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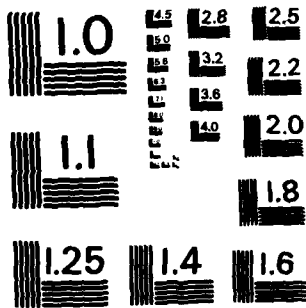
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# New Modes of Conflict

Brian Michael Jenkins

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# **New Modes of Conflict**

Brian Michael Jenkins

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## PREFACE

Building on past studies of terrorism and low-level conflict, this report attempts to describe how contemporary international terrorism, which the author regards as a new mode of conflict made possible by technological developments in the second half of the twentieth century, fits into the broader scheme of armed conflict in general. The report also offers some ideas about the relationships between conventional warfare, ordinary guerrilla warfare, and contemporary terrorism.

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## SUMMARY

What is armed conflict apt to be like in the remainder of the twentieth century? This report examines the components of modern warfare, the complex interrelationships among them, and the types of conflict that are likely to occur in the next two decades. The report foresees three major components of nonnuclear armed conflict: conventional war, guerrilla warfare, and international terrorism. It focuses on low-level conflict—warfare that is short of open, full-fledged conventional warfare between nations—because such limited warfare has been increasing over the past 20 years, and because the United States has found itself directly or indirectly engaged in a number of low-level conflicts.

Predictions made in the 1970s that conventional warfare was becoming obsolete have not been borne out. Since 1975, twelve conflicts have occurred that involved substantial commitments of conventional forces. However, the constraints imposed by the increasing destructiveness and costs of modern weaponry, the requirement for military personnel with advanced training, the complex roles played by the superpowers, and the limitations imposed by world and domestic public opinion have led to greater reliance on indirect forms of warfare and the employment of proxies. Indirect forms of warfare include clandestine and covert military operations carried out by other than the regular armed forces of a nation, providing asylum and support for guerrillas in an adjacent country, providing support—and sometimes operational direction—to terrorist groups opposing a rival or enemy regime, and governmental use of terrorist tactics, such as assassinating foreign foes or troublesome exiles.

The three components of armed conflict will coexist in future warfare, with both government and subnational entities employing them individually, interchangeably, sequentially, or simultaneously, as well as being required to combat them. In many respects, the future face of war is reflected in the course of armed conflict in Lebanon since the early 1970s. Warfare in that country has continued on all three levels—conventional war, guerrilla warfare, and terrorism. It involves regular armies, guerrillas, private militias, and terrorist gunmen, some of whom are openly assisted or covertly sponsored by foreign states, by political or religious factions, and even by other terrorist groups.

The coexistence of these three modes of armed conflict suggests an era of warfare quite different from the model that derives from the

world wars of the twentieth century. Putting aside technology, warfare in the future may resemble, in form, warfare in the Italian Renaissance or in the early seventeenth century, before the emergence of national armies.

Warfare in the future will be less destructive than that in the first half of the twentieth century, but also less coherent. Warfare will cease to be finite. The distinction between war and peace will dissolve. With constraints on the total application of military force, wars will seldom end in conquest or capitulation. Ceasefires will be imposed by external powers or will occur because the belligerents temporarily exhaust themselves or are unwilling to face the risks of escalation. The losers will consider their defeats temporary. Implacable foes will fight repeated wars. Hostilities will be endless, and nominal peace will be filled with continuing confrontations and crises.

Armed conflict will not be confined by national frontiers. Local belligerents will mobilize foreign patrons. Wars will spill floods of refugees on other countries, many of whom will carry their quarrels with them and many of whom will also be targets for factions in their native countries. Terrorists will attack foreign targets both at home and abroad.

The United States will be compelled to maintain capabilities for defending against (and perhaps, with the exception of terrorism, waging) all three modes of armed conflict. The United States may find itself involved in a limited conventional engagement somewhere in the Third World, and it is even more likely that we will become directly or indirectly involved in conflict at the lower end of the spectrum, in the realm of guerrilla warfare and terrorism.

As a result of increased public opposition to armed conflict, almost any application of American military power in circumstances that do not involve a direct attack on the United States or its traditional allies in Europe will be questioned and debated at home. Popular support for military efforts, if there is any to begin with, will be limited and ephemeral.

Given the domestic and political constraints on military operations, there will be an increasing tendency to rely on clandestine and special operations, which are less subject to public scrutiny, and on the use of friendly foreign powers as proxies.

The continuing threat of international terrorism presents a new set of requirements for U.S. political and military planners. It should be regarded as a mode of conflict that will increasingly demand the use of military force, e.g., in rescue operations. Unlike guerrilla contests in allied or friendly countries, terrorist campaigns are not likely to allow the U.S. government much choice in deciding whether or not to become involved.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### **New Modes of Conflict**

This essay explores armed conflict in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Since we are hardly eight years into that period, it is a somewhat perilous undertaking, and the conclusions are necessarily speculative. The essay focuses on armed conflict at the lower end of the spectrum, that is, conflict that is short of open, full-fledged conventional warfare between nations. This does not imply any prediction that the world's major powers will not collide some day, perhaps even setting off an exchange of nuclear weapons. Rather, low-level conflict is emphasized because this type of warfare has been increasing, and because during the last 20 years, the United States has found itself directly or indirectly engaged in a variety of low-level conflicts demanding limited application of military power.<sup>1</sup> While the United States, understandably, invests heavily against the contingency of conflict at the high end of the spectrum, it is more likely to find itself or its allies involved in low-level conflict.

### **Lebanon and Central America: A Look at War in the Future**

What is armed conflict apt to be like in the future? In many respects, the future face of war is reflected in the course of armed conflict in Lebanon since the early 1970s. Warfare in that country has continued on three levels: conventional war, guerrilla warfare, and terrorism. The conflict is concurrently a war among nations, a war between the State of Israel and a powerful nonstate actor (the PLO), a war among factions, and a multitude of terrorist campaigns. It involves regular armies, guerrillas, private militias, and terrorist gun-

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. participation in such conflicts includes the dispatch of U.S. Marines to Thailand in 1962, American intervention in the Dominican Republic, U.S. military involvement in Indochina, covert U.S. support for anti-Castro groups in the mid-1960s, and U.S. counterinsurgency efforts and military assistance programs in various Third World countries. Since the withdrawal of American troops in 1972-73 from Vietnam, U.S. armed forces have been deployed to evacuate American citizens from Saigon (1975), to rescue captured crew members of the Mayaguez, to attempt to rescue Americans held hostage in Teheran, to stem the flow of refugees from Cuba, to provide military advice to government forces engaged in a civil war in El Salvador, to maintain international rights in the Gulf of Sidra, to evacuate American citizens from Beirut, to escort Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) forces withdrawing from Beirut, and to assist in maintaining a fragile peace in Lebanon. American forces also serve in a peace-keeping role in the Sinai.

men, some of whom are openly assisted or covertly sponsored by foreign states (including some not directly involved in Lebanon), by political or religious factions, and even by other terrorist groups.

Weapons in the Lebanon conflict range from the sophisticated weapons of modern warfare to car bombs. Tactics range from point-blank assassinations to combined arms operations. Much of the fighting has occurred in an urban environment.

This is not to say that the world is going to collapse into the anarchy seen in Lebanon; but the conflict in Lebanon is likely to be representative of armed conflict worldwide in the last quarter of the twentieth century: a mixture of conventional warfare, classic guerrilla warfare, and campaigns of terrorism, openly fought or secretly waged, often without regard to national frontiers, by armies as well as irregular forces, directly and indirectly. We have already seen the complex mixture of state and substate forces waging conventional and guerrilla warfare with accompanying campaigns of terrorism in the second Indochina War and in the conflict in the southern half of Africa. And we see it today in Central America, where a Cuban-backed government in Nicaragua provides support for guerrillas in El Salvador and growing terrorist activity in Honduras. Honduras, with *encouragement and assistance* from the United States, has cooperated with the armed forces of El Salvador in stemming the flow of weapons to Salvadoran guerrillas and has permitted guerrillas fighting against the Nicaraguan government to use Honduran territory for training and resupply. The United States provides military assistance and training to the Honduran armed forces, while Argentinian advisers until recently provided training and management support to the Nicaraguan guerrillas. Meanwhile, terrorists attack Central American diplomats as well as the diplomats of other nations serving in the region.

## II. THE THREE FACES OF ARMED CONFLICT: CONVENTIONAL WAR, GUERRILLA WARFARE, AND INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

### Conventional War

In an essay written in 1974, the author suggested that "modern conventional war, the kind that is declared and openly fought, is becoming obsolete for a variety of reasons."<sup>2</sup> Clearly, that statement needs some revision.

With artillery duels and aerial dogfights in the Middle East, amphibious landings in the South Atlantic, and huge infantry engagements in Iran and Iraq, we can write no epitaph for conventional war, the kind that is openly fought between the regular armed forces of two nations. Since 1975 there have been twelve conflicts involving substantial commitments of conventional forces. North Vietnam's invasion of South Vietnam in 1975 and Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia two years later, Syria's occupation of Lebanon in 1976, Israel's invasions of Lebanon in 1978 and 1982, China's invasion of Vietnam in 1979, Tanzania's invasion of Uganda in 1979, the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1980, Libya's intervention in Chad in 1980, the continuing war between Ethiopia and Somalia, Iraq's invasion of Iran in 1980, the brief border war between Ecuador and Peru in 1981, Argentina's invasion of the Falkland Islands in 1982, and Britain's military response were all carried out with conventional arms, tactics, and strategy. In the two Israeli invasions of Lebanon and the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan, the opposing forces were not the regular military forces of the country invaded: In Lebanon, the opposing forces were the conventional as well as irregular forces of the PLO. In Afghanistan, the Soviet intervention has been tenaciously resisted by anti-government guerrillas.

Although almost all the fighting since World War II has taken place in the Third World, major world powers were involved in several of the conflicts. Having already withdrawn its forces, the United States was only nominally involved when North Vietnam invaded South Vietnam in 1975. But China's invasion of Vietnam, the Soviet

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<sup>2</sup> Brian Michael Jenkins, *High Technology Terrorism and Surrogate War: The Impact of New Technology on Low-Level Violence*, The Rand Corporation, P-5339, January 1975.

Union's invasion of Afghanistan, and Britain's retaking of the Falkland Islands directly involved the military forces of major powers. However, the scale of these wars, individually and collectively, in terms of the number of troops involved and total casualties, is far smaller than that of the world wars of the first half of the twentieth century. In the recent wars, several million soldiers and civilians have been killed, but 60 million soldiers and civilians lost their lives in the two world wars.

### ***Constraints on Military Efforts***

The recent conflicts have been generally limited in their military aspect. The belligerents, for the most part, have operated below capacity: They have refrained from bringing all of their military might to bear and have restricted their targeting. Despite years of frustration, the United States stopped short of employing its full military might to destroy North Vietnam's warmaking potential. The United Kingdom declared its intent to confine its military efforts to a zone around the Falkland Islands when it might have attacked the Argentine fleet in its mainland ports or bombed military targets on the mainland. Israel did not launch an all-out assault on the last remaining PLO forces in Western Beirut.

The constraint is the result of several factors. In most of the recent wars, the limited aims of the combatants have made total mobilization unnecessary and total warfare inappropriate. Moreover, modern warfare is extremely complex and costly. An all-out effort would divert trained manpower, a scarce resource in most Third World countries, and could quickly exhaust a nation's resources.

The superpowers can also impose a certain degree of restraint where local belligerents are dependent on foreign assistance. Rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union looms in the background of every local war. If a local war escalates, there is the danger that the superpowers themselves will come close to direct confrontation. To avoid that possibility, the patrons are likely to try to constrain their protégés and set only limited aims for them.

### ***The Constraints of Public Opinion***

Public opinion is another major constraint on contemporary armed conflict. The enormous American military effort in Indochina failed, in large measure because the military methods employed simply did not work, but also in part because the American public would not support either the continued conflict or an escalated military effort. Many blamed the decline of public support on television coverage of

the war, which focused on the amount of fighting and destruction and brought the bloodshed of the front line into the living room nightly.

British public opinion supported the British military effort to retake the Falkland Islands, but in that case, Argentina had openly invaded British territory. The inaccessibility of the Falkland Islands also prevented the kind of frontline media coverage that was possible in Vietnam. British censors were able to control what was transmitted home. The brief duration of the war was also an advantage to the British government. Had the conflict become a protracted effort with mounting losses, public support probably would have eroded. That was clearly the case in the Israeli invasion of Lebanon: As the Israeli occupation dragged on, Israeli public opposition to the war effort mounted.

The survival of a major power was not at stake in either Vietnam, the Falklands, or Lebanon. Despite wide currency of the "domino theory," the people of the United States did not perceive the communist threat to South Vietnam as a direct threat to the United States. Likewise, the Falkland Islands were a distant colonial possession, and Argentina posed no direct threat to the United Kingdom. In Lebanon, once it became clear that the aims of the Israeli government exceeded driving PLO gunners out of range of Israeli settlements, the military actions—particularly the shelling and bombing of Beirut—exceeded the perceived threat and evoked an increasingly negative reaction from the Israeli public.

It can be argued that although it is difficult to mobilize and sustain public opinion for peripheral contests, the people will usually support any military effort when national survival is at stake. But that argument ignores the implications of the growing anti-war sentiments in Western Europe and the United States, and to a lesser—although incalculable—extent, in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. If national survival means nuclear war, or even the destructive combat of World War II that decimated populations and left cities in ruins, a growing segment of the population may be unwilling to support any kind of conflict. Given the destructive potential of modern weapons demonstrated in World War II, multiplied in the vastly improved conventional weapons of today, and reasserted a thousandfold in the capabilities of nuclear devices, what does national survival mean?

Television increases the difficulty of mobilizing domestic public opinion in favor of any military effort. It provides a forum in which both sides can present and discuss their differences. Without imposing censorship, governments cannot prevent spokesmen for various positions from using television and radio to present their views, which often are not without merit. Television also tends to magnify

the apparent degree of domestic dissent, if any, on issues of potential or ongoing conflict.

In dictatorships and totalitarian states, where information is controlled by the government and open dissent is dangerous, domestic public opinion can more easily be manipulated, but not as efficiently as was once possible.

World public opinion is another constraint on warfare, although "world" is perhaps not the proper term, since we are, in fact, talking about the relatively small populations of the liberal democracies plus the tiny elites in Third World countries that have access to the international news media. An increasingly vocal segment of this "world" public opinion appears to reject the brutality of war, and the groups that are opposed to war in any form try to impose upon their governments limits on weaponry and enemy casualties.

In most cases, a nation planning to wage a modern conventional war will have to plan to achieve its military objectives fast, before it runs out of tanks, before international public opinion can be mobilized to condemn the aggression or support a ceasefire, before the superpowers decide between themselves that the fighting should end, before the public at home turns off and domestic opposition to the fighting mounts. *Blitzkrieg*, always militarily attractive, has become a virtual economic and political necessity in many parts of the world. Recent years have witnessed several military offensives in which the advancing armies have raced the clock.

The constraints imposed by the increasing destructiveness and costs of modern weaponry, the requirement for military personnel with advanced training, the role played by the superpowers, and the limitations imposed by world and domestic public opinion have led to greater reliance on indirect forms of warfare and the employment of proxies.

Indirect forms of warfare include clandestine and covert military operations carried out by other than the regular armed forces of a nation, providing asylum and support for guerrillas in an adjacent country, providing support—and sometimes operational direction—to terrorist groups opposing a rival or enemy regime, and governmental use of terrorist tactics, such as assassinating foreign foes or troublesome exiles.

Proxies may be mercenaries, guerrilla forces, terrorist groups, or the regular armed forces of a friendly nation. Cuba has acted as the Soviet Union's proxy in various African conflicts. Argentina acted as a proxy for the United States in Central America. Generally, proxy forces are provided by nations whose political or strategic interests coincide with those of the principal power and who may receive financial or political support in return for their involvement; in addition,

nations that provide proxy forces are generally less hampered by domestic constraints.

### **Guerrilla Warfare**

Just as we can write no epitaph for conventional war, neither can we declare classic rural guerrilla warfare to be obsolete. In *Conflict in the Twentieth Century*, David Wood listed 127 conflicts between 1900 and 1967, 80 of which occurred after 1945. Of these 80, only 28 took the form of fighting between the armed forces of two or more states. Forty-six consisted of civil wars, insurgencies, and guerrilla contests. (The remaining six were riots and coups d'état.)<sup>3</sup> The spread of insurgency noted by Wood has continued since 1967, at about the same pace. In the past 15 years, 32 countries have experienced some form of guerrilla warfare. And this does not include the terrorist problems in Western Europe, Latin America, and North America, or the continuing Palestinian terrorist campaign against Israel.

One innovation in guerrilla warfare is financing by means of ransom. Guerrillas who receive no support from patron states now often obtain money to support themselves through terrorist kidnappings. A series of five kidnappings in El Salvador brought leftist guerrillas \$18 million in ransom in a single year—more than one-third the amount of the Salvadoran government's annual defense budget. (Another source indicated that the total ransom collected was nearly \$44 million.) The money was used to buy weapons and munitions.

Another change is in the weaponry used by guerrillas. Worldwide production of infantry weapons has increased enormously in recent years. Moreover, the huge stocks of weapons that were abandoned or captured when the United States withdrew from Indochina, plus those that have been diverted from military assistance programs or disseminated by the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries, are also for sale on the world market. Thus, the weapons carried by the guerrillas of the late twentieth century are not necessarily inferior to those of the government forces. Increasingly guerrillas are armed with modern assault rifles, rocket-propelled grenades, and even precision-guided, surface-to-air missiles. Government forces, for the present, retain clear superiority in manpower, airpower, and transport, but some of these advantages will be diminished as man-portable anti-tank and surface-to-air weapons become more widely available in the 1980s.

<sup>3</sup> David Wood, *Conflict in the Twentieth Century*, Institute for Strategic Studies, Adelphi Papers, No. 48, June 1968.

### **International Terrorism**

Although terrorist tactics have often accompanied both conventional warfare and guerrilla warfare, the kind of international terrorism we see today is a recent phenomenon. It is a distinct and significant new mode of armed conflict.

Present-day terrorism is a derivative of twentieth century theories of guerrilla warfare, for which Mao Zedong deserves the most credit. It was he who constructed a coherent doctrine from a set of diverse military tactics that had been employed by groups who lacked armies. Mao formulated a series of relationships that differed both from existing military strategies and from earlier Marxist theories of revolution. He placed greater emphasis on military power than the earlier Marxists did; but he also recognized that his forces were numerically and technologically inferior to those of his opponent, so he substituted political power for conventional military power. Because of their superior political motivation, Mao reasoned, guerrillas strengthened by the support of the Chinese peasants could survive military reverses and wage a protracted military campaign to wear down their opponents.

Mao's concept of a "people's war" freed strategists from thinking about warfare exclusively in terms of more soldiers and better armaments. It allowed determined revolutionaries who lacked conventional military power to take on militarily superior forces with some hope of ultimately defeating them. Mao suggested that guerrillas must aim for and depend upon the political mobilization of people who would be mere bystanders in a conventional military conflict; he thus introduced a relationship between military action and the attitude and response of the audience. This added a new dimension to conflict: Instead of evaluating achievement primarily in terms of the physical effect that military action had on the enemy, some strategists now said that the effect a violent action has on the people watching may be independent of, and may equal or even exceed in importance the actual physical damage inflicted on the foe. Terrorism is that proposition pursued to its most violent extreme.

There are many hypotheses that attribute contemporary terrorism to social, economic, political, and historical factors, but no single cause has been identified for the increase in the use of terrorist tactics throughout the world that began in the late 1960s. Generally, however, terrorist tactics have been adopted when other modes of armed conflict or peaceful means to attain certain goals have failed.

By the late 1960s, it was clear that the rural guerrilla movements in Latin America inspired by the success of Fidel Castro and patterned on the Cuban model had failed. Leftist revolutionaries began

to devote more attention to combat in the cities. Urban guerrilla warfare led almost automatically to the use of terrorist tactics. Rural guerrillas might win battles that nobody would ever hear about, but dramatic acts of violence in a major city win national, perhaps international, attention. It was an easy move from killing or kidnapping local officials to killing or kidnapping foreign diplomats.

Meanwhile, frustrated by the failure of the Arab armies in 1967 and unable to wage guerrilla warfare in Israel, the Palestinians launched a global campaign of terrorism against Israel and its supporters. When hijacking airliners provoked worldwide outrage, the Palestinians turned to seizing hostages at places like Munich and Khartoum. Terrorist tactics were also adopted by radical students in Europe, the United States, and Japan when the mass protest movements of the late 1960s failed to bring about the changes they sought.

But the rise and persistence of contemporary terrorism cannot be explained merely by the unique political circumstances at the end of the 1960s. Rather, a confluence of political circumstances and technological developments gave birth to modern terrorism. Today's terrorist tactics may be the same as those employed by terrorists a century ago, but progress has enhanced their use.

Developments in the technological environment have made international terrorism possible. Modern jet travel provides worldwide mobility; terrorists can now strike on any continent. Radio, television, and communications satellites provide almost instantaneous access to a global audience. Weapons and explosives are widely available. Modern industrial society presents many vulnerable targets, from airliners to nuclear reactors. Once the utility of terrorist tactics was demonstrated, terrorism became an imitative mode of behavior, spreading throughout the world.

In contrast to the increased constraints on governments in the conduct of war, terrorists have adopted the concept of total warfare—they recognize no civilian noncombatants. Terrorists may attack anything, anywhere, anytime. Over the past 15 years, the spectrum of terrorist targets has expanded to include diplomats, embassies, airliners, airline offices, tourist agencies, tourists, hotels, airports, trains, train stations, reactors, refineries, restaurants, pubs, churches, temples, synagogues, nuns, priests, the Pope, schools, students, and nurseries. This widening of the range of "legitimate" targets and the resultant narrowing of the category of innocent bystanders parallels and extends the twentieth century concept of total war: In World War II, all combatants attacked cities, factories, workers, anything connected with the enemy's "war machine," and anything nearby.

### III. ARMED CONFLICT IN THE POST-INDUSTRIAL AGE

Wars reflect the age in which they are fought. Both world wars of this century reflected the industrial age. They were wars of production, in which the Allies ultimately produced and delivered weapons to the battle front in greater volume than their opponents. Terrorism reflects the post-industrial age. An increasing portion of the economy is now devoted to the creation, collection, retrieval, transfer, and dissemination of information, and political power increasingly rests on the ability to create or control information. Terrorists are primitive psychological warriors in an information war. Terrorism reflects the current age of instant communications and rapid mobility.

The amount of destruction caused by terrorists is minuscule compared with the violence of warfare, or even of ordinary crime. But terrorists create events that *appear* to be important. Except for the threat to human life, most terrorist events have only limited physical impact or consequences, but often they are of great political consequence.

Public perceptions of government standing and competence in combatting terrorism are based not on overall performance, but rather on performance in a few dramatic hostage incidents, where the government, of course, suffers disadvantages from the outset. The public sees the government only in crisis, demonstrably unable to provide security for its citizens, sometimes yielding to terrorists to save lives, unable to bring its enemies to justice. A rescue attempt that succeeds adds immeasurably to a nation's image of military prowess. An attempt that fails does incalculable damage.

Looking to the future, it seems certain that terrorist activity will persist. Many of the older terrorist groups have survived despite heavy pressure from authorities, and new groups have appeared.

We can pose three possible scenarios for the future: The first is more of the same, or, since terrorism is increasing, more of more of the same. In the second, acts of large-scale death and destruction—indiscriminate bombings and the destruction of airliners or similar targets with bombs or hand-held, ground-to-air missiles—become the normal level of terrorist violence. There are certain pressures on terrorists to escalate. It has become increasingly difficult for them to capture headlines through acts that have become commonplace with repetition. And it has become increasingly difficult to coerce governments, which have become more resistant to terrorist demands and more willing to use force whenever possible.

At the far edge of plausibility are the scenarios that worry authorities and fascinate novelists. In our third vision of the future, terrorists acquire and use, or credibly threaten to use, chemical, biological, or even nuclear materials or weapons.

Whether terrorists will some day go nuclear remains a topic of theoretical debate. The last 15 years have witnessed growing criminal activity in the nuclear domain. Many of the crimes are not politically motivated and cannot properly be considered acts of political terrorism. Ordinary thieves have stolen nuclear material. Anti-nuclear extremists have carried out a number of bombings and other kinds of attacks on nuclear facilities. But terrorists, mainly in Europe, also have attacked nuclear facilities.

None of these incidents has involved any attempt to acquire nuclear material for possible use in a weapon. The thefts involved uranium ore or low-enriched uranium. The attacks carried out by anti-nuclear extremists and terrorists were aimed at halting or delaying the construction of nuclear facilities. In a 1978 interview, a former member of West Germany's terrorist movement stated that members of the Red Army Faction discussed the possibility of nuclear extortion. The group recognized that possession of a nuclear weapon would provide them with enormous coercive power. Terrorists with a nuclear weapon, said the former gang member, would be able to make "the Prime Minister dance on a table in front of the TV camera. And a few other statesmen alongside him."<sup>4</sup> According to the interview, the terrorists were thinking about stealing a nuclear weapon, not fabricating a device with stolen nuclear material.

Related to criminal and terrorist activity in the nuclear domain are clandestine and terrorist actions intended to procure nuclear weapons or prevent others from procuring them. The hijacking of a ship loaded with 200 tons of uranium in 1968, allegedly by Israeli agents and commandos, may have provided Israel with the necessary material to pursue its nuclear program. A series of incidents of sabotage in 1980, again possibly by Israeli agents, delayed France's program to provide Iraq with a reactor capable of producing weapons-grade nuclear material. The Israeli bombing of the Iraqi reactor in 1980 set back that country's nuclear program by at least a couple of years. A series of terrorist bombings and threats have been directed against European firms that have contracts to provide Pakistan with a similar nuclear capability. When France withdrew its nuclear technicians from Pakistan, Moslem terrorists launched a series of attacks against French diplomatic officials to try to force France to resume

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<sup>4</sup> *Stern*, June 1, 1978, interview with Michael Baumann.

work on the nuclear plant it is helping Pakistan to build. This seems likely to remain a potential threat that will cause growing concern for the security of nuclear programs. Any effort to acquire a nuclear weapons capability may invite violence.

### **The Relationship Between Terrorists and Governments**

The relationship between governments and terrorists is not a simple conflict between terrorists and their patron states on one side and governments opposed to terrorism on the other. Governments have variously—sometimes simultaneously—tolerated, combatted, fomented, supplied, and exploited terrorist groups. Beneath the rhetoric of moral outrage is a labyrinth of secret wars and secret deals, of direct action and deliberate inaction.

Although the causes of terrorism in each country are found in idiosyncratic combinations of political, economic, ethnic, historical, cultural, demographic, psychological, and other factors, terrorists in various parts of the world cooperate with each other for reasons of ideological affinity, common goals, and shared needs. Putting aside their individual struggles, terrorists have collectively demonstrated that by using terrorist tactics, small groups with a limited capacity for violence can achieve disproportionate effects.

A number of governments have seen in terrorism a useful capability, a "weapons system," a cheap means of waging war, and have provided selected groups with various kinds of assistance, as well as, in some cases, operational direction. Terrorists have filled a need for some nations: As modern conventional war has become increasingly impractical, terrorists offer a possible alternative to open armed conflict. Nations that are unwilling or unable to mount a conventional military challenge—for example, Libya against the United States—have seen terrorism as an alternative. It was at one time assumed that "the bomb" would become the great equalizer among nations. At present, this role seems to be played more by terrorism. What began as a tactic of desperate and weak political extremists has increasingly become a component of armed conflict among nations—a mode of surrogate warfare.

Who are the patron states? The U.S. government has officially identified four nations that aid terrorism: Libya, Syria, Iraq, and South Yemen. On the basis of public statements by American officials, several more nations can be added to the list, including, obviously, the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Iran, Cuba, and Vietnam. If we also include countries that provide

training, Lebanon, North Korea, and Algeria join the list; and adding countries that provide financial support to organizations that frequently use terrorist tactics brings in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and to varying degrees the entire Arab bloc of nations. These are the obvious nominees. Depending on how one defines terrorism and support, the circle of patron states can easily be widened to include still more countries that provide some measure of continuing assistance to groups that use terrorist tactics.

### **State Adoption of Terrorist Tactics**

A growing number of nations have avowed commissioning assassination teams to silence foreign opponents, current or former leaders, or domestic foes living abroad. Other nations are alleged to have done so. Sometimes these nations commission terrorists. Sometimes they send their own agents. Bulgaria and Romania have both been accused of killing troublesome exiles in Western Europe. Yugoslavia has been accused of killing émigré Croatian exiles. Although the precise connections are still unclear, it appears that Bulgarian agents were also involved in some way in the attempted assassination of the Pope in 1981. In 1976, right-wing Cuban terrorists commissioned by the Chilean secret service assassinated a former Chilean cabinet minister in Washington, D.C. Argentine and Uruguayan operatives reportedly carried out operations against terrorists and others who had fled to other nations in the 1970s. Nicaragua was accused of commissioning Argentinian and Paraguayan elements to assassinate former dictator Anastasio Somoza in Paraguay. In response to terrorist attacks on Israeli targets abroad, Israeli agents in Europe assassinated a number of Palestinians believed to have been involved in terrorist activities.

For a while, Iraq and Syria waged an international war of assassination against each other. When Iraq invaded Iran, Iraqi gunmen turned their attention to Iranian diplomats. Iran killed the expatriate and exiled foes of the Ayatollah Khomeini, as well as Iraqi officials in Lebanon. Meanwhile, Syria assassinated Iraq's former premier in Paris and attempted to assassinate the head of the rebellious Moslem Brotherhood in Germany. South Africa is accused of killing African nationalist leaders living abroad. The Spanish are accused of operating a parallel police force in France dedicated to killing leaders of the violent Basque separatist movement. Libya openly avowed its campaign of murder directed against "traitors living abroad" and was accused of dispatching "hit teams" to kill American diplomats in

Europe, the President of the United States, and other high-ranking American officials.

Such campaigns pose problems of intelligence (e.g., can state-backed assassinations be identified and prevented or sufficiently proven to support allegations?), law enforcement, diplomacy, and, potentially, military response. Take the case of Libya: What would have been an appropriate response had the Libyans attempted to assassinate a high-ranking American official and then denied it? What if they had succeeded? Such an assassination would be an act of war, to be sure, but what kind of military reaction, if any, would be appropriate? The bombing of military targets in Libya? A commando raid? Retaliation in kind? And if the Bulgarians are proved to be behind the attempted assassination of the Pope, what is the appropriate response? In the coming decade, we may be asking ourselves what measures of political or military response a foreign-backed assassination warrants.

To a degree, terrorism has become institutionalized, part of the system. This is not to say that terrorism is accepted, but rather that it is simultaneously combatted, tolerated, and exploited in the same fashion that piracy was combatted, tolerated, and exploited by the European powers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

### **The Response to Terrorism**

Governments have devoted more and more resources to security against terrorist attacks. The protection of diplomats and diplomatic facilities provides a striking example. Physical security was not a major concern at embassies 15 years ago, but since then terrorists have included embassies and diplomats among their targets. Indeed, diplomats and diplomatic facilities are the largest single target category in incidents of international terrorism, accounting for nearly 40 percent of the total. As a result, embassies have become virtual fortresses, and high-ranking diplomats are routinely protected by bodyguards. The protection of American diplomats alone requires an estimated 3,000 man-years at an annual cost of \$200 million. An increasing number of military personnel have been assigned to providing security for military bases and senior military personnel.

Security has also been strengthened around likely terrorist targets in the civilian sector: airlines, nuclear facilities, vital components of energy systems. In some cases, government forces provide the security; in other cases, the government mandates increased security measures, the costs of which must be met by the private sector; in

still others, a government may encourage increased security through subsidies and tax allowances. The result of all this is a growing diversion of resources to internal security functions.

Because corporate executives and business facilities comprise the second largest category of terrorist targets in international and internal terrorist incidents, the business community has also increased its own security. As a result, much of the burden of internal security is shifting from the public sector to the private sector, and the private security industry is growing. Private security is devoted almost entirely to a defensive role, but there have been a few examples of private security forces carrying out more active roles.

The use of military force to rescue hostages held by terrorists seemed far-fetched 15 years ago. Since then, however, many governments have developed specialized military units to carry out such rescues and have shown an increasing willingness to employ military force to end hostage situations despite obvious risks to the hostages. Rescue attempts are isolated events, and because they have enormous visibility, failure in such operations has a great impact on public perceptions.

Terrorism has thus become a common mode of conflict involving a mixture of national and subnational players. Defending against terrorist attack are an army of military personnel, police, and private sector guards, assisted by specially trained military and police units, and occasionally private commandos.

## IV. THE IMPLICATIONS

### **The Future of Armed Conflict**

The three components of armed conflict—conventional war, guerrilla warfare, and terrorism—will coexist in the future, with both governments and subnational entities employing them individually, interchangeably, sequentially, or simultaneously, as well as being required to combat them. Terrorist tactics may be used to publicize the existence of guerrilla groups and finance guerrilla campaigns. Terrorist operations may be substituted when guerrilla warfare fails, or they may be employed as a mode of surrogate warfare by nations unable or unwilling to achieve their aims through diplomacy or conventional military means. Acts of terrorism may accompany conventional warfare between nations.

The coexistence of these three modes of armed conflict suggests an era of warfare quite different from the model of armed conflict that derives from the world wars of the twentieth century. Warfare in the future will be less destructive than that in the first half of the twentieth century, but also less coherent.

Warfare will cease to be finite. The distinction between war and peace will dissolve. With constraints on the total application of military force, wars will seldom end in conquest or capitulation. Cease-fires will be imposed by external powers or will occur because the belligerents temporarily exhaust themselves or are unwilling to face the risks of escalation. The losers will consider their defeats temporary. Implacable foes will fight repeated wars. Hostilities will be endless, and nominal peace will be filled with continuing confrontations and crises.

Armed conflict will not be confined by national frontiers. Local belligerents will mobilize foreign patrons. Wars will spill floods of refugees on other countries, many of whom will carry their quarrels with them and many of whom will also be targets for factions in their native countries. Terrorists will attack foreign targets both at home and abroad.

Fighting may involve conventional armies, guerrilla bands, independent and state-directed terrorist groups, specialized anti-terrorist units, and private militias. Terrorist attacks could conceivably evolve into classic guerrilla warfare, and from there to conventional conflict. Or fighting may take place on several levels at once.

With continuous, sporadic armed conflict, blurred in time and space, waged on several levels by a large array of national and subnational forces, warfare in the last quarter of the twentieth century may well come to resemble warfare in the Italian Renaissance or warfare in the early seventeenth century, before the emergence of national armies and more organized modern warfare.

### **Implications for the United States**

The United States will be compelled to maintain capabilities for defending against (and perhaps, with the exception of terrorism, waging) all three modes of armed conflict.

If the United States fights a conventional war, or a war with bouts of conventional combat, as it did in Vietnam, the confrontation is more likely to be a limited engagement somewhere in the Third World than a full-scale war in Europe. And it is even more likely that the United States will find itself involved, directly or indirectly, in armed conflict at the lower end of the spectrum, in the realm of guerilla warfare and terrorism.

Almost any application of American military power in circumstances that do not involve a direct attack on the United States or its traditional allies in Europe will be questioned and debated at home. Popular support for military efforts, if there is any to begin with, will be limited and ephemeral.

For almost a decade, military analysts have debated the role of the news media in America's failure in the Vietnam War. The same issue arose during the war in the Falkland Islands and during Israel's most recent invasion of Lebanon. Military officials argue that the news media report information that is valuable to the enemy and provide a distorted picture of events which serves to undermine domestic support and instigate opposition to the war effort. They further point out that the problems caused by the news media are asymmetrical. Authoritarian opponents can strictly limit media access to the front and can impose censorship to prevent domestic audiences from seeing or hearing anything the government does not want them to hear. The news media argue that censorship is incompatible with a free society, that political leaders and military commanders would, if they could, permit reporting only of victories, would try to conceal incompetence, and would try to feed the media misleading information to further the war effort. In World War II, the news media exercised self-censorship, and military news was limited by the government. People have been willing to accept this in times of all-out war. During World War II,

the media accepted it too. But with the distinction between war and peace so hazy, and the use of force so permanent, all this no longer applies.

Putting aside the constitutional issue of freedom of the press, given the pervasiveness of the news media and rapid technological advances in communications, it is futile to contemplate controlling the press. Unless a war is fought in some totally inaccessible part of the world, the news media must be considered part of the terrain, often unfriendly, sometimes exploitable, but impossible to ignore.

One might argue that perhaps this is as it should be, that is, any military effort that is not a response to a widely perceived direct threat to national security *should* be subject to political debate, subject to scrutiny in the news media, and subject to competition for attention and support within the complex machinery of government. In other words, in this view the tension is healthy, even if it interferes with the effort, because it will discourage military adventures that are likely to fail in the long run. To carry that argument too far, however, is to attribute a collective wisdom to such things as media hype, institutional rigidity, parochial bureaucracies, and the inefficiencies inherent in large government.

Given the domestic political constraints on military operations, there has been a tendency to rely more on clandestine and special operations, which are less subject to public scrutiny, and on the use of friendly foreign powers as proxies. Both alternatives create their own problems. Support for clandestine operations may involve U.S. military personnel and assets which, if captured, could be exploited for propaganda purposes or held hostage. One of the many difficulties in dealing with proxies is that the United States may become tainted by a proxy's past record or by operations that are incompatible with U.S. objectives and standards.

Guerrilla wars pose special problems. The United States has had little success in combatting guerrillas and must consider how to improve either its capabilities in this area or its ability to choose guerrilla contests where American military power might affect the outcome, avoiding major involvement in the others.

Guerrilla warfare is inherently difficult to deal with. Guerrilla wars are long and nasty. Americans have little patience for dragged-out military operations in which U.S. forces operate below capability. But counter guerrilla efforts—even successful ones—require years: It took nine years to defeat the guerrillas in the Philippines, thirteen in Malaya. It is difficult to imagine an American president today promising the public a successful conclusion to a military effort but not before 1995.

Part of the problem also derives from the fact that the United States will almost always be an indirect participant in any guerrilla war, assisting some friendly nation in the Third World. Like most Third World nations, the ally we are attempting to help is likely to be weak, its political system fragile, its standards of democracy and its respect for human rights lower than ours, its war effort hampered by incompetence and corruption. Allies of that sort are usually (and correctly) suspicious of the quality and durability of an American commitment. As we have learned in many cases, such allies also may be quite resistant to any American effort to modify their domestic political behavior.

Organizational and institutional impediments cause further problems. In conflicts below the level of major war, a complicated government machinery does business as usual, undermining unity of command, precluding the formulation of any strategy, hampering coordination, permitting each bureaucratic entity to do its own thing. The inability of the United States to succeed in South Vietnam or to guarantee victory in El Salvador is not merely a problem of organization, but organizational difficulties are a large part of the problem.

Another part of this nation's problem is the American military's predilection to selectively recall and prepare for its preferred mode of conflict—war on the Central Front in Europe—consigning other and more likely applications of military power to the realm of exotic diversions.

International terrorism presents a new set of requirements for political and military planners. It should be regarded as a mode of conflict increasingly likely to demand the use of military force. Unlike guerrilla contests in allied or friendly countries, terrorist campaigns are not likely to allow the U.S. government much choice in deciding whether or not to become involved. Terrorists create situations that demand the use of military force. And unlike guerrilla wars, whose spans are measured in years or decades, terrorist-created crises develop in hours and require rapid response.

Military planners must also take terrorism into account as a factor that can affect the military's ability to deploy forces or weapons in any other kind of contest. This is not to say that terrorists represent a direct rather than an indirect challenge to U.S. military power. But a major terrorist incident coupled with the threat of further terrorist activity against U.S. military facilities in Europe could, for example, prevent or delay the deployment of additional nuclear weapons.

The threat of terrorist attack could affect the willingness of other countries to provide bases or port privileges. Terrorist attacks may also disrupt mobilization or erode public support for military inter-

vention abroad under certain circumstances. Finally, it must be assumed that any U.S. military action abroad could provoke terrorist attacks against American targets anywhere in the world.