SOW UNCERTAINTY AND PANIC THROUGH ACTS OF TERROR

THE CHAIN-REACTION STRATEGY

Terror is the ultimate way to paralyze a people's will to resist and destroy their ability to plan a strategic response. Such power is gained through sporadic acts of violence that create a constant feeling of threat, incubating a fear that spreads throughout the public sphere. The goal in a terror campaign is not battlefield victory but causing maximum chaos and provoking the other side into desperate overreaction. Melting invisibly into the population, tailoring their actions for the mass media, the strategists of terror create the illusion that they are everywhere and therefore that they are far more powerful than they really are. It is a war of nerves. The victims of terror must not succumb to fear or even anger; to plot the most effective counterstrategy, they must stay balanced. In the face of a terror campaign, one's rationality is the last line of defense.

THE ANATOMY OF PANIC

In Isfahan (in present-day Iran) toward the end of the eleventh century, Nizam al-Mulk, the powerful vizier to Sultan Malik Shah, ruler of the great Islamic empire of the period, became aware of a small yet irritating threat. In northern Persia lived a sect called the Nizari Ismailis, followers of a religion combining mysticism with the Koran. Their leader, the charismatic Hasan-i-Sabah, had recruited thousands of converts alienated by the tight control the empire exercised over religious and political practices. The influence of the Ismailis was growing, and what was most disturbing to Nizam al-Mulk was the utter secrecy in which they operated: it was impossible to know who had converted to the sect, for its members did so in private and kept their allegiance hidden.

> *"Brothers," says an Ismaili poet, "when the time of triumph comes, with good fortune from both worlds as our companion, then by one single warrior on foot a king may be stricken with terror, though he own more than a hundred thousand horsemen."*

QUOTED IN *THE ASSASSINS*, BERNARD LEWIS, 1967

The vizier monitored their activities as best he could, until finally he heard some news that roused him to action. Over the years, it seemed, thousands of these secret Ismaili converts had managed to infiltrate key castles, and now they had taken them over in the name of Hasan-i-Sabah. This gave them control over part of northern Persia, a kind of independent state within the empire. Nizam al-Mulk was a benevolent administrator, but he knew the danger of allowing sects like the Ismailis to flourish. Better to snuff them out early on than face revolution. So, in 1092, the vizier convinced the sultan to send two armies to bring down the castles and destroy the Nizari Ismailis.

The castles were strongly defended, and the countryside around them teemed with sympathizers. The war turned into a stalemate, and eventually the sultan's armies were forced to come home. Nizam al-Mulk would have to find some other solution, perhaps an occupying force for the region--but a few months later, as he was traveling from Isfahan to Baghdad, a Sufi monk approached the litter on which he was carried, pulled out a dagger from under his clothes, and stabbed the vizier to death. The killer was revealed to be an Ismaili dressed as a peaceful Sufi, and he confessed to his captors that Hasan himself had assigned him to do the job.

The death of Nizam al-Mulk was followed within weeks by the death, from natural causes, of Malik Shah. His loss would have been a blow at any time, but without his crafty vizier to oversee the succession, the empire fell into a period of chaos that lasted several years. By 1105, however, a degree of stability had been reestablished and attention again focused on the Ismailis. With one murder they had managed to make the entire empire tremble. They had to be destroyed. A new and vigorous campaign was launched against the sect. And soon it was revealed that the assassination of Nizam al-Mulk was not a single act of revenge, as it had seemed at the time, but an Ismaili policy, a strange and frightening new way of waging war. Over the next few years, key members of the administration of the new sultan, Muhammad Tapar, were assassinated in the same ritualistic fashion: a killer would emerge from a crowd to deliver a deadly blow with a dagger. The deed was most often done in public and in broad daylight; sometimes, though, it took place while the victim was in bed, a secret Ismaili having infiltrated his household staff.

A wave of fear fanned out among the empire's hierarchy. It was impossible to tell who was an Ismaili: the sect's adherents were patient, disciplined, and had mastered the art of keeping their beliefs to themselves and fitting in anywhere. It did not help that when the assassins were captured and tortured, they would

accuse various people within the sultan's inner circle of being either paid spies for the Ismailis or secret converts. No one could know for certain if they were telling the truth, but suspicion was cast on everyone.

Losses to which we are accustomed affect us less deeply.

JUVENAL, FIRST TO SECOND CENTURY A.D.

Now viziers, judges, and local officials had to travel surrounded by bodyguards. Many of them began to wear thick, uncomfortable shirts of mail. In certain cities no one could move from house to house without a permit, which spread disaffection among the citizenry and made it easier for the Ismailis to recruit converts. Many found it hard to sleep at night or to trust their closest friends. All kinds of wild rumors were spread by those who had grown delirious with paranoia. Bitter divisions sprang up within the hierarchy, as some argued for a hard-line approach to Hasan, while others preached accommodation as the only answer.

Meanwhile, as the empire struggled to somehow repress the Ismailis, the killings went on--but they were highly sporadic. Months would pass without one, and then suddenly there would be two within a week. There was no real rhyme or reason to when it happened or which high administrator was singled out. Officials would talk endlessly about a pattern, analyzing every Ismaili move. Without their realizing it, this little sect had come to dominate their thoughts.

In 1120, Sanjar, the new sultan, decided to take action, planning a military campaign to capture the Ismaili castles with overwhelming force and turn the region around them into an armed camp. He took extra precautions to prevent any attempt on his life, changing his sleeping arrangements and allowing only those he knew well to approach him. By making himself personally secure, he believed he could stay free of the panic around him.

As preparations for the war got under way, Hasan-i-Sabah sent ambassador after ambassador to Sanjar offering to negotiate an end to the killings. They were all turned away. The tables seemed to have turned: now it was the Ismailis who were frightened.

Shortly before the campaign was to be launched, the sultan awoke one morning to find a dagger thrust neatly in the ground a few feet away from the position where his breast lay on the bed. How did it get there? What did it mean? The more he thought about it, the more he began to literally tremble with fear--it

was clearly a message. He told no one about this, for whom could he trust? Even his wives were suspect. By the end of the day, he was an emotional wreck. That evening he received a message from Hasan himself: "Did I not wish the sultan well, that dagger which was struck into the hard ground would have been planted in his soft breast."

> *On their voyage Pisander and the others abolished the democracies in the* [*Greek*] *cities, as had been decided. From some places they also took hoplites to add to their forces, and so came to Athens. Here they found that most of the work had already been done by members of their* [*antidemocratic*] *party. Some of the younger men had formed a group among themselves and had murdered without being detected a certain Androcles, who was one of the chief leaders of the* [*democratic*] *party.... There were also some other people whom they regarded as undesirable and did away with secretly.....* [*Athenians*] *were afraid when they saw their numbers, and no one now dared to speak in opposition to them. If anyone did venture to do so, some appropriate method was soon found for having him killed, and no one tried to investigate such crimes or take action against those suspected of them. Instead the people kept quiet, and were in such a state of terror that they thought themselves lucky enough to be left unmolested even if they had said nothing at all. They imagined that the revolutionary party was much bigger than it really was, and they lost all confidence in themselves, being unable to find out the facts because of the size of the city and because they had insufficient knowledge of each other.... Throughout the democratic party people approached each other suspiciously, everyone thinking that the next man had something to do with what was going on.*
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> *HISTORY OF THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR*, THUCYDIDES, CIRCA 460-CIRCA 399 B.C.

Sanjar had had enough. He could not spend another day like this. He was not willing to live in constant fear, his mind deranged by uncertainty and suspicion. It was better, he thought, to negotiate with this demon. He called off his campaign and made peace with Hasan.

Over the years, as the Ismailis' political power grew and the sect expanded into Syria, its killers became almost mythic. The assassins had never tried to escape; their killing done, they were caught, tortured, and executed to a man, but new ones kept on coming, and nothing seemed to deter them from completing

their task. They seemed possessed, utterly devoted to their cause. Some called them *hashshashin,* from the Arabic word *hashish,* because they acted as if they were drugged. European crusaders to the Holy Land heard stories about these devilish *hashshashin* and passed them on, the word slowly transforming into "assassins," passing forever into the language.

Interpretation

Hasan-i-Sabah had one goal: to carve out a state for his sect in northern Persia, allowing it to survive and thrive within the Islamic empire. Given his relatively small numbers and the powers arrayed against him, he could not hope for more, so he devised a strategy that was surely history's first organized terrorist campaign for political power. Hasan's plan was deceptively simple. In the Islamic world, a leader who had won respect was invested with considerable authority, and to the extent that he had authority, his death could sow chaos. Accordingly Hasan chose to strike these leaders, but in a somewhat random way: it was impossible to see any pattern in his choices, and the possibility of being the next victim was more disturbing than many could bear. In truth, except for the castles they held, the Ismailis were quite weak and vulnerable, but by patiently infiltrating his men deep into the heart of the sultan's administration, Hasan was able to create the illusion they were everywhere. Only fifty or so assassinations are recorded in his entire lifetime, and yet he won as much political power through them as if he had an enormous army.

This power could not come by merely making individuals feel afraid. It depended on the effect the killings would have on the entire social group. The weakest officials in the hierarchy were the ones who would succumb to paranoia and voice doubts and rumors that would spread and infect those who were less weak. The result was a ripple effect--wild swings of emotion, from anger to surrender, up and down the line. A group caught by this kind of panic cannot find its balance and can fall with the slightest push. Even the strongest and most determined will be infected in the end, as Sultan Sanjar was: his attempts at security, and the harsh life to which he subjected himself as protection, revealed that he was under the influence of this panic. One simple dagger in the ground was enough to push him over the edge.

Understand: we are all are extremely susceptible to the emotions of those around us. It is often hard for us to perceive how deeply we are affected by the moods that can pass through a group. This is what makes the use of terror so effective and so dangerous: with a few well-timed acts of violence, a handful of assassins can spark all kinds of corrosive thoughts and uncertainties. The weakest members of the target group will succumb to the greatest fear, spreading

rumors and anxieties that slowly overcome the rest. The strong may respond angrily and violently to the terror campaign, but that only shows how influenced they are by the panic; they are reacting rather than strategizing--a sign of weakness, not strength. In normal circumstances individuals who become frightened in some way can often regain their mental balance over time, especially when they are around others who are calm. But this is almost impossible within a panicked group.

As the public's imagination runs wild, the assassins become something much larger, seeming omnipotent and omnipresent. As Hasan proved, a handful of terrorists can hold an entire empire hostage with a few well-calibrated blows against the group psyche. And once the group's leaders succumb to the emotional pull--whether by surrendering or launching an unstrategic counterattack--the success of the terror campaign is complete.

Victory is gained not by the number killed but by the number frightened.

--Arab proverb

KEYS TO WARFARE

In the course of our daily lives, we are subject to fears of many kinds. These fears are generally related to something specific: someone might harm us, a particular problem is brewing, we are threatened by disease or even death itself. In the throes of any deep fear, our willpower is momentarily paralyzed as we contemplate the bad that could happen to us. If this condition lasted too long or were too intense, it would make life unbearable, so we find ways to avoid these thoughts and ease our fears. Maybe we turn to the distractions of daily life: work, social routines, activities with friends. Religion or some other belief system, such as faith in technology or science, might also offer hope. These distractions and beliefs become the ground beneath us, keeping us upright and able to walk on without the paralysis that fear can bring.

Under certain circumstances, however, this ground can fall away from under us, and then there is nothing we can do to steady ourselves. In the course of history, we can track a kind of madness that overcomes humans during certain disasters--a great earthquake, a ferocious plague, a violent civil war. What troubles us most in these situations is not any specific dreadful event that happened in the recent past; we have a tremendous capacity to overcome and adapt to anything horrible. It is the uncertain future, the fear that more terrible things are coming and that we might soon suffer some unpredictable tragedy--

that is what unnerves us. We cannot crowd out these thoughts with routines or religion. Fear becomes chronic and intense, our minds besieged by all kinds of irrational thoughts. The specific fears become more general. Among a group, panic will set in.

> *Six at the top means: Shock brings ruin and terrified gazing around. Going ahead brings misfortune. If it has not yet touched one's own body But has reached one's neighbor first, There is no blame. One's comrades have something to talk about. When inner shock is at its height, it robs a man of reflection and clarity of vision. In such a state of shock it is of course impossible to act with presence of mind. Then the right thing is to keep still until composure and clarity are restored. But this a man can do only when he himself is not yet infected by the agitation, although its disastrous effects are already visible in those around him. If he withdraws from the affair in time, he remains free of mistakes and injury. But his comrades, who no longer heed any warning, will in their excitement certainly be displeased with him. However, he must not take this into account.*
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> *THE I CHING*, CHINA, CIRCA EIGHTH CENTURY B.C.

In essence, this is terror: an intense, overpowering fear that we cannot manage or get rid of in the normal way. There is too much uncertainty, too many bad things that can happen to us.

During World War II, when the Germans bombed London, psychologists noted that when the bombing was frequent and somewhat regular, the people of the city became numb to it; they grew accustomed to the noise, discomfort, and carnage. But when the bombing was irregular and sporadic, fear became terror. It was much harder to deal with the uncertainty of when the next one would land.

It is a law of war and strategy that in the search for an advantage, anything will be tried and tested. And so it is that groups and individuals, seeing the immense power that terror can have over humans, have found a way to use terror as a strategy. People are crafty, resourceful, and adaptable creatures. The way to paralyze their will and destroy their capacity to think straight is to consciously create uncertainty, confusion, and an unmanageable fear.

Such strategic terror can take the form of exemplary acts of destruction. The masters of this art were the Mongols. They would level a few cities here and there, in as horrible a manner as possible. The terrifying legend of the Mongol Horde spread quickly. At its very approach to a city, panic would ensue as the

inhabitants could only imagine the worst. More often than not, the city would surrender without a fight--the Mongols' goal all along. A relatively small army far from home, they could not afford long sieges or protracted wars.

This strategic terror can also be used for political purposes, to hold a group or nation together. In 1792 the French Revolution was spinning out of control. Foreign armies were on the verge of invading France; the country was hopelessly factionalized. The radicals, led by Robespierre, confronted this threat by initiating a war against the moderates, the Reign of Terror. Accused of counterrevolution, thousands were sent to the guillotine. No one knew who would be next. Although the radicals were relatively small in number, by creating such uncertainty and fear they were able to paralyze their opponents' will. Paradoxically, the Reign of Terror--which gives us the first recorded instance of the use of the words "terrorism" and "terrorist"--produced a degree of stability.

Although terror as a strategy can be employed by large armies and indeed whole states, it is most effectively practiced by those small in number. The reason is simple: the use of terror usually requires a willingness to kill innocent civilians in the name of a greater good and for a strategic purpose. For centuries, with a few notable exceptions such as the Mongols, military leaders were unwilling to go so far. Meanwhile a state that inflicted mass terror on its own populace would unleash demons and create a chaos it might find hard to control. But small groups have no such problems. Being so few in number, they cannot hope to wage a conventional war or even a guerrilla campaign. Terror is their strategy of last resort. Taking on a much larger enemy, they are often desperate, and they have a cause to which they are utterly committed. Ethical considerations pale in comparison. And creating chaos is part of their strategy.

Terrorism was limited for many centuries by its tools: the sword, the knife, the gun, all agents of individual killing. Then, in the nineteenth century, a single campaign produced a radical innovation, giving birth to terrorism as we know it today.

In the late 1870s, a group of Russian radicals, mostly from the intelligentsia, had been agitating for a peasant-led revolution. Eventually they realized that their cause was hopeless: the peasants were unprepared to take this kind of action, and, more important, the czarist regime and its repressive forces were far too powerful. Czar Alexander II had recently initiated what became known as the White Terror, a brutal crackdown on any form of dissidence. It was almost impossible for the radicals to operate in the open, let alone spread their influence. Yet if they did nothing, the czar's strength would only grow.

And so from among these radicals, a group emerged bent on waging a

terrorist war. They called themselves Narodnaya Volia, or "People's Will." To keep their organization clandestine, they kept it small. They dressed inconspicuously, melting into the crowd. And they began to make bombs. Once they had assassinated a number of government ministers, the czar became a virtual prisoner in his palace. Deranged with the desire to hunt the terrorists down, he directed all of his energies toward this goal, with the result that much of his administration became dysfunctional.

> *The basis of Mongol warfare was unadulterated terror. Massacre, rapine and torture were the price of defeat, whether enforced or negotiated.... The whole apparatus of terror was remorselessly applied to sap the victim's will to resist, and in practical terms this policy of "frightfulness" certainly paid short-term dividends. Whole armies were known to dissolve into fear-ridden fragments at the news of the approach of the* toumans .... *Many enemies were paralysed...before a* [*Mongol*] *army crossed their frontiers.*
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> *THE ART OF WARFARE ON LAND,* DAVID CHANDLER, 1974

In 1880 the radicals were able to explode a bomb in the Winter Palace, the czar's residence in St. Petersburg. Then, finally, the following year another bomb killed Alexander himself. The government naturally responded with repression still harsher than the policy already in place, erecting a virtual police state. In spite of this, in 1888, Alexander Ulianov--the brother of Vladimir Lenin and a member of Narodnaya Volia--nearly succeeded in killing Alexander's successor, Czar Alexander III.

The capture and execution of Ulianov brought the activities of Narodnaya Volia to a close, but the group had already begun to inspire a wave of terrorist strikes internationally, including the anarchist assassinations of the American presidents James A. Garfield in 1881 and William McKinley in 1901. And with Narodnaya all the elements of modern terrorism are in place. The group thought bombs better than guns, being more dramatic and more frightening. They believed that if they killed enough ministers of the government, extending upward to the czar himself, the regime would either collapse or go to extremes to try to defend itself. That repressive reaction, though, would in the long run play into the radicals' hands, fomenting a discontent that would eventually spark a revolution. Meanwhile the bombing campaign would win the group coverage in the press, indirectly publicizing their cause to sympathizers around the world. They called this "the propaganda of the deed."

"This is what you should try for. An attempt upon a crowned head or on a

president is sensational enough in a way, but not so much as it used to be. It has entered into a general conception of the existence of all chiefs of state. It's almost conventional--especially since so many presidents have been assassinated. Now let us take an outrage upon--say a church. Horrible enough at first sight, no doubt, and yet not so effective as a person of an ordinary mind might think. No matter how revolutionary and anarchist in inception, there would be fools enough to give such an outrage the character of a religious manifestation. And that would detract from the especial alarming significance we wish to give to the act. A murderous attempt on a restaurant or a theatre would suffer in the same way from the suggestion of non-political passion; the exasperation of a hungry man, an act of social revenge. All this is used up; it is no longer instructive as an object lesson in revolutionary anarchism. Every newspaper has ready-made phrases to explain such manifestations away. I am about to give you the philosophy of bomb throwing from my point of view; from the point of view you pretend to have been serving for the last eleven years. I will try not to talk above your head. The sensibilities of the class you are attacking are soon blunted. Property seems to them an indestructible thing. You can't count upon their emotions either of pity or fear for very long. A bomb outrage to have any influence on public opinion now must go beyond the intention of vengeance or terrorism. It must be purely destructive. It must be that, and only that, beyond the faintest suspicion of any other object. You anarchists should make it clear that you are perfectly determined to make a clean sweep of the whole social creation.....What is one to say to an act of destructive ferocity so absurd as to be incomprehensible, inexplicable, almost unthinkable, in fact, mad? Madness alone is truly terrifying, inasmuch as you cannot placate it either by threats, persuasion, or bribes. Moreover, I am a civilized man. I would never dream of directing you to organize a mere butchery even if I expected the best results from it. But I wouldn't expect from a butchery the results I want. Murder is always with us. It is almost an institution. The demonstration must be against learning--science. But not every science will do. The attack must have all the shocking senselessness of gratuitous blasphemy...."

THE SECRET AGENT, JOSEPH CONRAD, 1857-1924

Narodnaya Volia aimed principally at the government but was willing to kill civilians in the process. The fall of the czarist government was worth a few lives lost, and in the end the bombs were less deadly than their alternative, which was civil war. At the very least, Narodnaya Volia would show the Russian people that

the government was not the untouchable monolithic power that it made itself seem; it was vulnerable. The group's members understood that the regime was quite likely to be able to liquidate them in time, but they were willing to die for their cause.

Narodnaya Volia saw that it could use one relatively small event--a bomb blast--to set off a chain reaction: fear in the administration would produce harsh repression, which would win the group publicity and sympathy and heighten the government's unpopularity, which would lead to more radicalism, which would lead to more repression, and so on until the whole cycle collapsed in turmoil. Narodnaya Volia was weak and small, yet simple but dramatic acts of violence could give it a disproportionate power to sow chaos and uncertainty, creating the appearance of strength among police and public. In fact, its smallness and inconspicuousness gave it a tremendous edge: at enormous expense, a cumbersome force of thousands of police would have to search out a tiny, clandestine band that had the advantages of mobility, surprise, and relative invisibility. Besides giving the terrorists the chance to present themselves as heroic underdogs, the asymmetry of forces made them almost impossible to fight.

This asymmetry brings war to its ultimate extreme: the smallest number of people waging war against an enormous power, leveraging their smallness and desperation into a potent weapon. The dilemma that all terrorism presents, and the reason it attracts so many and is so potent, is that terrorists have a great deal less to lose than the armies arrayed against them, and a great deal to gain through terror.

It is often argued that terrorist groups like Narodnaya Volia are doomed to failure: inviting severe repression, they play into the hands of the authorities, who can effectively claim carte blanche to fight this threat--and in the end they bring about no real change. But this argument misses the point and misreads terrorism. Narodnaya Volia awakened millions of Russians to its cause, and its techniques were copied around the world. It also profoundly unbalanced the czarist regime, which responded irrationally and heavy-handedly, devoting resources to repression that could have been better applied to reforms that might have prolonged its stay in power. The repression also incubated a much more potent revolutionary group, the burgeoning communist movement.

In essence, terrorists kick a rock in order to start an avalanche. If no landslide follows, little is lost, except perhaps their own lives, which they are willing to sacrifice in their devotion to their cause. If mayhem and chaos ensue, though, they have great power to influence events. Terrorists are often reacting against an extremely static situation in which change by any route is blocked. In

their desperation they can often break up the status quo.

It is a mistake to judge war by the rubric of victory or defeat: both states have shades and gradations. Few victories in history are total or bring about lasting peace; few defeats lead to permanent destruction. The ability to effect some kind of change, to attain a limited goal, is what makes terrorism so alluring, particularly to those who are otherwise powerless.

For instance, terrorism can be used quite effectively for the limited goal of gaining publicity for a cause. Once this is achieved, a public presence is established that can be translated into political power. When Palestinian terrorists hijacked an El Al plane in 1968, they captured the attention of the mass media all over the world. In the years to come, they would stage-manage other terrorist acts that played well on television, including the infamous attack on the 1972 Munich Olympics. Although such acts made them hated by most in non-Arab countries, they were willing to live with that--the publicity for their cause, and the power that came from it, was all they were after. As the writer Brian Jenkins notes, "Insurgents fought in Angola, Mozambique, and Portuguese Guinea for fourteen years using the standard tactics of rural guerrilla warfare. The world hardly noticed their struggle, while an approximately equal number of Palestinian commandos employing terrorist tactics have in a few years become a primary concern to the world."

In a world dominated by appearances, in which value is determined by public presence, terrorism can offer a spectacular shortcut to publicity--and terrorists accordingly tailor their violence to the media, particularly television. They make it too gruesome, too compelling, to ignore. Reporters and pundits can profess to be shocked and disgusted, but they are helpless: it is their job to spread the news, yet in essence they are spreading the virus that can only aid the terrorists by giving them such presence. The effect does not go unnoticed among the small and powerless, making the use of terrorism perversely appealing to a new generation.

Yet for all its strengths, terrorism also has limitations that have proved the death of many a violent campaign, and those opposing it must know and exploit this. The strategy's main weakness is the terrorists' lack of ties to the public or to a real political base. Often isolated, living in hiding, they are prone to lose contact with reality, overestimating their own power and overplaying their hand. Although their use of violence must be strategic to succeed, their alienation from the public makes it hard for them to maintain a sense of balance. The members of Narodnaya Volia had a somewhat developed understanding of the Russian serfs, but more recent terrorist groups, such as the Weathermen in the United States and the Red Brigades in Italy, have been so divorced from the public as to

verge on the delusional. Accentuating the terrorists' isolation and denying them a political base should be part of any effective counterstrategy against them.

> *When Odawara Castle fell to the attackers in the Meio period (the end of the fifteenth century), Akiko, who had been a maid in the service of Mori Fujiyori, the lord of the castle, escaped with a cat which had been her pet for years, and then the cat became a wild supernatural monster which terrorized the people, finally even preying on infants in the village. The local officials joined with the people in attempts to catch it, but with its strange powers of appearing and disappearing, the swordsmen and archers could find nothing to attack, and men and women went in dread day and night. Then in December of the second year of Eisho (1505), priest Yakkoku went up on to the dais at Hokokuji and drew the picture of a cat, which he displayed to the congregation with the words: "As I have drawn it, so I kill it with Katzu!, that the fears may be removed from the hearts of the people." He gave the shout, and tore to pieces the picture of the cat. On that day a woodcutter in the valley near the Takuma villa heard a terrible screech; he guided a company of archers to the upper part of the valley, where they found the body of the cat-monster, as big as a bear-cub, dead on a rock. The people agreed that this had been the result of the master's Katzu!*

Terrorism is usually born out of feelings of weakness and despair, combined with a conviction that the cause one stands for, whether public or personal, is worth both the inflicting and the suffering of any kind of damage. A world in which the faces of power are often large and apparently invulnerable only makes the strategy more appealing. In this sense terrorism can become a kind of style, a mode of behavior that filters down into society itself.

In the 1920s and '30s, the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan butted heads with the extremely conservative medical societies that dominated almost all aspects of psychoanalytic practice. Realizing the futility of taking on these authorities in a conventional way, Lacan developed a style that can fairly be described as terroristic. His sessions with his patients, for example, were often cut short before the usual fifty minutes were up; they could last any period of time that he saw fit and were sometimes as brief as ten minutes. This deliberate provocation to the medical establishment caused a great deal of scandal, setting off a chain reaction that shook the psychoanalytic community for years. (These sessions were also quite terrorizing for the patients, who could never be sure when Lacan would end them and so were forced to concentrate and make every moment count--all of which had great therapeutic value, according to Lacan.)

Having gained much publicity this way, Lacan kept stirring the pot with new provocative acts, culminating in the creation of his own rival school and professional society. His books are written in a style to match this strategy: violent and arcane. It was as if he occasionally liked to throw little bombs into the world, thriving on the terror and attention they got him.

People who feel weak and powerless are often tempted into outbursts of anger or irrational behavior, which keeps those around them in suspense as to when the next attack will come. These fits of temper, like other, more serious kinds of terror, can have a chilling effect on their targets, sapping the will to resist; when the simplest dealings with these people are potentially so unpleasant, why fight? Why not just give in? A violent temper or outlandish act, volcanic and startling, can also create the illusion of power, disguising actual weaknesses and insecurities. And an emotional or out-of-control response to it just plays into the other person's hands, creating the kind of chaos and attention he or she thrives on. If you have to deal with a terroristic spouse or boss, it is best to fight back in a determined but dispassionate manner--the response such types least expect.

Although organized terrorism has evolved and technology has increased its capacity for violence, its essential makeup does not seem to have changed--the elements developed by Narodnaya Volia are still in effect. Yet the question many ask today is whether a new, more virulent kind of terrorism may be developing, one far surpassing the classical version. If terrorists could get hold of more potent armaments, for example--nuclear or biological weapons, say--and had the stomach to use them, their kind of war and the power it may bring them would make a qualitative leap into a new, apocalyptic form. But perhaps a new form of terrorism has already emerged that does not need the threat of dirty weapons to create a more devastating result.

On September 11, 2001, a handful of terrorists linked to the Islamic Al Qaeda movement produced the single deadliest terrorist action to date, in their attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon outside Washington, D.C. The attack had many of the earmarks of classical terrorism: a small group, with extremely limited means, using the technology of the United States at their disposal, was able to strike with maximum effect. Here was the familiar asymmetry of forces in which smallness becomes an asset, being inconspicuous within the larger population and accordingly quite difficult to detect. The terror of the event itself set in motion a paniclike reaction from which the United States has still not fully recovered. The drama and symbolism of the Twin Towers themselves, not to mention the Pentagon, created a grotesquely compelling spectacle that gave the terrorists maximum exposure

while incisively demonstrating the vulnerability of the United States, often described in recent years as the world's only remaining superpower. There were those around the world who had never imagined that America could be so quickly and seriously harmed but were delighted to find they were wrong.

Many deny that 9/11 was a new form of terrorism. It simply distinguished itself, they say, by the number of its victims; the change was quantitative, not qualitative. And, as in classical terrorism, these analysts continue, Al Qaeda is ultimately doomed to failure: the U.S. counterattack on Afghanistan destroyed their operational base, and they are now the targets of the unbending will of the American government, whose invasion of Iraq was a stage in a grand strategy to rid the region of terrorism in general. But there is another way to look at the attack, keeping in mind the chain reaction that is always the terrorist's goal.

Tests
(1) How can tearing up a picture with a Katzu! destroy a living monster?
(2) That devil-cat is right now rampaging among the people, bewitching and killing them. Kill it quickly with a Katzu! Show the proof!

SAMURAI ZEN: THE WARRIOR KOANS, TREVOR LEGGETT, 1985

When a man has learned within his heart what fear and trembling mean, he is safeguarded against any terror produced by outside influences. Let the thunder roll and spread terror a hundred miles around: he remains so composed and reverent in spirit that the sacrificial rite is not interrupted. This is the spirit that must animate leaders and rulers of men--a profound inner seriousness from which all outer terrors glance off harmlessly.

THE I CHING, CHINA, CIRCA EIGHTH CENTURY B.C.

The full economic impact of 9/11 is hard to measure, but the ripple effect of the attack is by any standard immense and undeniable: substantial increases in security costs, including the funding of new government programs for that purpose; enormous military expenditures on the invasions of two separate nations; a depressive effect on the stock market (always particularly susceptible to the psychology of panic) and a consequent injury to consumer confidence; hits on specific industries, such as travel and tourism; and the reverberating effect of all these on the global economy. The attack also had tremendous political effects--in fact, the American elections of 2002 and 2004 were arguably determined by it. And as the chain reaction has continued to play out, a growing

rift has emerged between the United States and its European allies. (Terrorism often implicitly aims to create such splits in alliances and in public opinion as well, where hawks and doves line up.) September 11 has also had a definite and obvious impact on the American way of life, leading directly to a curtailment of the civil liberties that are the distinguishing mark of our country. Finally--though this is impossible to measure--it has had a depressive and chilling effect on the culture at large.

> *"It appears to me that this mystery is considered insoluble, for the very reason which should cause it to be regarded as easy of solution--I mean for the* outre *character of its features. The police are confounded by the seeming absence of motive--not for the murder itself--but for the atrocity of the murder.... They have fallen into the gross but common error of confounding the unusual with the abstruse. But it is by these deviations from the plane of the ordinary, that reason feels its way, if at all, in its search for the true. In investigations such as we are now pursuing, it should not be so much asked 'what has occurred,' as 'what has occurred that has never occurred before.' In fact, the facility with which I shall arrive, or have arrived, at the solution of this mystery, is in the direct ratio of its apparent insolubility in the eyes of the police."*
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> AUGUSTE DUPIN IN "THE MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE,"
> EDGAR ALLAN POE, 1809-1849

Perhaps the strategists of Al Qaeda neither intended all this nor even imagined it; we will never know. But terrorism is by its nature a throw of the dice, and the terrorist always hopes for the maximum effect. Creating as much chaos, uncertainty, and panic as possible is the whole idea. In this sense the 9/11 attack must be considered a success to such an extent that it does indeed represent a qualitative leap in terrorism's virulence. It may not have been as physically destructive as the explosion of a nuclear or biological weapon could be, but over time its reverberating power has far surpassed that of any terror attack before it. And this power comes from the altered nature of the world. Given the deep interconnections of the new global scene, whether commercial, political, or cultural, a powerful attack at a single point can have a chain-reactive effect that terrorists of earlier years could never have imagined. A system of interconnected markets that thrives on open borders and networks is intensely vulnerable to this intense ripple effect. The kind of panic that once might stir in a crowd or through a city can now spread over the world, fed spectacularly by the media.

To consider the 9/11 attack a failure because it did not achieve Al Qaeda's ultimate goal of pushing the United States out of the Middle East or spurring a pan-Islamic revolution is to misread their strategy and to judge them by the standards of conventional warfare. Terrorists quite often have a large goal, but they know that the chances of reaching it in one blow are fairly negligible. They just do what they can to start off their chain reaction. Their enemy is the status quo, and their success can be measured by the impact of their actions as it plays out over the years.

To combat terrorism--classical or the new version on the horizon--it is always tempting to resort to a military solution, fighting violence with violence, showing the enemy that your will is not broken and that any future attacks on their part will come with a heavy price. The problem here is that terrorists by nature have much less to lose than you do. A counterstrike may hurt them but will not deter them; in fact, it may even embolden them and help them gain recruits. Terrorists are often willing to spend years bringing you down. To hit them with a dramatic counterstrike is only to show your impatience, your need for immediate results, your vulnerability to emotional responses--all signs not of strength but of weakness.

Because of the extreme asymmetry of forces at play in the terrorist strategy, the military solution is often the least effective. Terrorists are vaporous, spread out, linked not physically but by some radical and fanatic idea. As a frustrated Napoleon Bonaparte said when he was struggling to deal with German nationalist groups resorting to acts of terror against the French, "A sect cannot be destroyed by cannonballs."

> *We can no longer conceive of the idea of a symbolic calculation, as in poker or the potlatch: minimum stake, maximum result. This is exactly what the terrorists have accomplished with their attack on Manhattan, which illustrates rather well the theory of chaos: an initial shock, provoking incalculable consequences.*
>
> *THE SPIRIT OF TERRORISM*, JEAN BAUDRILLARD, 2002

The French writer Raymond Aron defines terrorism as an act of violence whose psychological impact far exceeds its physical one. This psychological impact, however, then translates into something physical--panic, chaos, political division--all of which makes the terrorists seem more powerful than they are in reality. Any effective counterstrategy must take this into consideration. In the aftermath of a terrorist blow, what is most essential is stopping the psychological ripple effect. And the effort here must begin with the leaders of the country or

group under attack.

In 1944, near the end of World War II, the city of London was subjected to a fierce campaign of terror from Germany's V-1 and V-2 rockets, an act of desperation that Hitler hoped would spread internal division and paralyze the will of the British public to continue the war. Over six thousand people were killed, many more were injured, and millions of homes were damaged or destroyed. But instead of allowing despondency and worry to set in, Prime Minister Winston Churchill turned the bombing campaign to his advantage as an opportunity to rally and unify the British people. He designed his speeches and policies to calm panic and allay anxiety. Instead of drawing attention to the V-1 attacks, or to the more dreaded V-2s, he emphasized the need to stay resolved. The English would not give Germany the satisfaction of seeing them bow to such terror.

> *In general, the most effective response to unconventional provocation is the least response: do as little as possible and that cunningly adjusted to the arena. Do no harm. Deny one's self, do less rather than more. These are uncongenial to Americans who instead desire to deploy great force, quickly, to achieve a swift and final result. What is needed is a shift in the perception of those responsible in Washington: less can be more, others are not like us, and a neat and tidy world is not worth the cost.*
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> *DRAGONWARS*, J. BOWYER BELL, 1999

In 1961, when President Charles de Gaulle of France faced a vicious right-wing terror campaign by French forces in Algeria opposed to his plan to grant the colony its independence, he used a similar strategy: he appeared on television to say that the French could not surrender to this campaign, that the costs in lives were relatively small compared to what they had recently suffered in World War II, that the terrorists were few in number, and that to defeat them the French must not succumb to panic but must simply unite. In both these cases, a leader was able to provide a steadying influence, a ballast against the latent hysteria felt by the threatened citizenry and stoked by the media. The threat was real, Churchill and de Gaulle acknowledged; security measures were being taken; but the important thing was to channel public emotions away from fear and into something positive. The leaders turned the attacks into rallying points, using them to unite a fractured public--a crucial issue, for polarization is always a goal of terrorism. Instead of trying to mount a dramatic counterstrike, Churchill and de Gaulle included the public in their strategic thinking and made the citizenry active participants in the battle against these destructive forces.

And it is this uncontrollable chain reaction effect of reversals that is the true power of terrorism. This power is visible in the obvious and less obvious aftereffects of the event--not only in the economic and political recession throughout the system, and the psychological recession that comes out of that, but also in the recession in the value system, in the ideology of liberty, the freedom of movement, etc., which was the pride of the Western world and the source of its power over the rest of the world. It has reached a point where the idea of liberty, one that is relatively recent, is in the process of disappearing from our customs and consciences, and the globalization of liberal values is about to realize itself in its exact opposite form: a globalization of police forces, of total control, of a terror of security measures. This reversal moves towards a maximum of restrictions, resembling those of a fundamentalist society.

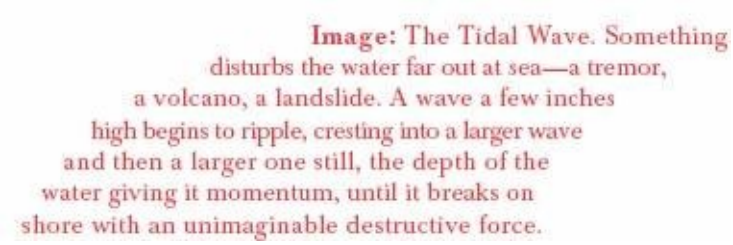
THE SPIRIT OF TERRORISM, JEAN BAUDRILLARD, 2002

While working to halt the psychological damage from an attack, the leader must do everything possible to thwart a further strike. Terrorists often work sporadically and with no pattern, partly because unpredictability is frightening, partly because they are often in fact too weak to mount a sustained effort. Time must be taken to patiently uproot the terrorist threat. More valuable than military force here is solid intelligence, infiltration of the enemy ranks (working to find dissidents from within), and slowly and steadily drying up the money and resources on which the terrorist depends.

At the same time, it is important to occupy the moral high ground. As the victim of the attack, you have the advantage here, but you may lose it if you counterattack aggressively. The high ground is not a minor luxury but a critical strategic ploy: world opinion and alliances with other nations will prove crucial in isolating the terrorists and preventing them from sowing division. All this requires the willingness to wage the war over the course of many years, and mostly behind the scenes. Patient resolve and the refusal to overreact will serve as their own deterrents. Show you mean business and make your enemies feel it, not through the blustery front used for political purposes--this is not a sign of strength--but through the cool and calculating strategies you employ to corner them.

In the end, in a world that is intimately interlinked and dependent on open borders, there will never be perfect security. The question is, how much threat are we willing to live with? Those who are strong can deal with a certain acceptable level of insecurity. Feelings of panic and hysteria reveal the degree to which the enemy has triumphed, as does an overly rigid attempt at defense, in

which a society and culture at large are made hostage to a handful of men.



Authority: There is no fate worse than being continuously under guard, for it means you are always afraid.

--*Julius Caesar (100-44 B.C.*)

REVERSAL

The reverse of terrorism would be direct and symmetrical war, a return to the very origins of warfare, to fighting that is up-front and honest, a simple test of strength against strength--essentially an archaic and useless strategy for modern times.