On the Psychological Absurdity of a War on Terror

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"No one starts a war—or rather, no one in his senses ought to do so—without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by that war and how he intends to conduct it."   …. Karl von Clausewitz

The United States of America has conducted at least two wars in recent history that have failed the test that Clausewitz proposed as sensible grounds for starting a war. First was the War on Drugs, declared by President Nixon in 1969 as a reaction to the deep fear that increasing drug use posed a major threat to the safety and welfare of our nation. The second example of a campaign not grounded in good sense is the War on Terror (the major topic of this presentation), declared by President Bush, reflexively, after the attacks of September 11, 2001. Once again, fear of a major threat to the safety and welfare of our nation served as a justification for this declaration of war.

Both wars, I contend, are psychologically absurd and thus bound to fail. More, the cost of conducting these absurd wars has been little short of ruinous—both in economic and moral terms. We can now see signs that the rhetoric supporting these exercises in absurdity is being abandoned. The long and arduous task of economic and

moral redemption can begin once our thinking is no longer dominated by fear and the reflexes fear produces. .

Before leaving the War on Drugs for my main topic of the War on Terror, a few observations about the former are in order, for it provides an instructive case. As a recent commentator has noted, if there has been a War on Drugs over the past four decades in the United States, then it should be clear that Drugs have won.[1] The use of drugs has not diminished, drugs of all kinds are readily available at relatively low cost and high potency, and the cost in the United States to our criminal justice system is enormous. Over 50% of those incarcerated in federal prisons in the U.S. are there because of drug offenses.[2] The United States has the highest per capita incarceration rate of any nation in the world, about five times the international average. And yet the traffic in illegal drug use continues unabated. On the supply side, this has created enormous political and criminal costs throughout Latin American. On the demand side, the United States is the unmatched leader for both consumption and finance. We should now clearly recognize that the strategic objective of achieving a drug-free environment is not attainable by law enforcement tactics of interdiction, arrest, confiscation, and destruction of supplies.

The alternative to pursuing a War on Drugs is to think of the problem in another way—as a problem in public health, rather than as a criminal justice issue. This can lead to more attention to prevention via education—along the lines of the campaign against the use of tobacco. The public health perspective will lead as well to improved treatment of those addicted to drugs—along the lines of effective treatment programs for alcoholics. These positive changes can only come about if we have the courage and good

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[1] See Nicholas D. Kristof, "Drugs won the war." *New York Times*, Sunday June 14, 2009, p. wk 10.
[2] DrugWarFacts.org asserts that around 350,000 people were incarcerated in the United States for drug offenses in 2005. 53% of federal prisoners and 20% of state prisoners were serving time for drug offenses.

sense to admit that the original War on Drugs was entirely misconceived, both in terms of strategy and tactics.

Strategy, tactics, and the War on Terror

We owe to Clausewitz the clear and compelling distinction between strategy—what one intends to achieve in a conflict—and tactics, the means by which one intends to achieve those objectives. This distinction has been incorporated into modern game theory, into military science, and into the worlds of business, politics, and sports. Tactics are always subordinate to strategy.

The life of the Strategic Air Command (SAC) within the United States may be taken as an example. The SAC was created with the mission of providing long-range bombing capabilities for the United States anywhere in the world. This strategic objective was subordinate only to the more general mission of prevailing in the Cold War, with the Soviet Union serving as the main adversary to the U.S. The tactics employed by SAC consisted of creating a fleet of long-range bombers, keeping some of them in the air constantly, developing missile delivery systems, inventing air-refueling capabilities and the like. The SAC existed from 1946 until 1992—the year after the demise of the Soviet Union. With the end of the Cold War, the strategic objective was, in a general sense, achieved. It no longer made sense to maintain a strategic air command, and the unit was accordingly deactivated.

Such things as winning a sporting contest, winning an election, winning a war, winning a chess game, or more generally, improving public health, reducing crime rates, improving the profitability of a business, or improving "quality of life" constitute strategic objectives. Tactics are dictated not only by strategic objectives but by

conditions "on the ground"—by the availability of tools, weapons, techniques, and material resources, as well more subtle psychological techniques of detecting information about one's opponent and concealing information about oneself.[3]

The use of terror is commonly a tactic directed to attaining strategic objectives. Terror *as* a strategic objective is certainly conceivable. Terror would be a strategy when one party has the objective of terrifying another for no other reason than to frighten them—as might occur at a Halloween party. Thrill-seeking is a plausible and even common motive in our culture—and activities such as race-car driving, sky-diving, spelunking, and even body-piercing are testimony to the general appeal of inducing or experiencing transitory fears. Movies advertised as displaying death-defying or terrifying scenes are designed to capitalize on this taste for safe thrills.

But the War on Terror is clearly not directed at these recreational or occasionally perverse uses of terror as a strategic objective. Rather, the serious War on Terror is directed at the use of terror as a tactic—as a means of advancing strategic objectives. The Arab terrorists who sacrificed themselves on 9/11 were most assuredly not motivated to create terror for its own sake, but rather to strike a blow for greater cause—a cause that they somehow conceived to be holy and entirely self-transcending. Even though their tactic involved the sacrifice of their own lives, they hoped thereby to advance the cause of the Islamic group with which they identified—in this case, Al Qaeda.

Orwell asserted that, "Human beings only started to fight each other in earnest when there was no longer anything to fight about."[4] By this he meant to say that modern wars are not fought for material or territorial advantage. The reasons for modern wars are

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[3] See Scheibe (1979) *Mirrors, Masks, Lies, and Secrets.* I develop arguments in that book about the use of a variety of tactics of detecting and concealing information in the context of strategic interactions.
[4] Orwell (1946/19968, p. 249)

couched in terms of abstractions—freedom, liberty, democracy, proper respect for God or Allah. Modern wars are fought in earnest against enemies who are thought to represent evil—and this projection of evil to the other side is mutual, reciprocal. The Arab attackers of September 11 employed their extreme tactic of murderous self-sacrifice against a power that they regarded as thoroughly evil. This act, in turn, was manifest and convincing evidence to the U.S. of the evil nature of Osama bin Laden and his followers. This justified our attack on the Taliban in Afganistan. Failing to find the fugitive Bin Laden, we displaced our martial energies onto Iraq—an engagement that turned into a prime example of tactics unguided by strategy.

Once again, tactics are the means for the achievement of strategic goals. A dog that chases a car has a tactic, but no practical strategic goal.   It has no idea what to do with the car if it should catch it. In a tactical sense, our invasion of Iraq in 2003 was a clear success, in that the defending army in Iraq was quickly vanquished and Saddam Hussein was removed from power within days. However, our lack of strategic vision soon became painfully evident, for the United States had no plan for becoming an occupying force and for restoring order and basic services to the country. General Tommy Franks, the senior U.S. commander after the invasion, following his civilian counterparts, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, and Richard Cheney, apparently thought he was conducting a war of liberation rather than a war of occupation. The expectation that Iraqi citizens would greet the U.S. army as liberators was wildly mistaken. It wasn't until July, 2003, when General Abizaid took over command from General Franks that the term "war" was used to describe the conflict—such was the force of denial (another classic defense mechanism) within our government.

It soon became clear that the insurgents in Iraq had both a strategy and a set of

tactics. Their strategy was to rid the country of its occupying force—the United States

and its allies—the so-called "coalition of the willing." The tactics were to snipe at and

kill our soldiers and others in the occupying force—always small-scale encounters, rarely

risking full-scale battles. They used IEDs (improvised explosive devices). They used

RPGs (rocket propelled grenades). They used suicide bombers, both in cars and on foot.

The first conspicuous car bombing took place outside the Jordanian Embassy on August

7, 2003, killing or wounding more than 60 people. Bush's "Mission Accomplished"

speech from the deck of the carrier Abraham Lincoln, was given on May 1 of that year.

When a mission is accomplished, one's strategic goals have been achieved. Such a claim

was, on its face, unwarranted.

The insurgents made a particular point of attacking our military allies. One by

one, these forces, initially sent to keep the peace rather than engage in combat, were

withdrawn by their host countries. United Nations and aid officials were targeted, as

were foreign journalists. During just three years, 84 journalists were killed in Iraq, far

surpassing the 66 killed in Vietnam over 15 years.[5]

In his book, *Fiasco,* Thomas Ricks makes this comment about the coalition of the

willing:

> Altogether, the troop contribution of the thirty-one coalition partners
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> amounted to less than twenty-four thousand. The real 'coalition of the
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> willing' that was in Iraq was the one of international jihadists flocking to

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[5] Ricks, (2007, p. 424)

Iraq to fight the Americans, tartly commented Marine Col. Hammes,

"These people are willing to fight." [6]

Ricks also observes that U.S. military intelligence quickly concluded that the enemy fighters were much better than had been thought, while our Iraqi allies were worse. The reason for this observed imbalance has entirely to do with strategy. The Iraqi insurgents and their jihadist sympathizers had a clear and credible strategy—to rid Iraq of a foreign occupying force. This gave people a good reason to fight. On our side, we talked of "winning the war on terror"—a strategic objective that was far from clear and credible. This articulation of a strategic objective was meaningless. Since it was conceptually vacuous, it was also psychologically weak as a means of motivating people to do battle. Our leaders spoke of achieving victory in Iraq without saying how we would know victory if we were to see it.

The Preconditions for Terrorism

Despite the enormous publicity that is given to terrorism, such attacks are relatively rare. We have no hard evidence that such events are more common now than they have been in the past. Indeed, the term "terrorism" was commonly used to describe bombings of conspicuous targets that represented the power of capitalism, as conceived by anarchists, in the early 20th Century. A famous example of such an attack took place on September 16, 1920, when a wagon full of explosives was set off in front of the Wall Street bank of J.P. Morgan. Some 33 people were killed as a result of this explosion and an additional 400 were

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[6] Ricks, (2007, p. 348)

wounded. While the perpetrators of this attack were never identified, it was commonly assumed that this was an act of terrorism committed by anarchists who wished to spread mortal fear among the complacent and exploitative capitalists of New York, and thus to advance their cause. This particular episode is still prominent in the memory of students of terrorism and of 20th Century capitalism.[7]

The bare logic of terrorism is best displayed in the language of elementary game theory. Two players are required, both of whom are motivated to win in a structured contest. In the simplest case, two moves are possible for Player A and two moves for Player B. The outcomes or payoffs are determined jointly by the moves selected by both players. In the famous Prisoners' Dilemma game, the payoff matrix is symmetrical, so that the rewards and losses are identical for both players—but the game is so structured as to lead to both players repeatedly to choose moves that are mutually ruinous.

Rapaport has shown that moves that can be construed as acts of terrorism follow from a game matrix that is markedly asymmetrical.[8] That is, one of the players is in the beginning position of Top Dog while the other player is in the position of Bottom Dog. In everyday terms, this means that in the normal course of events, Top Dog receives vastly more benefits from the status quo than does Bottom Dog. Bottom Dog normally enjoys benefits that are sufficient to maintain life, but are much inferior to those enjoyed by Top Dog. At the level of social reality, such a condition might describe the relationship between a master and a slave, where both accept the inevitability of the status quo. But Bottom Dog has a

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[7] See, for example, the account of this bombing in *The Match King,* by Frank Partnoy (2009).
[8] See A. Rapaport (1973). *Experimental Games and their Uses in Psychology.* N.J.: General Learning Press.

choice. This player may put the status quo at risk by attacking or threatening to attack Top Dog—thereby putting himself into jeopardy, but at the same time causing quite a large loss in benefit to Top Dog. Top Dog may or may not capitulate to demands of Bottom Dog for a redistribution of benefits. Bottom Dog, of course, is hoping for such a capitulation, for his survival resources are meager in comparison to those enjoyed by Top Dog.

This is, of course, the bare logic of a slave rebellion. This logic applies, as well, *mutatis mutandis*, to the case of strikes, violent or peaceful, by laborers against management, or class rebellions, where the poor rise up against a rich aristocracy, or a mutiny, where a crew might attempt to seize control from a tyrannical captain, or indeed, in any case where those who are normally without power or privilege rise up to upset the status quo by, at a minimum, refusing to continue the acceptance of peaceful subjugation, and in the extreme case, making violent strikes against the body of those who are seen as the enemy, even at the cost of sacrificing the lives of some of the Bottom Dogs in the process. The French Reign of Terror, let us remember, was instigated by the common people in revolution against the entrenched aristocracy and ecclesiastical authority.

The main consequence of a terrorism is to succeed, by means of dramatic and violent acts, to bring about generalized fear in the body of those who are seen as normally victimizing or oppressing the lives or interests of the group represented by the terrorists. After the bombing on Wall Street in 1920, bankers and financiers could no longer conduct their daily lives with the easy and casual style to which they had become accustomed. Now they must be wary, and more

than wary, guarded. And more than guarded, they must live in perpetual fear of being attacked at any time. Anarchists hoped, at the least, that their attack would raise general awareness of the predations of rampant capitalism, and that perhaps this might ultimately lead to increased fairness in the distribution of goods and money, or the end of what they saw as tyranny.

Terrorism is employed as a means to an end. It is a tactic. The main precondition for terrorism is economic or social inequality—where one individual or class of individuals enjoys benefits far superior to another individual or group in the same social system. But inequality itself is not a sufficient condition for terrorism. Something must happen to make the continuation of the unequal status quo unacceptable to those in a disadvantaged position. Slavery in the Americas existed almost since of the time of discovery until the 19th Century. Only in the mid-19th Century did the institution of slavery come to be seen, generally, as intolerable. The development of Marxist and communist ideology in the 19th Century might be seen as a product of social and economic inequality, which has existed time out of mind. But the effect of this crystallizing ideological development was to convert this inequality into discontent, and more, into interclass hostility.

But even intergroup hostility is not a sufficient condition for the use of terrorism as a tactic. Rather, that hostility must be converted into hatred of the Other. It is at this point that the rhetoric of evil emerges.[9] Once the rhetoric of

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[9] Tip-off phrases for this rhetoric are "They hate us," or "They have no regard for human life," or "This conflict will never be resolved because people never change," or "The only language they understand is the language of power, of force," or "They do not recognized our legitimacy."

evil is used, it quickly generalizes and is taken up by both sides of the conflict.[10] The notion of *jihad* is that of a holy war—a war where self-sacrifice is transformed from an act of stupidity into an act of heroism, of martyrdom for a sacred cause.

To recapitulate, the most fundamental precondition for the use of terror as a tactic is social and economic inequality. Even so, massive inequality can exist without it becoming problematic. But the tides of history can and have swept away passive acceptance of disadvantage for large collectivities. When discontent is transformed into hatred of out-groups, the major preconditions for the use of terror as a tactic are satisfied. Terrorism can then occur where there are targets of opportunity and weapons or ammunition to be employed in inflicting harm on the body of the Other. The direction for the employment of Terror is normally from Bottom Dog to Top Dog—though we will turn attention to apparent exceptions to this rule presently.

Reflections on the Rhetoric of Terror

When I hear the phrase, "war on terror," I am reminded of Orwell's famous essay, "Politics and the English Language," wherein he criticized the general mindlessness of political writing. He said, "Political language…is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind"[11]. The 'war

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[10] A superb analysis of the War on Terror as an example of a misplaced metaphor is provided by Barrett and Sarbin (2007), "The Rhetoric of Terror." Barrett and Sarbin suggest that the use of war rhetoric made members of the Bush Administration prisoners of their own language.
[11] Orwell, 1946/1968, vol. 4, p. 139

on terror'is a good example of 'pure wind.'   But this rhetoric has, lamentably, made murder respectable.[12]

The term 'terror' carries with it a strong note of disapproval. It is usually presented as a disreputable and even cowardly tactic, as described by those who are its intended object.

The exceptions to this general opprobrium, of course, are provided when the moral tables are turned or victors are writing the history. Thus, slave rebellions in the Americas are not now described as the work of terrorists, for history has come to abhor the slavers, not the slaves. Similarly, the use of clandestine killings and kidnappings in the period leading up to the establishment of the state of Israel are not now thought of as terrorism, at least on our side of the world. We don't hear much any more of the terrorist tactics that accompanied the decolonization of most of the continent of Africa after World War II. The American Revolutionary war had its share of aggressive actions designed to spread fear among the occupying British troops, but these patriotic acts of valor would never be described in our histories as terrorism. My freedom fighter is your terrorist.

It might be objected that the willingness for agents of aggression to sacrifice their own lives for their cause—the modern phenomenon of suicide bombers—is an entirely different matter and can never be justified as a fair tactic. But let us not forget that our own Bible teaches us that, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13) Nathan Hale is said to have lamented that, "I regret that I have only one life to give for my country." Self-sacrifice for a good cause is deeply

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[12] See Barrett and Sarbin (2007)

imbedded in our own traditions and is not something that is a depraved product of a heathen religion or of those who have no regard at all for human life.

Any imbalance of power invites challenge from those in the weaker position. This is the basis of the Oedipus complex which Freud considered to be universal. Those in a stronger position do not need to risk their lives or scarce resources in order to maintain their position, unless such a response is required to meet the challenge by the weak. Workers strike against powerful management as a tactic—to redress neglect or intransigence and they must endure the sacrifice. When David confronts Goliath, he must resort to unorthodox tactics in order to prevail. The weak, the small, the outsiders—these people will require an arsenal of tactics entailing great risk of self-sacrifice. Early Christianity was a minority religion—and martyrdom was a major feature of its advancement. Establishment religions have no need for martyrs.

. The 9/11 Muslim martyrs cannot rightly be called cowards. They certainly thought that they were serving their own highest principles. Every study done of the recruitment and training of jihadists shows that these people are not drawn from criminal classes or from among the morally depraved, but rather are recruited from intelligent and well-meaning youths who chose to dedicate themselves to a high calling, not a low one.[13] These are ordinary young men (and a few women) who choose to accept an opportunity to do something out of the ordinary for the collectivity to which they owe allegiance. The great difficulty we have in understanding how such destructive actions can be seen as legitimate derives from our own habitual positions—our own anchors in place and creed and kinship.

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[13] See Elliott, 2007.

Marc Sageman has published a study of the recruitment of Muslim jihadists, based on a sample of over 500 militants[14]. He describes four stages in the process of forming a suicide bomber. The first stage is provided by coming to share a sense of outrage at the West for causing suffering somewhere in the Muslim world. The second stage entails generalization, so that a single insult becomes a feature of what is construed as an epic drama pitting Islam against alien forces. The third stage involves a fusion of this global sense of conflict with a local sense of deprivation or suffering of injustice. The fourth and final stage involves recruitment into a local cell, which replaces the jihadist's family as a source of instruction and control. Few Muslims go through all four of these stages, but it doesn't take many martyrs to make a huge impact. Again, terrorist acts must be understood as tactics—a means by which an underdog might hope to overcome a powerful opponent.

Ricks cites a senior military officer who describes tactics we have used to our own disadvantage. In seeking suspected terrorists in Iraq, "They are going through neighborhoods, knocking on doors at two in the morning without actionable intelligence. …That is how you create new insurgents."[15] Ricks also documents the common practice of arresting the wife and children of a suspected insurgent if that person cannot be found—with the offer of releasing these hostages if and when the suspect turns himself in. These tactics have quickly rebounded against us by providing a justification for new recruits toenter the ranks of the insurgents.

Our occupation of Iraq has, in simple terms, lacked broad legitimacy. The Coalition Provisional Authority was initially set up to conduct the occupation and was

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[14] See Sageman, 2007.
[15] In Ricks, 2007, p. 233

headed by Paul Bremer. His administration was generally conceded to be a disaster. He decided, as part of his de-Baathification program, to disband the Iraqi army immediately, thus creating massive problems of unemployment and an incentive for the recruitment of insurgents. As one officer of the CPA said at the end of his tour of duty, summarizing his office's work, "We were pasting feathers together, hoping for a duck."[16]

Conducting a "war on terror" is rather like conducting a war on dissent, or rebellion, or disobedience. It is a logical absurdity. "War on terror" is a loaded term that is designed to justify a prolonged military engagement that has no strategic objective. It is a war that, in principle, cannot be won. Moreover, our efforts to prosecute a "war on terror" have only strengthened the moral case for the recruitment of jihadists. We seemed intent on scoring goals against our own side.

Perverse Consequences and the Prospect of Reversal

Attacking a tactic does not make sense. But those who strive to conduct a War on Terror need more than a correction in their logic, for they have actively made things worse rather than better. The consequences of a War on Terror are precisely the opposite of what might constitute a legitimate strategic objective—namely, of guaranteeing the safety and well being of our people.

The history of the first five years of the war in Iraq is replete with examples of our engaging in actions that had the effect of increasing the sense among the citizens of Iraq that our occupation of their country was intolerable and grounds for hatred of the occupying forces. A major contributor to a loss in our prestige and honor as a nation came about with the revelations of torture and mistreatment of prisoners at Abu Ghraib in

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[16] In Ricks, 2007, p. 204

Iraq. Cruel tactics are never easily justified, either for the weak or for the strong. But the sort of cruelty exhibited by our side at Abu Ghraib prison was entirely gratuitous—it served no purpose. It seemed to come out of pure meanness. The effect was to undermine any claim to moral advantage by our side. It makes no sense to liberate people from a tyrant like Saddam Hussein and then to subject those same people to humiliation and torture.

The journalist Jane Mayer has argued that our stubborn and misguided participation in a War on Terror has undermined the honor and prestige of the United States not only in the Middle East but throughout the world.[17] She provides thorough documentation of the adoption by the Bush-Cheney administration of the rhetoric of evil, to which reference has been made above. It must surely be recognized that the U.S. administration did not regard themselves as acting out of base motives. What is most conspicuous in Mayer's account is the predominance of fear—often leading to profound paranoia—among our leaders. This fear allowed them to employ "any means necessary" to protect the American people. But in the process, they acted in a way that led to the justification of an even deeper hatred and distrust of the United States.

In the last few years, the tide of violence and declining prospects in Iraq has turned. This positive change has come about not because of the employment of the 'surge' tactic that was so confidently cited by the Bush-Cheney administration. Rather, the prospects for a favorable end to the Iraq struggle came about because of the articulation and implementation, for the first time, of a plausible *strategy* for the country. Thomas Ricks describes this change at length and in detail in the sequel to his first book

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[17] Jane Mayer, *The Dark Side.*

about the Iraq war.[18] He describes the Old War as ending and a New War beginning with

the installation of General David Petraeus as the Commander in Chief of American forces

in Iraq in 2006. Reversing the policies of previous Commanders, Petraeus gave priority

to tactics that would have the effect of achieving some kind of reconciliation with the

people of Iraq—of getting them to hate us less. The strategy, which has been carried

forward ably by the Obama administration and by the successors to General Petreus in

Iraq, is for U.S. forces to retire from the field in Iraq as soon as conditions permit. This

strategy, as it happens, conforms to the general objective of those in Iraq who have

opposed us in the past. The result is that tactics now employed by the U.S. forces in Iraq

are constructive and conciliatory by design. There are fewer terrorist attacks not because

we have somehow defeated terrorism. Terrorist attacks have diminished because the

Iraqi insurgents have little to gain by them. Hatred is cooling. Contempt for the U.S. is

gradually being replaced by respect. This conflict might, after all, end well.

The Conundrum of Terrorism From Above

Thus far, my discussion of terrorism has been limited to the case of the

underprivileged seeking by violent acts to induce fear and disarray in the forces that have

dominated them. This has, after all, been predominant use of terror in the last decade.

However, terror has been employed as a tactic of control from above—by states, utilizing

the mechanisms of the state—the police, the armed forces, the courts—in such a way as

to dissuade or intimidate dissent within a country. The classic example is that of the

U.S.S.R, particularly during Stalin's era, where the Gulag system reinforced a sense of

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[18] Thomas E. Ricks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008.*

terror throughout the population.[19] In our hemisphere, the example of Brasil in the era of the generals, 1964-1984, comes to mind immediately, as does the period of government-sponsored terror in Argentina during the 1970's, and the regime of Augusto Pinochet in Chiles from 1973-1990 . One might add many other examples to this list. In all of these cases, repressive, terrorist tactics were employed by government officials—including kidnapping, torture, imprisonment, and death by 'disappearing'—in order to intimidate and eliminate political dissent and opposition from within the country. The rulers, in almost all of these cases, were drawn from the military, and were seen by large segments of their respective nations as lacking full legitimacy. Once again, fear and hatred were the principle emotional supports for these protracted and violent dramas.

Fortunately, it may be observed that in the case of the countries I have mentioned above, the deep civic divisions that produced terrorism by the state have been largely eliminated by the removal of dictators, the introduction of democratic elections, and the consequent shared sense of the legitimacy of civic authority.

The stories, nation by nation, throughout Latin American, are, of course, varied and complex. The Tupamaros insurgency in Uruguay, the Sendero Luminoso movement in Peru, and the Sandanistas in Nicauragua have been characterized as terrorist movements of the more traditional sort.   (We can see here that the danger of use of the term "terrorist" becomes ever more obvious, because it is clear, once again, that my freedom fighter is your terrorist.)   The cases of Colombia and Bolivia and Mexico, where the drug wars are interwoven with political conflict, present yet more complex and challenging cases for analysis. Suffice it to say here, that no War on Terror as such has ever been effective in any of these cases. Rather, it is increasingly clear that the major

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[19] Alexander Solzenyitsen's (1973) *Gulag Archipelago* is a brilliant description of this system in action.

way of decreasing the use of terror in our world is to address instead the conditions that encourage that use—namely group divisions, antagonisms, hatreds and fears.

In closing, I shall attempt an outline that might suggest how such an approach might be developed and applied.

Ingroups and Outgroups: Conflicts Formed and Dissolved

On of the classic studies of 20th Century social psychology was that of Muzafer Sherif on *Robbers Cave.* Boys at a summer camp were arbitrarily divided into two competing groups—the Rattlers and the Eagles and quickly developed strong group antagonisms.[20] They attacked and roundly criticized members of the ourgroup, while protecting and defending members of their ingroup. Near the end of the experiment, Sherif was able to eliminate these antagonisms by obliging boys from both groups to work together to solve common problems and to create a sense of interdependence. Now these boys could befriend other boys who had formerly been in the outgroup.

The opposite of this process of reconciliation can also be observed. Recent events on the world stage have provided examples of peoples who formerly lived in peace quickly becoming polarized into enmity, as their latent group identities somehow seemed newly salient.   The removal of Soviet domination in parts of the former USSR and in Eastern Europe has led to the flaring up of ethnic hostilities that had for many years been latent. Ingroup-outgroup hostilities are always a potential danger.

It is no easy task to defuse and eliminate such hostilities once they have begun. But again, the principles developed by Sherif have been of demonstrable utility.   Herbert Kelman and others have shown that arranging opportunities for opposing groups to

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[20] H. Tajfel's (19) research on minimal groups provides additional evidence for the ease with which group competition and hostility can be achieved.

engage in common enterprise markedly reduces hostility and negative attitudes toward outgroups.[21] Palestinian and Israeli youths who attend camp together are led to overcome their initially negative dispositions toward each other. While no one can say how long peaceful dispositions between formerly warring groups can be preserved, we do have ample evidence that people can reduce deeply held hostilities toward outgroups. This is, quite obviously, of key value in reducing the potential for resort to such tactics as terrorism.

A study of history provides sobering lessons about the fragility of the conditions for continuing peace between collectivities. The emergence of nationalism is the 19th century has been credited by many students world events as providing a major basic for the international conflicts that have plagued the 20th century.[22] Bertrand Russell characterized nationalism as the, "…chief force making for the extermination of the human race."[23] And yet, a form of nationalism might be said to be responsible for the extinction of the U.S.S.R—as that form of imposed communism gave way to the emergence of suppressed national identities—not in itself a bad thing.

The final lesson is this: The student of terrorism must first of all be a student of the complexities and vagaries of human identity—particularly those forms of identity that have to do with race, religion, tribe, and nation. The pull and force of these primordial ascriptions will not be eliminated in favor of scientific enlightenment. Psychology can help us to understand how hatred between collectivities can come about and as well to see how such hatred can be reduced. This, in turn, might allow us to understand the roots

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[21] See Kelman (2008)
[22] See Scheibe (1983)
[23] See Russell (1952)

of such tactics as terrorism, and can thus lead to a substantial reduction in the need for

recourse to such violent tactics.

References