizers, lawyers, propagandists, and chroniclers -- all in some way dependent on the survival of the terrorist group and the continuation of its activities -- it may become a political underworld that is able to survive the fate of any specific terrorist group. It may develop its own service industries providing illegal documents and weapons, as well as fences for stolen cash or ransoms. Terrorism itself may become its ideology.

On the international level we already see that terrorists with quite different goals are able to cooperate with each other, not solely because of ideological affinity, but increasingly so, it seems, on a purely professional basis. They help each other because they are all terrorists.

Today's terrorist groups may become tomorrow's new Mafias, as political objectives become secondary to maintaining a cash flow. The Irish Republican Army, for example, is heavily into extortion; it runs protection rackets, participates in defrauding insurance companies, and also is acquiring ownership of legitimate businesses.

New sources of terrorist violence may emerge. Technological advance appears to be stimulating a powerful resistance which has in some cases turned violent. The increased centralization of the modern state, a reflection of technological advance, has provoked cultural backlash in many countries -- an increasing awareness of and desire to preserve ethnic identity and autonomy. The last few years have seen the emergence of "neo-Luddites" or, as one European author calls them, "neo-Rousseau-nians" who directly challenge modern industrial society's conception of progress. Political extremists in Western Europe have attacked computers and nuclear reactors as the symbols and sinews of modern society. In some cases, the threats of separatism and environmentalism have come together, as in France and Spain, where Breton and Basque separatists have bombed nuclear reactors in support of ethnic autonomy and environmentalist movements.

One immediate effect of the growing threat posed by terrorism, along with other forms of politically motivated violence during the past decade has been a major diversion of resources to internal security functions. The protection of political leaders and diplomats, airports, portions of the energy system, and other vital systems will continue to demand increasing manpower and money. We can foresee the continuing growth of what we might call an "internal defense" budget as well as of security expenditures by private business. This is part of a major shift in society from viewing security in terms of secure national frontiers, clearly a national responsibility, to the defense of "inner perimeters" -- guarded facilities, privately patrolled communities, security buildings, alarmed homes -- where the burden of

defense is increasingly placed upon local government, the private sector, and the individual citizen.

A second effect of terrorism has been a growing corpus of law to deal with politically motivated crime, specifically acts of terrorism. In many cases, terrorism has been identified as a crime different from, and in most cases more serious than the traditional crimes that terrorists commit -- murder, kidnaping, arson. New criminal offenses, such as air piracy, have been identified. Many countries have extended their penal codes to cover crimes committed outside of the national territory, such as crimes aboard airliners. Legislation has also broadened police powers. In some countries, trial procedures have been changed, generally to the accused's disadvantage. Several nations have created groups at the national level to coordinate national efforts against terrorists. New special anti-terrorist organizations have been created within police departments or within internal security organizations. Military participation in police functions has increased. Private security services have grown tremendously. Special military units for possible use in anti-terrorist operations abroad have also been created in a number of countries.

Although the measures enacted to combat terrorist have impeded free movement to a certain degree, subjected travelers to more scrutiny, and on occasion created a nuisance, we cannot say that democracy has been imperiled by them. Authoritarian regimes have characteristically reacted with repressive measures. Nations with strong democratic traditions have cautiously limited certain liberties as the price of

security. As long as terrorism persists, there will continue to be clashes between the perceived need for increased social controls and the protection of individual liberties.