

## CHAPTER

# 7

### CHAPTER OUTLINE

#### What Do We Study? 221

> *Terrorism and Counterterrorism* 222

> *Why Definitions are Important* 222

*Debate* The Terrorism Label Can Be Misused 225

> *How Terrorism Works* 225

*Debate* Terrorism and Global Interactions 228

> *Terrorism: In the Name of What?* 228

*Debate* Assumptions and Misconceptions About Terrorism, Radicalism, and Violent Groups 231

#### How Do We Study It? 231

> *The Realist View of Terrorism* 231

*Debate* Power Balance and Terrorist Attacks in 1914 and 2001 232

> *The Liberal View of Terrorism* 235

> *The Constructivist and Other Views of Terrorism* 237

*Case in Point* Northern Ireland 238

*Debate* On Moral Relativism and Terrorism 240

#### How Do We Apply It? 241

> *The Individual Context* 241

> *The State Context* 243

> *The Global Context* 246

**Past, Present, and Future: Al-Qaeda** 250

#### CONCLUSION 253

#### CHAPTER SUMMARY 253

#### KEY TERMS 254

#### VISUAL REVIEW 255

Light beams in place of New York City's World Trade Center, which was destroyed in the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.



# International Terrorism

*All of us have had to pause, reflect, and sometimes change our minds as we studied these problems and considered the views of others. We hope our report will encourage our fellow citizens to study, reflect—and act. . . .*

*We learned about an enemy who is sophisticated, patient, disciplined, and lethal.*

—FINAL REPORT OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON TERRORIST  
ATTACKS UPON THE UNITED STATES, 2004.

LANCE CORPORAL FREDERIK E. VAZQUEZ, OF MELROSE PARK, ILLINOIS, DIED ON JULY 24, 2010, WHILE SUPPORTING COMBAT OPERATIONS IN HELMAND PROVINCE, Afghanistan. He was twenty years old. Mark Leijssen, a forty-four-year-old sergeant major from the Netherlands, was killed by a roadside bomb in Uruzgan province. Petty Officer Second Class Xin Qi, of Cordova, Tennessee, twenty-five years old, died on January 23, 2010, while supporting combat operations in Afghanistan. He was a medical caregiver. There are three thousand more names from thirty countries who died since 2001 in “Operation Enduring Freedom” in Afghanistan. More than two thousand are from the United States. More than four hundred and forty are from the United Kingdom. One hundred and fifty eight are from Canada. Forty are from Poland.

When you read these pages, the number of casualties may be up. What have all of them died for?

On September 11, 2001, a radical group called *al-Qaeda* carried out terrorist strikes against the United States. The group destroyed the World Trade Center in New York and a portion of the Pentagon near Washington, DC. The terrorists hijacked four civilian airplanes and flew them into their targets, dying along with their victims. One plane crashed in Pennsylvania. Fifteen of the hijackers were from Saudi Arabia, and four came from other Arab countries of the Middle East.

The attackers were trained in al-Qaeda camps in Pakistan, Sudan, and Afghanistan. The Bush administration issued an ultimatum to the Taliban government, the religious group that controlled Afghanistan at that time and gave refuge to al-Qaeda. The ultimatum called for immediate delivery of Osama bin Laden and his associates to an American court. The Taliban offered to try bin Laden in Afghanistan in an Islamic court instead. The White House rejected the offer, and U.S. and British troops launched a war in Afghanistan.

The allied troops quickly established control over the country yet failed to capture bin Laden and destroy the Taliban and al-Qaeda completely. In 2003 the United States sent troops to Iraq. Meanwhile, the Taliban, supported by militant groups in western Pakistan, began to regain control over Afghani territories. It took ten years to hunt down and kill Bin Laden in his hideout in Pakistan. The U.S. President Barak Obama pledged in 2012 to withdraw the U.S. troops from Afghanistan in two years.

Country	Total	Country	Total
Albania	1	Lithuania	1
Australia	38	NATO	10
Belgium	1	Netherlands	25
Canada	158	New Zealand	11
Czech Republic	5	Norway	10
Denmark	42	Poland	35
Estonia	9	Portugal	2
Finland	2	Romania	19
France	86	South Korea	1
Georgia	11	Spain	34
Germany	53	Sweden	5
Hungary	7	Turkey	14
Italy	47	UK	432
Jordan	2	US	2,122
Latvia	3	Total	3,186

**FIGURE 7-1**  
Coalition casualties in  
Afghanistan, 2001–2012.  
Source: <http://www.icasualties.org>

The military operations triggered by 9/11 had a profound impact on international relations. The United States and other countries committed enormous resources to these efforts. Some analysts compared it to the Vietnam War and predicted that terrorist groups would only embolden themselves for more attacks against the United States and other countries. Others, more recently, considered the antiterrorist campaign accomplished successfully, and urged to end on “the war on terror” and focus on more pressing problems of the economy and budget debt. Yet others argued that the struggle against terrorism should move to the nonmilitary phase when intergovernmental and nongovernment organizations turn to economic and social issues that spawn terrorism.

Which argument is stronger? How dangerous is international terrorism and how does it affect the world? In this chapter we will guide you through the theories explaining international terrorism and explore how states, international organizations, and the entire global system deal with the challenge.

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- ▶ define terrorism, explaining its logic, strategies, and methods;
- ▶ explain how states, international organizations, and the entire global system deal with the challenge of terrorism;
- ▶ distinguish among different views of terrorism and counterterrorism policies; and
- ▶ apply your knowledge about terrorism and counterterrorism at three levels of analysis.

## Learning Objectives

### What Do We Study?

Most states agree that problem of international terrorism needs immediate attention. They only disagree as to how terrorism can be defeated. Journalists and security experts debate definitions and policies to deal with terrorism. Governments and international organizations have committed huge resources to study, understand, and combat it. Thousands of people have died. Many areas of our lives, including public safety procedures and international travel,

have been altered. In this chapter we will define terrorism, examine its historical roots, discuss counterterrorism, and critically examine various views of terrorism and counterterrorism.

### ***Terrorism and Counterterrorism***

**Terrorism** is violence by nonstate actors, such as individuals or groups, to achieve radical political goals. Terrorism is thus a form of *political radicalism*—ideas and methods to produce rapid, dramatic change in the social or political order. Terrorism can be state sponsored, in that a foreign government can provide financial, military, or logistical support to terrorists to further its policy goals. Yet in essence it remains a nonstate phenomenon.

As a means to achieve political goals, terrorism can be viewed as domestic or international. **Domestic terrorism** pursues domestic political goals such as the dismantling of a government or a change in state policies. This does not necessarily present a direct danger to other states or international organizations. **International terrorism**, which is the main focus of this chapter, challenges international stability by threatening one country or a group of states. It rejects international law and defies international organizations. It could be the act of a radical group secretly operating in several countries, and it has regional or global consequences. The distinctions between domestic and international forms are imprecise, however; some apparently domestic acts of terrorism have regional or even global consequences.

International terrorism differs from guerrilla warfare, gangsterism, or piracy. **Guerrilla warfare** is political violence by identifiable, irregular combat units, usually to seize state power, win autonomy, or found new states (see Chapter 4). *Gangsters* and *pirates* may practice random killing, extortions, and kidnappings, but their goal is not political: It is profit (Boot, 2009). International terrorism usually sets no limits on violence and targets civilians in the name of extreme political goals.

States and international organizations develop measures, called **counterterrorism**, to prevent and combat international and domestic terrorism. This is a government's policy, with a budget, conducted according to legal rulings, and exercised by a special agency in coordination with other offices, international organizations and alliances, NGOs, or independent contractors. In the United States many federal institutions are involved in counterterrorism, above all the Department of Homeland Security, the CIA, and the NSA (see Chapter 4). They gather information, pursue and eliminate terrorist groups, and disrupt their activities including their financial operations. Overall, more than 1,200 federal organizations and close to 2,000 private companies have worked recently on programs related to counterterrorism, intelligence, and homeland security in the United States alone (Priest and Arkin, 2010a). The price tag of their operations is measured in hundreds of billions of dollars.

### ***Why Definitions are Important***

There are serious consequences to the use of the labels *terrorism* or *terrorist*. The policy choices of states and international organizations often depend on how terrorism is defined. Also, violent individuals, groups, and governments





Armed police hold a railway bridge antiterrorist drill in Anhui Province, China, in 2012. China had nearly 100,000 commandos, police, and members of the military on standby up to and during the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games to respond to potential terrorist attacks.

typically avoid being associated with terrorism and often contest its definitions (Hoffman, 1998; Sloan, 2006).

### LEGITIMIZATION OF MILITARY ACTIONS

Because terrorism is considered an illegal form of violence, countries may choose **extreme measures** to deal with it. By labeling a group an international terrorist organization or a violent act as an act of international *terror*, a government can establish a justification for violent countermeasures, just as in times of war. Even an invasion of foreign territory can be labeled self-defense if it targets terrorists. In the wake of September 11, 2001, there was evidence that the Afghani government provided asylum and created conditions beneficial to the al-Qaeda terrorists. This gave the United States a justification to send troops to Afghanistan, with full support of the international community (See Figure 7.1.) Notice that the decision to label an act as terrorism or an organization as terrorist remains a **prerogative** of governments. The U.S. Department of State maintains an official list of foreign terrorist organizations, which is regularly updated.



On the companion website, you will find links to terrorist designation lists, the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, and the RAND database of worldwide terrorist incidents.

### MOBILIZATION OF INTERNATIONAL LAW

International law generally favors cooperation against terrorist groups or states accused of sponsoring terrorism. In 1988, a terrorist act against civilian Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, killed 270 people. When it was established that a Libyan official had been involved, Western countries imposed sanctions on Libya. Its leader, Muammar Qaddafi, was kept away from international meetings, including UN sessions. Only after Libya formally apologized and offered compensation to the victims' families were sanctions lifted (Bergman, 2008).

Also according to international law, individuals suspected of terrorist acts are subject to **extradition**, or removal from one country to another (where they committed their violent acts) to face charges. Many states cooperate with one another and extradite suspects. In the summer of 2005, for example, the Italian government sent a suspect in a terrorist attack on the London underground back to the United Kingdom. Some governments revoke the travel passports of individuals accused of terrorist activities (Wright, 2006). Saudi Arabia chose to detain terrorism suspects in specially organized rehabilitation camps (J. Stern, 2010).

Overall, the need to **combat** international terrorism has created an **unprecedented network of new bilateral and international military, economic, and intelligence sharing and financial agreements**. In a word, the threat of terrorism changed international relations.

### JUSTIFICATION OF OTHER POLICIES

Some states may use swift counterterrorist measures questionable from the viewpoint of international law. For example, after the assassination of Israeli athletes during the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich by Palestinian militants, the Israeli government set up a special squad to scout and kill the perpetrators. The squad frequently acted illegally, using almost the same violent means as the hunted terrorists. (It was the subject of the controversial film *Munich*, directed by Stephen Spielberg.) Countries may also unilaterally toughen domestic security laws including street surveillance, passenger screening at airports, and travel restrictions for foreigners. Some view any forms of counterterrorism as justifiable because terrorists are “outside the law” (Klein, 2005). Others disagree on legal grounds. After 9/11 many criticized the U.S. government for suspending normal juridical norms for suspects

The graves of five murdered Israeli athletes in Tel Aviv. Palestinian terrorists kidnapped and killed 11 Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics in 1972 in a crime that shocked the world. Israel launched covert operations to retaliate for the murder.



## DEBATE > THE TERRORISM LABEL CAN BE MISUSED

Because policies are frequently based on how terrorism is defined, the term is subject to misuse. First, some governments use the label to combat domestic opposition. The Chinese government used this tactic in Tibet to crush public protests against oppressive Communist rule. The Russian government did the same to subdue the separatists in Chechnya.


Second, governments may argue that international law does not apply when terrorism is at stake. For example, after 2001, U.S. authorities identified many suspected terrorists as “illegal combatants” and disregarded the Geneva protocols, which prohibit indefinite detention of prisoners of

war. For years, prisoners were kept at a U.S. military base at Guantanamo. This precedent caused serious domestic and international criticism of both the George W. Bush and Obama administrations.

Third, governments could use the *terrorism* label to settle personal scores with political or business opponents. By accusing a group or individuals of terrorist activities, a government can delegitimize them in the eyes of the courts and public opinion.

### WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

Can you suggest other examples of the actual or potential misuse of

 term *terrorism*? Did you see American civil liberties endangered by the federal government after 9/11?



Search the Web for “We are not terrorists” (in quotation marks). You will find an amazing diversity of quotes, speeches, and statements. Select five cases. What arguments do the authors of these statements use to separate themselves from terrorism? If they are not terrorists, what do they call themselves? Why do they need to defend their image, and to whom do they appeal?

in terrorism, keeping them in special prisons, such as at the U.S. base Guantanamo in Cuba, and even using torture to obtain information. Critics also claimed that the “Patriot Act,” a set of domestic counterterrorist policies signed by President George W. Bush in October 2001, limit civic freedoms at home. In 2013, new facts ignited the debate about the government’s role in a vast domestic surveillance program.

- Define political radicalism. Can political radicalism be nonviolent?
- How does terrorism differ from gangsterism and guerrilla warfare?

**CHECK YOUR  
KNOWLEDGE**

## How Terrorism Works

When we ask how terrorism works, we should not only look at methods, such as suicide bombing. We should look at assumptions and supposed justifications of terrorists.

### ASSUMPTIONS AND METHODS

Terrorists understand that they cannot defeat states and international coalitions in an open battle. Governments have intelligence, armed forces, and law-enforcement institutions. Therefore, they rely on unconventional methods to



cause fear among the population of a targeted country or a group of states (Chaliand and Blin, 2007). They rely on secrecy and the ability to keep their cells invisible from the governments. The Internet becomes an asset to terrorist groups because governments have little control over it (Horgan, 2009, 2).

Terrorist groups are often extremely difficult to infiltrate. Most are in reality *networks*, or loose collectives. Members of one group may not know members from others. Instead of building a formal hierarchical structure, they rely on loyalty and mutual surveillance. Their sense of collective involvement is reaffirmed by spiritual and material rewards for devotion—and merciless punishments for betrayal (Gunaratna, 2002).

Terrorist groups use violence or threats of violence to influence governments or key decision makers. Government officials are not always the direct targets. Terrorists often target civilians, including children, using random killings, bombings in public places, and attacks on television stations or hotels (Nacos, 2009). Everyone is potentially vulnerable. In September 2004, in the southern Russian city of Beslan, a terrorist group took more than one thousand hostages, including seven hundred children. The group was demanding, among other things, Russia's military withdrawal from the ethnic enclave of Chechnya. Russian officials in Moscow refused. As a result of the hectic rescue operation, more than three hundred hostages, mostly children, died.

Future terrorist attacks may attempt to use weapons of mass destruction (WMD): nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons. A small suitcase nuclear device in the hands of a terrorist can destroy New York, Washington, Moscow, Tokyo, or London. Preventing nuclear proliferation and a leak of nuclear know-how to terrorist organizations, therefore, remains a priority for the international community (Howard and Forest, 2008; D. Hoffman, 2010). The Internet and other communication networks add the possibility of **cyberterrorism**—paralyzing attacks online on political, financial, and economic centers. Threats may range from significant theft of data and disruption of computer operations to more deadly attacks that destroy entire systems and physical equipment (Gertz, 2011). Cyberterrorism poses a significant threat to a country's military capabilities by threatening its logistics network, stealing its operational plans, or obstructing its ability to deliver weapons on target. Even when the cyberterrorist is identified, it is difficult to retaliate (Lynn, 2010). We will address these threats later in the chapter. Table 7-1 summarizes the most common methods of terrorism.

The face of international terrorism changed irrevocably after September 2001. Before, terrorists usually relied on **coercion** and **extortion** to get what they wanted from governments—while promising not to use coercion in the future if their demands are satisfied. Negotiations between states and terrorists were possible (Bueno de Mesquita, 2005). Bin Laden and his associates created a new brand of terrorism: They aimed to cause a moral and political defeat to the West and rejected negotiations. It is still not clear if the Taliban just want to coerce the United States and NATO to withdraw from Afghanistan—or has more extreme goals and methods.

Terrorists look for publicity or *public exposure*. By committing an act of violence, a radical group is likely to attract the attention of millions. This is

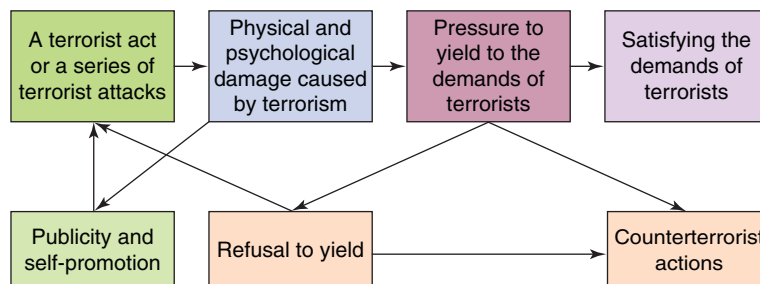
**TABLE 7-1 Methods of Contemporary Terrorism**

Methods	Examples
Attacks against civilians in public places	In 2005, a series of coordinated suicide attacks in London took the lives of fifty-six people. Prerecorded statements from the perpetrators claimed that the attacks were in response to UK participation in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.
Attacks against military targets	In October 2000, two suicide bombers killed seventeen U.S. sailors and damaged the Navy ship, USS <i>Cole</i> , in Aden Harbor in Yemen. The terrorist group al-Qaeda took responsibility for the attacks.
Hostage taking	On June 27, 1976, a plane on its way from Tel Aviv through Athens to Paris with 248 passengers was taken hostage and landed in Entebbe, Uganda. The terrorists demanded the release of their fellows—mostly Palestinians—from various prisons.
Cyberterrorism	In May 2007, Russian hackers became enraged by Estonia's decision to remove the monument to a Soviet soldier from World War II from a central square in Tallinn, the Estonian capital. A massive cyberattack paralyzed the Estonian government for days.

important for at least two reasons. First, the group may rapidly publicize its agenda to seek sympathy (Pape, 2003; Pillar, 2001). Second, public exposure often helps a terrorist group to recruit supporters, sponsors, and new members. Copycat terrorist acts may also follow (Coleman, 2004). Figure 7.2 summarizes the tactics of terrorism.

### THE “LOGIC” OF TERRORISM

Most terrorist groups use relatively similar arguments to justify their violence. Terrorism is explained as a method of *last resort*. Terrorism is portrayed as a desperate response to an acute problem. Once the source of injustice is



**FIGURE 7-2** How terrorism and counterterrorism work.

## DEBATE &gt; TERRORISM AND GLOBAL INTERACTIONS

A local terrorist act may become a global problem in a connected world because fear can more easily spread. Terrorism can disrupt international communications, airways, tourism, business, commerce, and other global networks.

**WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?**

Do you think that globalization—including ease of international

travel, internationalization of business, and stationing troops overseas—facilitates terrorism? If so, should states close their borders? After all, if no country has foreign entrepreneurs, tourists, and military forces abroad, terrorists no longer target those people. How would you decide?



An article from *The Washington Post* argues that targeting travel is, unfortunately, effective. Also read the article about the influence of terrorism on international tourist activities in *European Journal of Social Sciences*. Find the links on the companion website.

removed, then violence will end. Terrorists often argue for *collective responsibility*. If civilians die in a terrorist act, it is claimed, they paid the price for being on the side causing injustice. Osama bin Laden, in his *Letter to America* in 2002, claimed that those who died in terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, including Muslims, were guilty because they supported U.S. policies as taxpayers and consumers.

Finally, terrorism is justified as an act of *retaliation*. Terrorist groups often call their attacks a payback for grievances. The Marriott Hotel bombing in Pakistan in 2008 was an act of retaliation from local terrorist groups for Pakistan's cooperation with the United States. The two perpetrators of the 2013 terrorist act in Boston reportedly vented their grievances against U.S. foreign policy.

### ***Terrorism: In the Name of What?***

Before turning to terrorism, groups and individuals share certain goals. Such goals derive from *ideologies*, or comprehensive principles and beliefs. We briefly examine four major ideologies that inspired terrorists around the world: anarchism, radical Socialism, extreme nationalism, and religious fundamentalism. (See Table 7-2.)

#### **ANARCHISM**

As we saw in Chapter 2, **anarchism** seeks to create a borderless, peaceful society of free communes in which people generate and distribute wealth without government control. There are peaceful and violent types of anarchism. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, violent anarchists have used political assassinations as a means to reach political goals. After an act of terrorism, they believed, people would rise against injustice and then turn to anarchism. This never happened, despite assassinations of many world leaders by anarchists. Anarchism has always been fragmented and poorly organized. A less dangerous form of anarchism today is the radical antiglobalization movement.

**TABLE 7-2** Tactics and Goals of Terrorism Driven by Ideology

Ideology	Tactics of Terrorism	Goals of Terrorism
<b>Anarchism</b>	Acts against government officials and civilians to create panic and paralyze government and society.	Destruction of all state institutions. Creation of a self-governing society of free communes.
<b>Extreme Nationalism</b>	Acts against government officials and civilians of another nation to break their will. Acts against other ethnic groups.	Creation of a nation-state. The eviction of other ethnic groups.
<b>Radical Socialism</b>	Acts against governments, to unleash a revolution of masses.	A new society based on the abolition of private property and the destruction of privileged groups.
<b>Religious Fundamentalism</b>	Acts against those viewed as enemies of a religious order.	A religious revolution. A theocracy in one country or transnational religious order.

### EXTREME NATIONALISM

In the context of international relations, **nationalism** is an ideology of terrorists trying to create a nation-state. Nationalist militants have used terrorist methods for many years. In July 1914, in the Bosnian city Sarajevo, Serbian nationalists assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian (Habsburg) throne and his wife Sophia, thus triggering a harsh response from Austria. The failure of European governments to resolve this crisis resulted in World War I. Nationalism-motivated terrorism was predominant throughout the twentieth century. In the twenty-first century this brand of terrorism declined. One of the most active radical groups remains the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party). It continues its violent struggle (including terrorism) against the Turkish government to create a sovereign Kurdistan.

### RADICAL SOCIALISM

*Radical Socialism* seeks to destroy capitalism and liberal democracy in the name of social and economic equality (see Chapters 3 and 6). Radical Marxist groups used terrorist methods early in the twentieth century. During decolonization in the 1950s and 1960s, many radical Socialist groups in Latin America and Africa used terrorism and targeted authoritarian governments, which often relied on Western support. Ernesto Che Guevara (1928–1967), an Argentinean doctor, believed that random acts of deadly violence would spark revolutions across Latin America. Another Socialist, Abimael Guzmán, a former university professor in Peru, formed a radical Maoist group called Shining Path (*Sendero Luminoso*) that began a bloody campaign of terror against government

Masked supporters demonstrate by waving various PKK flags and images of jailed Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan, left, in the Turkish city of Diyarbakir, 2013. The group is responsible for one of the world's bloodiest resistances, lasting nearly 30 years and costing tens of thousands of lives.



institutions and officials (Burt, 2009). Government forces in Bolivia tracked down, captured, and killed Guevara in 1967. Guzmán was captured and imprisoned for life in Peru in 1992.

In the 1970s another spike of Marxism-inspired terrorism occurred in Europe: the *Red Army Faction* (RAF) in West Germany and the Red Brigades (*Brigate Rosse*) in Italy targeted bankers and government officials to create instability and chaos. In 1978, Italian terrorists kidnapped and killed former prime minister Aldo Moro. Gradually, the wave of terrorism abated. Some of its leaders, including RAF's founder Ulrike Meinhof, committed suicide. Others were killed or captured. Only a few Socialist groups today use terrorism as a method of struggle against capitalism.

### RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM

**Religious fundamentalism** is a set of beliefs and behaviors based on strict adherence to religious principles. Fundamentalist groups have had a long history of terrorism in India and Pakistan. Many terrorist organizations are inspired by radical and politicized interpretations of religion. A number of Islamic groups have organized terrorist acts to advance their political agenda—the creation of an Islamic state. In recent years, Salafism, a radical version of Islam, has inspired anti-Russian guerrillas in Northern Caucasus (Hahn, 2012). *Al-Qaeda*, an international underground network, wants the establishment of a global Muslim state governed by the Sharia law (Desai, 2007). *Jemaah Islamiyah* is a Southeast Asian radical organization attempting to establish an Islamic state to include Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and the southern Philippines. The *Taliban* is a Sunni political movement operating primarily in Afghanistan and Pakistan and using both terrorism and insurgency to build



an Islamic state in Afghanistan. *Hamas* is a political movement in Palestine hoping to create an independent Islamic Palestine; it is still formally committed to destroy Israel as a state. This group, especially its military wing, has been engaged in violence and terrorism. *Hezbollah* is a Shiite group operating from Lebanon and targeting Israel and its supporters. (Both Sunnis and Shiites are different branches of Islam.) Radical groups inspired by Buddhism appeared in Myanmar (Beech, 2013).

This brief classification does not exhaust the long list of beliefs that can motivate terrorists. Even a belief in the need to protect nature can move some individuals to violence, or “ecoterrorism” (as we will see in Chapter 8).

- Explain the strategic goals of anarchism, Socialism, nationalism, and religious fundamentalism, especially Islamist groups. Can their goals be achieved by peaceful means?

### CHECK YOUR KNOWLEDGE

## DEBATE > ASSUMPTIONS AND MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT TERRORISM, RADICALISM, AND VIOLENT GROUPS

Labels can be misleading. Test yourself on these claims: true or false?

“Almost every fundamentalist or radical group supports terrorism.” *False*. Many fundamentalist groups reject violence. Most nationalist or Socialist groups also categorically rejected terrorist methods.

“Radical groups disagree about the methods they use.” *True*. It is important to distinguish moderate

and nonviolent wings in any movement from more radical wings.

“Violent groups don’t change.” *False*. Some groups abandon terrorism for the sake of international legitimacy. Nationalists often shift from violence to negotiations if they see their ultimate goal, the creation of a nation-state, acknowledged by the international community.

### WHAT’S YOUR VIEW?

Do your own investigation and provide examples of political radicalism and fundamentalism that reject violence.



Go to the companion website to learn about the Hezbollah, or the Party of God, and discuss whether terrorist organizations change over time—and if so, how.

## How Do We Study It?

### The Realist View of Terrorism

Understanding international terrorism has been a challenge to realists. First, the main focus of realism is not on informal networks, but on power relations among sovereign states. Second, realism’s models for decision-making often do not take into account the ideological or religious motivations that drive terrorist networks. Still, realism’s framework of *power balance* and *asymmetrical threats* is useful in explaining international terrorism. Also, realism justifies the preventive use of force to neutralize terrorist threats.

### POWER BALANCE

Nonstate actors can disrupt the balance of power much like states. Inaction in response to terrorism, realists argue, may weaken a targeted state's power and encourage terrorist groups to strike again. Terrorism may thus be used as a powerful tool of international destabilization.

Let's return to the 1914 Sarajevo assassination. The Serbian nationalists who killed Archduke Ferdinand did not act officially on behalf of Serbia, and the Serbian government condemned the terrorist act. However, the Austrian government in Vienna should have taken swift action to punish the Serbs because otherwise it would have encouraged Serbia, and its ally Russia, to reduce the influence of Austria-Hungary in Europe and in the Balkans. So Vienna made the fateful decision to declare war on Serbia. An unstable power balance in Europe, divided into two blocs, contributed to the decision of other countries—Russia, then Germany, and then France and the United Kingdom—to join the war. A nonstate group of nationalists had interfered in an international power balance and achieved an extraordinary result.

### ASYMMETRICAL THREATS AND PREVENTIVE ACTIONS

Realism teaches that in a stable world, there is a *symmetry*, or balance of forces and threats: An attack by one state could cause a response from other states, and a balance is restored. Terrorism, however, poses an **asymmetrical threat** to sovereign states (Cordesman, 2002). Because terrorists do not represent a state, countries may find it difficult to identify the perpetrators and retaliate effectively. Terrorist groups therefore try to provoke governments to overreact or launch futile responses. Some say that the U.S. reaction to the 9/11 attacks was also exaggerated and led to a costly “war on terror” without any definite outcome.

International terrorism may destabilize a balance of forces in unpredictable ways: as you can see, the Serbian terrorists provoked European states to go to war that destroyed the existing international order. Realism maintains that

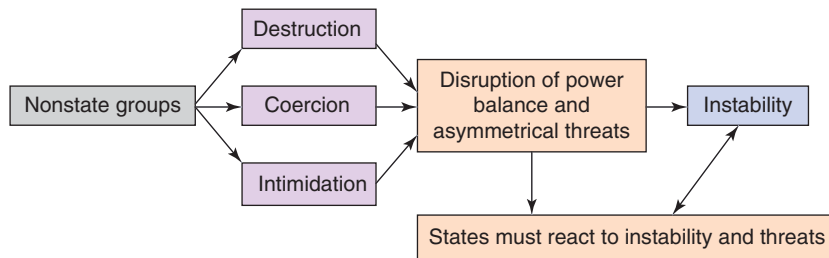
#### DEBATE > POWER BALANCE AND TERRORIST ATTACKS IN 1914 AND 2001

Terrorist acts in Sarajevo in 1914 and on September 11, 2001, in the United States are nearly a hundred years apart yet they seem to share some similarities in terms of their international dynamics and consequences. In both cases, nonstate groups committed extraordinary acts of violence. Both Austria-Hungary and the United States went to war against the countries

(Serbia and Afghanistan, respectively) harboring terrorists. Both wars disrupted the power balance: in Europe and in the Persian Gulf. After the United States destroyed Saddam Hussein's Iraq, Iran remained the only regional power. We can see why states use military power in response to terrorist acts but also why the result of their actions is often unpredictable.

#### WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

Do you think that the United States' government responding to the terrorist attacks of 2001 cared about global balance of power? Would the U.S. standing in the world have weakened if it had not gone to war against the Taliban?



**FIGURE 7-3** Terrorism from the realist perspective.

responses to a terrorist act can drag various forces into a wider conflict, as in Europe in 1914. (See Figure 7.3.)

In the context of asymmetrical threats, the key realist idea of international security based on deterrence (Chapter 4) becomes essentially ineffective. Because states cannot effectively retaliate against terrorism in “an eye for an eye” fashion, they should instead engage in preventive and punishing measures. States should use force preventively, whenever a verifiable evidence of an imminent terrorist threat emerges. Such realist logic influenced decision-making of the Bush Administration when it decided to attack Iraq in 2003. The United States has failed to find WMD in Iraq and has not discovered a connection between Saddam Hussein and terrorist networks. Still, the realist logic prevailed in guiding Washington’s actions. The UN High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, appointed by the General Secretary Kofi Annan, also reported in 2004 that countries may conceivably justify the use of force, “not just reactively but preventively and before a latent threat becomes imminent” (United Nations, 2004).

### COUNTERTERRORISM

Realist strategies for counterterrorism include *monitoring* and *prevention*. Intelligence gathering ranges from electronic monitoring to infiltration into terrorist organizations. In the United States, more than eight hundred information technology companies were not long ago involved in counterterrorism intelligence (Priest and Arkin, 2010b; 2011). These policies also include elaborate measures to prevent terrorist groups from acquiring sophisticated military technologies, including WMD.

Other policies are *preemptive* and *punitive*. **Preemptive policies** take action against terrorists before they strike. These policies range from the physical elimination of groups to the disruption of their financial operations. Since 2001 scores of al-Qaeda militants have been detained or killed—mostly by unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), commonly known as drones. From the realist viewpoint, such actions do not violate other countries’ sovereignty for two reasons. First, governments often secretly grant permission for such actions. Second, some governments, such as in Pakistan, Sudan, or Afghanistan, do not exercise full control over their territory.

Another set of policies is called *homeland security*, after the American example. The September 11 attacks required a costly refurbishing and expansion of the U.S. government. New government structures were created to increase

TABLE 7-3 Counterterrorist Policies: Realist Targets and Methods

Targets	Methods: Monitoring, Preemption, and Homeland Security
Camps and other facilities used for training or to stage a terrorist attack	Political pressure on governments where such facilities exist; direct military strikes against camps or facilities
Financial assets of suspected terrorists	Confiscation, blocking, or control of assets used to support international terrorism
Terrorist networks and cells	Search and surveillance; operations against the existing networks; tougher immigration policies
Weapons of mass destruction and delivery systems	Safeguarding the sites where WMD are stored; protection of technologies to prevent their use by terrorists; ensuring nonproliferation of WMD beyond current nuclear states

the control of borders and immigration, screen millions of visitors, monitor electronic communications, and investigate suspects. After 2001 and particularly after the 2004 bombing in Madrid and the 2005 bombing in London, most governments of the European Union implemented tougher immigration policies, deportation procedures, and other legal restrictions to monitor the flow of people through EU borders. These policies were aimed at individuals and organizations suspected of helping terrorist organizations, particularly in the Middle East and Central Asia. (See Table 7-3.)

A bus destroyed by the July 2005 terrorist attack in London. This attack along with others in the London underground took the lives of more than 50 people. The British government soon tightened security and immigration procedures, most of which are still in place today.



In summary, realism assumes that states identify and eliminate the physical and organizational infrastructure of international terrorism. Realists also stand for punitive military operations against states that harbor terrorists. There should be pressure on states that provide financial and political support to terrorism. The combination of preventive measures and force should take incentive from the terrorist hands and eventually weaken them.

How can we measure the effectiveness of realist policies? Most obviously, the absence of new terrorist attacks may indicate that these policies have worked. There are, however, both obvious and hidden side effects. These include the high financial costs of counterterrorism, its impact on the economy, loss of individual freedoms, and the impact on democratic governance itself. We will address these issues later in this chapter.

### ***The Liberal View of Terrorism***

To understand terrorism, liberalism argues, we have to examine the conditions that breed political radicalism. Terrorism cannot be defeated by military means alone. It takes understanding the causes of terrorism and using legal means of international cooperation to defeat it. States combating terrorism are likely to succeed when they act together to create a better international environment and engage international institutions and nonstate actors.

#### **UNDERSTANDING CAUSES OF TERRORISM**

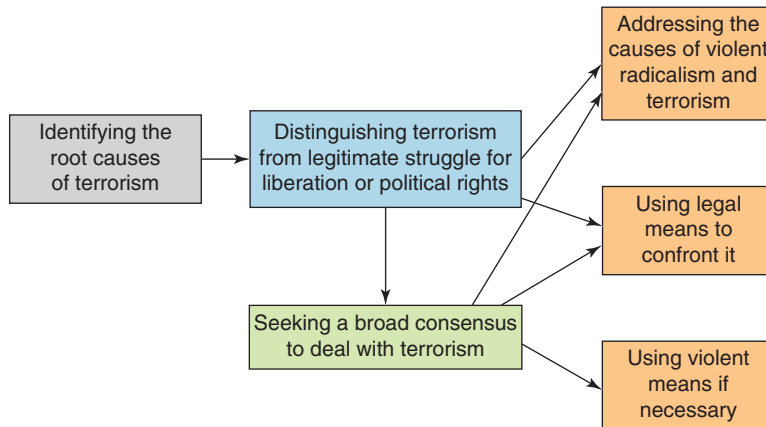
A key question is why terrorism takes place. Liberalism treats terrorism as a complex phenomenon exploiting acute social and political problems. This view finds support in a 1977 UN resolution stating that economic and social problems cause some people to turn to terrorism. This was not a justification of terrorism, but an attempt to explain it.

The logic of liberalism is straightforward: People turn to terrorism for a reason, even if it appears to be a distorted one. Corruption and nepotism in high offices, chronic unemployment, the injustices of daily lives, and profound inefficiency in addressing social problems all contribute to radicalism. Foreign occupation is another serious cause. From the liberal point of view, policies that address these causes can dry up the reservoir of violent radicalism and isolate terrorists from the rest of the population that may justify the terrorists' activities. It takes time and patience to implement such policies.

#### **CRIMINALIZING TERRORISM**

In a liberal point of view, in what is called the **criminalization of terrorism**, a democratic society should not apply one set of legal rules for its own citizens and another set for groups labeled terrorists. The main point is that illegal violent actions should not cause illegal counteractions. International law can be used in addition to domestic laws to qualify terrorist actions as crimes and deal with them using a broad domestic and international consensus (Schultz, 2004). If legal rules are not in place, they have to be set. Inside their countries, governments should not limit the rights of law-abiding citizens and should draw a clear line between monitoring terrorist activities and the surveillance of people's daily activities. They should coordinate their policies and rely on





**FIGURE 7-4** Terrorism from the liberal perspective.

international law against terrorist groups and their sponsors. The rule of law, in the end, is the best way to confront the lawlessness that is the breeding ground of radicalism and terrorism. (Figure 7.4 shows the steps in analyzing terrorism from the liberal perspective and choosing the appropriate counterterrorism option).

#### **LIBERALISM AND COUNTERTERRORISM**

Supporters of the liberal view do not promise quick results. Rather, they emphasize gradual improvements. They do not reject military actions against known terrorist groups and individuals. The difference between the liberal

**TABLE 7-4** Fighting International Terrorism: The Liberal Perspective

Target	Method of Handling International Terrorism
Violent radical groups	Deterrence by propaganda and legal policies. Differentiation and marginalization of extremists. Attempts to negotiate with others.
Conditions and root causes of terrorism	The improvement of social and economic conditions of the population, reduction of potential social support for radical groups.
Terrorist propaganda, justified by nationalist and other legitimate goals	International condemnation of terrorism, outlawing groups that resort to terrorist methods. Support of national liberation and other legitimate causes through international organizations.
Anti-Western radicalism, especially Islamic fundamentalism	Educational campaigns. Cooperation with nonextremist Islamic and other religious organizations. Coordination of policies with local authorities.

and realist approaches is in the priorities they assign to negotiations, legal means, and the use of force.

Any action against terrorist groups should be strictly legitimate. It must be conducted in accordance with international law and include, whenever possible, international cooperation. Counterterrorist measures should be a combination of negotiations, law-enforcement operations, and military actions (if necessary)—all under the guidance of local and international rules. Such policies should legitimize counterterrorism.

Counterterrorism should include strategic cooperation between states, international organizations, and NGOs (Cronin, 2002). *Public diplomacy*, or the achievement of policy goals by engagement with the local communities and elements of civil society, should become an efficient form of counterterrorism. Public diplomacy seeks to separate terrorist and other radical organizations from their popular base (Simon and Martini, 2004).

Recent American experience with counterinsurgency (COIN) in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2006–2013 provided additional facts and new arguments for the liberal approach. In Iraq a combination of military power and public diplomacy eventually led to the end of a civil war between the Sunnis and the Shiites. Foreign terrorist groups were either destroyed or driven away with the help of local communities. At the same time, in Afghanistan, COIN operations essentially failed. The Taliban was a homegrown movement and its fighters had a safe haven in neighboring Pakistan. Abject poverty and rampant corruption played a negative political role. Finally, the mountainous terrain was too difficult to control (Kaplan, 2012). These facts suggest that the liberal principles should not be applied without considering the actual social, cultural, and geographical factors.

Can democratic peace theory help in explaining terrorism and counterterrorism? It is obvious that developed democracies do not become “breeding grounds” of terrorists. Most of the al-Qaeda fighters came from the authoritarian and corrupt Middle East societies, above all Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Egypt. Yet we still do not know how exactly democratization helps in defeating terrorism. It may be, as the critics of democratic peace theory maintain (see Chapter 2) that the process of democratic transition may actually lead to the temporary growth of discontent, ideological clashes, and terrorism. We will discuss this argument in more detail later in this chapter.

- What is public diplomacy in combating terrorism?
- What is the main point of the criminalization of terrorism?

**CHECK YOUR  
KNOWLEDGE**

### ***The Constructivist and Other Views of Terrorism***

Other approaches focus on different interpretations of terrorism’s causes and suggest new approaches to counterterrorism. These include constructivism and conflict theories.