

## International Terrorism Today

### Lecture Note

Historically, terrorism is a relatively new concept having its birth in modern history with the French Revolution. Whether we accept or reject this point in time as being significant, we have little choice but to pay attention to the way which terrorism has evolved.

There are three factors that are clear right now;

- 🌐 International terrorism is not going to go away, in fact its almost certain to get worse for three reasons that we will explore in a minute.
- 🌐 While many feel that a decisive, forceful response is necessary to terrorism, force isn't by itself enough – we must act to address the roots of this madness.
- 🌐 The worst thing that we can do is to overreact to a terrorist act. Overreaction is exactly what the perpetrators want and overreaction poses a threat to our democratic institutions.

Returning to the reason why things will get worse – there are three trends which need to be clearly understood. Two of these trends are technological and the third is social.

- 🌐 New technologies are shifting power downward from large institutions and governments to small groups and individuals. Sometimes this is a good thing as when the Internet empowers individuals to better participate in democratic processes. But it can be bad as some groups are malign and because one technology that's diffusing downward is the extraordinary capacity to destroy. Because of progress in engineering, miniaturization of electronics and explosives, weapons are becoming easier to use, more accurate and more powerful. Communications tools too allow terrorists and criminal syndicates to marshal their resources to coordinate their actions around the planet. It is now possible for smaller and smaller numbers of people to hurt larger and larger numbers of people. These new gadgets are truly double edged swords.

- ④ Another trend is the growing complexity and interdependence of our technological systems, which makes it more likely that damage to one system will ramify outward to other components. We've seen such effects in the globe's tightly wired financial system and electricity grids. Terrorists can exploit this greater interdependence to magnify their disruptive power. The first rule of modern terrorists should be to find the critical but nonredundant parts of the system and sabotage them according to your purposes.
- ④ The third trend is social: the rapidly widening gap between the planet's richest and poorest groups, and between individuals and societies that thrive in the face of our world's dramatic new challenges and those that fail and succumb. While the lives of people in the world's most impoverished corners have generally improved in recent decades, their progress has been snail like compared to the stunning enrichment of the wealthiest. These differences breed envy and frustration and ultimately, anger. Thanks to TV, today's disadvantaged know better than ever before what they are missing AND they have the capacity to harm the targets of their anger.

If this is the future, how should we respond? Make no mistake. The coming terrorist threats will test profoundly our democratic institutions. Can we maintain the freedom of association or movement; the diversity of opinion? Can we resist becoming more intolerant, suspicious, bitter and militarized? Most importantly, can we remember that the problem will never go away if we don't address the underlying disparities that help to motivate violence?

# **TERRORISM**

- **First terrorist incident took place during the French Revolution (1793-94)**
- **Maximillien Robespierre, leader of the Jacobin Party, used violence to suppress the opposition and to enhance their own power**
- **This “Reign of Terror” is where the term *terrorism* comes from**
- **Today, terrorism implies the use of violence to achieve political objectives**
- **It’s success depends on the fear that it generates – it must be substantial to paralyze all potential opponents**
- **There are 2 types of terrorism; REVOLUTIONARY and NATIONALISTIC**
- **There are 2 types of terrorist acts: DISRUPTIVE and COERCIVE**