

# International Terrorism and the World-System\*

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*Theories of international terrorism are reviewed. It then is noted that waves of terrorism appear in semiperipheral zones of the world-system during pulsations of globalization when the dominant state is in decline. Finally, how these and other factors might combine to suggest a model of terrorism's role in the cyclical undulations of the world-system is suggested.*

At present there is little sociology of terrorism, whether in the form of theory or research. There are, no doubt, numerous reasons for this. For one, it is a scattered and random event performed by clandestine groups of often very small numbers. As such, it is hard to gather data and to theorize or to study in a systematic fashion. Terrorism also seems to come and go in world history without having any long-term effects, making it seem a less significant agent of social change and hence of less interest to sociologists. The same might be said for social movements in general, but whether it is working-class movements and eventual passage of wage laws or civil rights movements and passage of civil rights laws (McAdam and Su 2002), since Karl Marx debated Mikhail Bakunin in the 1840s there has been a sociological bias toward studying social movements or protest organizations rather than terrorist events and organizations.

But the events of September 11, 2001, may have changed that, and this paper is an attempt to provide some ideas that might help develop a theoretical framework for understanding terrorist activity by situating it within the larger dynamics of the global system.

We begin with definitions: What does one mean by *terrorism*, for as often is said, one person's terrorist is another's freedom fighter? Let us begin at the broadest sense of terrorism and then work toward something more specific. There is *terrorism* the adjective, which can be applied to any number of social groupings: men terrorize women; adults terrorize children; humans terrorize animals; and so on. Within this we can separate terrorist tactics used by states and social groups. State terrorism includes everything from the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution; through the Stalinist purges, trials, and camps; to the Allied bombing of Dresden to terrorize the German population during World War II. State terrorism is important and should be studied and theorized, but it is not the focus here. Instead, we focus upon *terrorism* by subnational or transnational nongovernmental groups, defining it as "the premeditated use of violence by a nonstate group to obtain a political, religious, or social objective through fear or intimidation directed at a large audience." Our concern here is with terrorism that is international, where the perpetrator, target group, or national locale of the incident involves at least two different

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countries.<sup>1</sup> By this definition, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's assassination of Anwar Sadat is domestic terrorism; the al-Qaeda attack on the World Trade Center (WTC) on September 11, 2001, is international terrorism; so are the murders of three American missionaries in Yemen by a Yemeni national and the kidnapping and murders of Israeli athletes by the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) at the 1972 Munich Olympics. However, by our definition suicide bombings by Palestinians that target and take place in Israel are domestic rather than international terrorist acts.

Because transnational, international, or global terrorism involves two or more countries, it seems best approached from a world-systemic or globological framework (Bergesen 1990). The methodological point here is analogous to Durkheim's (1964) classic understanding of social events as distinct collective realities that exist as *sui generis* social facts. International, or global, terrorism is in that sense a *sui generis* globological fact and following the Durkheimian maxim that social facts should have sociological explanations, global facts (international terrorism) should have a globological explanation.

## LEVELS OF ANALYSIS IN THEORIES OF INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

But a globological perspective is not the only theoretical perspective that can be taken, and before turning to the specifics of our ideas we begin by reviewing various levels of analysis at which one might construct an explanatory theory of terrorist events, using the September 11 attack as an example.

### *Individual Level*

Theories can be constructed, or if already existing, can be applied, to the individual terrorist—to try to understand Osama bin Laden or Ayman al-Zawahiri or to speculate on what is going on in the mind of suicide bombers. One also can theorize the interests, motives, and personalities of a variety of actors, from George W. Bush to Tony Blair to Osama bin Laden. At this level of analysis, there is a vast literature on the psychology of terrorists (see the extensive review in Hudson 1999).

### *Group and Social Movement*

Explanatory theories also can be moved up a notch to focus upon collections of individuals, such as terrorist organizations, cells, or fundamentalist religious-based social movements. Speculation here ranges from trying to understand how perpetrators frame their issues, grievances, tactics, recruitment, and training practices to organizational analyses of network and other forms of terrorist organization (Arguilla and Ronfeldt 2001). Terrorist organizations also can be studied in a

<sup>1</sup>Not all terrorism is international, of course, but from an historical perspective both domestic and international terrorism seem endemic to organized social life, appearing and reappearing throughout history. Waves of terrorism have been documented in the first century CE with the Zealots-Sicarii, a Jewish group involved in assassinations and poisonings of Romans occupying Palestine, and with the Assassins, who operated in 11th- to 13th-century Persia and Syria, assassinating political and religious leaders (Lacqueur 1999; Stern 1999:15). The modern meaning of the term *terrorism* is associated with the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution of the 18th century, and Rapoport (1999, 2001) speaks of modern terrorist waves since the 1870s, with the first being the one associated with anarchists and social revolutionaries in the late 19th century.

fashion similar to social movement organizations (SMOs) employing theories about resource mobilization, frame analysis, political action opportunity structures, and cycles of violence (McAdam 1982; Snow and Benford 1992; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001).

At present, the brunt of the social-movement and political-violence literature tends to meld terrorist acts in with other forms of collective violence. Gurr (1990), for instance, codes sporadic terrorism, political banditry, and unsuccessful coups in one category and successful coups and campaigns of terrorism in another. Terrorism incidents are not coded separately. Likewise Tilly (2002a, 2002b) conceptually mixes terrorist incidents in with other forms of “violent claim making,” seeing them as a form of “coordinated destruction” along with other forms such as “lethal contests” and “campaigns of annihilation,” while White (1993:576) codes terrorist incidents in Northern Ireland as “political violence,” and Koopmans (1993:640), in what seems clearly to be terrorist events, speaks of acts of “severe and unusually conspiratorial violence directed against property (arson, bombings, sabotage) or people (political murders, kidnapping)” as “heavy violence.”

Terrorism is certainly a form of political violence, coordinated destruction, and heavy violence, but so are other collective events, such as race riots, some protest events, or violent encounters between management and labor. But they are seen as their own form of collective violence, with their own causal logics and theoretical linkages to their broader social environment. Terrorist events have yet to attain this status, as we have seen, being collapsed into a more general category of collective or political violence. Terrorist events are value laden, and their meaning often lies in the eye of the beholder (the maxim that one person’s terrorist is the other’s freedom fighter), but the same was true of the race riot, the labor strike, the protest event, the mob, and the crowd. But each now is considered its own generic form of collective, or political, violence, and with increased research efforts terrorism no doubt someday will be considered the same way.

### *National Level*

A third level would be to move the center of analysis up to the society, nation, or state, in, for instance, trying to understand state policies and financial support that go to terrorist groups, or on the other side, inquiring into the policies of states that might make them targets of terrorism. For example, Friedman (2001) argues the following about the contradictory policies of many Arab-Islamic states:

The governing bargain is that the regimes get to stay in power forever and the mullahs get a monopoly on religious practice and education forever. ... This bargain lasted all these years because oil money, or U.S. or Soviet aid, enabled many Arab-Muslim countries to survive without opening their economies or modernizing their education systems. But as oil revenues have declined and the population of young people seeking jobs has exploded, this bargain can’t hold much longer. These countries can’t survive without opening up to global investment, the Internet, modern education and emancipation of their women ... But the more they do that, the more threatened the religious feel. (2001:A23)

Friedman goes on to say that this increasingly untenable disjuncture between the state and culture/religious institutions has led some extreme groups to try to break

this compact by overthrowing their secular regimes (e.g., the assassination of Egyptian president Anwar el-Sadat in 1981 by Islamic fundamentalists). But by and large the terrorists' groups were suppressed domestically, and some, like al-Qaeda, moved abroad to be centered in more hospitable locales such as Afghanistan. The locus of attacks also shifted toward countries like the United States, one of the principal supporters of autocratic regimes such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

### *The Present Historical Period*

If individuals are nested within groups/social movements, and they within societies/states, then it also is true that states constitute part of particular historical periods of time. Some have suggested that in today's historical situation the Islamic world needs something equivalent to the Protestant Reformation. Friedman (2002) argues that the Reformation welded Christianity and modernity and what made this stick was when the "wealthy princes" came to back the reformers; that this is not the case in the Muslim world today, where "the wealthiest princes, like Saudi Arabia's, are funding antimodern schools from Pakistan to Bosnia, while the dictators pay off the anti-modern mullahs . . ." (2000:105).

### *A Comparison to a Past Period*

One gets closer and closer to a distinctly globological analysis when past incidents can be identified that seem similar to those of the present period, suggesting something recurring, hence systematic, and since international, something of the systematic logic of the international system. An earlier instance of Islamic fundamentalism and attack against the reigning hegemony can be found in the comparison of bin Laden, Islamic fundamentalism, and anger against the United States with the fundamentalist Islamic revolt against British rule in the Sudan in the 1890s. Here Mohammed Ahmed proclaimed himself as the second great prophet of Islam, the Mahdi and, in an interesting analogy with bin Laden's desire to drive the Americans out of Saudi Arabia, claimed he was going to drive the British out of the Sudan. General Charles Gordon was sent to Khartoum to evacuate British forces but was surrounded by forces of the Mahdi, and the British were all killed. Later the reconquest of the Sudan was begun, and the analogy with the American pursuit of al-Qaeda in Central Asia has not been lost on commentators. "As with Afghanistan today, there was great concern that the Sudan was too forbidding and remote for a successful military campaign, and there were many public worries that the British were heading for yet another debacle in the desert" (Hayward 2001). The theoretical import of comparisons such as these increase when not only the events but also the surrounding international situation seems similar, and in this regard there appears to be a similarity between the international situation today and the one at the time of the anarchist terrorist wave of 1880–1914.

Following incidents such as the bombing of the WTC in 1993, U.S. embassies in Africa in 1998, and the attacks on the Pentagon and WTC in 2001, the conventional wisdom of researchers and commentators on terrorism was that the world had entered a new phase since the 1990s that departed dramatically from what had gone before. It variously was called the "new terrorism" (Lesser et al. 1999; Jenkins 2001); or spoken of as involving "new types of post-cold war terrorists" (Hudson

1999:5); or “a new breed of terrorist” (Stern 1999:8); or “new generation of terrorists” (Hoffman 1999); or “terror in the mind of God” (Jurgensmeyer 2000); or a “clash of fundamentalisms” (Ali 2002); or simply a new “wave” of terrorism (Rapoport, 1999, 2001).

In these analyses terrorism seemed to be changing in some of the following ways.

**Terrorist organizations shift toward a more network form.** Newer terrorist organizations seemed to have moved away from the earlier model of professionally trained terrorists operating within a hierarchical organization with a central command chain and toward a more loosely coupled form of organization with a less clear organizational structure. Similarly, whereas from the 1960s through the 1980s groups more clearly were bound nationally (German, Japanese, Italian, Spanish, Irish, Palestinian, and so forth), more recent organizations like al-Qaeda have members from multiple nationalities and organizational sites outside the leadership’s country of origin.

**The identity of terrorist organizations becomes more difficult to identify.** Terrorist organizations also seem to identify themselves or to claim responsibility for specific acts less often, such as the bombing of the U.S. embassies in Africa or the events of September 11, which while purportedly organized by bin Laden and al-Qaeda, never clearly were claimed by that organization. This is in contrast with earlier terrorist organizations, which were much more clear in taking responsibility for their actions and defining who they were, often with elaborate radical political ideologies.

**Terrorist demands become more vague, hazy, and nonexistent.** Earlier terrorist demands often were quite specific: Black September demanded the release of comrades when they attacked Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics; the Irish Republican Army (IRA) want the British out of Northern Ireland; the PLO wants the Israelis out of the West Bank; and Basque independence is a clear desire of Euskadi Ta AsKaTasuna (ETA).

Similarly, the Marxist/radical/left logic behind earlier attacks on businessmen, diplomats, and so forth also were well known. In contrast, there were no demands surrounding the 1998 U.S. embassy attacks or the events of September 11.

**Terrorist ideologies become more religious.** What has been called the new religious terrorism or holy terrorism reflects the increasing prevalence of religion in the ideology of terrorist organizations, with the most notable being Islamic fundamentalism, or political Islam, and also including Christian fundamentalism (antiabortion terrorism); Messianic Zionism (behind Yitzhak Rabin’s assassination); or the religious sect Aum Shinrikyo, a Japanese terrorist group that released poisonous gas in a Tokyo subway in 1995. There also seems to be an increase in groups with more vague, millennial, and religious ideologies than earlier radical groups such as the German Red Army Faction, the Italian Red Brigades, or the Japanese Red Army.

**Terrorist targets are dispersed more globally.** Where international terrorism of the 1960s and 1970s was centered largely in Europe and the Middle East, by the 1990s it had moved to Africa (1998 attack on U.S. embassies); Argentina (1992 truck bombing of Israeli embassy and 1994 bombing of a Jewish Community Center); and the U.S. mainland proper (1993 WTC bombing and 2001 WTC/Pentagon suicide airplane attacks).

**Terrorist violence becomes more indiscriminate.** Along with a geographical dispersion of targets, there seems to be a move away from specific targets, for instance as when hundreds of civilian Kenyan and Tanzanian embassy employees and passersby were killed to achieve the objective of bombing the U.S. embassy. The 1993 and 2001 attacks of the WTC were also examples of more indiscriminate targets, as opposed to earlier skyjacking of a national airline's plane in order to attain specific demands or the kidnapping a particular politician (such as Aldo Moro by the Italian Red Brigades).

If one reflects for a moment upon these changes, many of them suggest the process of globalization (Robertson 1992; Sklair 1995; Sassen 1998; Boli and Thomas 1999; Tomlinson 1999; Barber 2001; Hoffman 2002; Tilly 2002c), raising the question of whether terrorism, like other economic, cultural, and political aspects of life also is globalizing? That is, arguments about terrorist organizational forms becoming more network-like and multinational in locale and membership remind of ideas about new global network forms of business organizations and arguments about ideologies and demands becoming less nationally specific are reminiscent of theories of how globalization involves cultural deterritorialization (Meyer et al. 1997; Tomlinson 1999). Finally, arguments about a growing dispersion and indiscriminateness of terrorist violence also express a disregard for national boundaries and, as such, a growing global, as opposed to national, character of terrorism.

## GLOBALIZATION/TERRORISM

Some scholars interpret the link between globalization and terrorism in a causal fashion: globalization generates a backlash or resistance that can take the form of terrorist attacks on national powers in the forefront of the globalization processes. In this regard, some see terrorism as a defensive, reactionary, solidaristic movement against global forces of cultural and economic change (Hoffman 2002). Barber (2001:xii) sees terrorism as fostered by a "disintegral tribalism" and "reactionary fundamentalism" created by the expansion of "integrative modernization" and "aggressive economic and cultural globalization." This is the same general theoretical logic as Tilly's (1978) classic explanation of earlier European collective violence as a defensive reaction to forces of modernization and rapid social change. Substitute globalization for modernization/social change, and the Tilly hypothesis is reborn in Barber's (2001) "McWorld versus *jihad*" thesis. Industrialization then and globalization now involve integration into a larger web of economic transactions that threatens local authority and sense of place. The result is defensive, reactionary

mobilization, manifested in European food riots then and Middle Eastern terrorism now.

### *World-System Theory*

While world-system theorists normally are concerned with questions of development and underdevelopment, they have advanced similar ideas (Sassen 1998). Chase-Dunn and Boswell (2002:2) speak of the “reactionary force” of international terrorism as an antisystemic element or “globalization backlash”; Ali (2002:312) believes Islamic terrorists view religion as an alternative to the “universal regime of neoliberalism.” Jurgensmeyer (2000) links the disruption of globalization with defensive reactions that often take a religious character, and when that reaction is terrorism, it can take the form of fundamentalist Arab-Islamic terrorist organizations.

### *World-Society/Polity Theory*

While world-society theorists (Soysal 1994; Meyer et al. 1997; Ramirez, Soysal, and Shanahan 1997; Boli and Thomas 1999; Frank, Hironaka, and Schofer 2000) have not addressed the issue of international terrorism directly, they have documented the continued expansion of Western originated cultural models of rationalized action and universal standards during the same period that we observe a rise in international terrorism. To the extent that there is a possible causal relationship, world-society theory’s top-down model of the intrusion of the world-polity’s global standards, expectations, norms, and definitions of reality also might generate defensive backlash that might, under some circumstances, take the form of international terrorism. Their model works in a complex way when it comes to predicting rates of international terrorism. It would seem that the growth in world society provides a generalized empowerment for international action on the basis that social existence is global existence and that social problems are global problems.<sup>2</sup> The expansion of global society should empower action across the globe as a distinctly globological effect, which means that individuals in Latin America suffering from the side effects of economic globalization should feel just as globally empowered to engage in international backlash terrorism as those of the Arab-Islamic Middle East. But this does not seem to be the case; there is not as much international terrorism emanating from Latin America as from the Middle East, yet both are or should be globally empowered (world-society effect) and angry (globalization creates resistance effect). But the anger seems to be turned inward in Latin America and outward in the Middle East. What accounts for differences of response? Relative openness, democracy, representational institutions, and levels of functioning intermediary social organization may absorb, channel, or somehow provide outlets for the tensions and anger set off by globalization. Their anger is channeled into electoral politics, demonstrations, social movements, and domestic terrorism; in the more autocratic Arab-Islamic regimes, dissent is suppressed more often, and there are fewer opportunities for its expression within the institutionalized political opportunity structures of those states. As a result, given the

<sup>2</sup>“Osama bin Laden declared war on the United States in the late 1990s. After he organized the bombing of two American embassies in Africa, the U.S. Air Force retaliated with a cruise missile attack on his bases in Afghanistan as though he were another nation-state. Think about that: on one day in 1998, the United States fired 75 cruise missiles at bin Laden. The United States fired 75 cruise missiles, at \$1 million apiece, at a person! That was the first battle in history between a superpower and a super-empowered angry man” (Friedman 2002:6).

same level of global empowerment, the anger is turned outward to take the form of international terrorism more often than in Latin America. There is also no doubt something of a curvilinear effect with linkages to world-society. They empower and, given grievances, would have a positive effect upon contentious acts like international terrorism. But continued linkage into world-society also would seem to have an integrative effect and thereby would dampen terrorism rates, yielding an overall curvilinear relationship between linkages to world-society and rates of international terrorism.

### *Blowback Theory*

Crenshaw (2001:425) argues that “terrorism should be seen as a strategic reaction to American power,” an idea associated with Johnson’s (2000) “blowback” thesis. In this view, the presence of empires—both at the end of the last century and today—and the analogous unipolar military position of the United States today (Brooks and Wohlforth 2002) provoke resistance in the form of terrorism. Johnson (2000) notes that the Russian, Ottoman, and Habsburg Empires—which controlled multiple ethnic, religious, and national peoples—led to a backlash, or blowback, by Serb, Macedonian, and Bosnian terrorist organizations (the Black Hand, Young Bosnia, Narodnaya Volya). By analogy the powerful global position of the United States, particularly in its role of propping up repressive undemocratic regimes, constitutes something of a similar condition with Arab-Islamic terrorism as a result. The causal mechanism here is that the projection of military power plants seeds of later terrorist reactions, as “retaliation for previous American imperial actions” (Johnson 2000:9).

### AN EARLIER WAVE OF TERRORISM

While globalization is for many a causal variable generating backlash and resistance, there also have been earlier waves of globalization (Chase-Dunn, Kawano, and Brewer 2000). If terrorism and globalization appear together today, it is possible that terrorism and globalization co-appeared during an earlier period that ran from the 1880s to 1914. Associated with the idea of “propaganda by deed,” Russian, Italian, Spanish, French, American, Serbian, and Macedonian terrorists were involved in a period of assassination and bomb throwing from the Russian and Ottoman Empires to the east through the Austrian Empire and Western Europe to the United States in the west. In Serbia, there was the Black Hand; in Russia, Narodnaya Volya, or People’s Will; among Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs, the Young Bosnians and the Narodna Obrana, or the People’s Defense (Hoffman 1999). Terrorists from one country also killed people from another. In 1892 the Italian Angiolillo assassinated the Spanish prime minister; in 1894 the Italian Santo Jeronimo Caseiro assassinated French president Carnot; in 1898 the Italian Luigi Luccheni assassinated Empress Elizabeth of Austria; and in 1914 the Bosnia Serb Princip assassinated the Austrian Archduke Francis Ferdinand (Joll 1964). While the contemporary period is known as one of “international terrorism,” there are clear grounds for considering the anarchist period as one that also had international or global aspects in that terrorism appeared in different parts of the world and involved crossing national boundaries for many attacks. This possible similarity with today’s terrorism has not gone unnoticed, as there are scholars who suggest that recent terrorist events have had precursors, whether as individual terrorists (the aforementioned Sudanese Mahdi in the 1880s and bin Laden today); terrorist organizations (the Black Hand and al-Qaeda); or

reactions of public officials (President Theodore Roosevelt after a terrorist attack declaring in 1901, “the anarchist is the enemy of all mankind” and President George W. Bush after the September 11 attack, blaming the “evildoers”).

More specifically, Ferguson (2001) and Gray (2002) make comparisons between figures like bin Laden and late-19th-century Russian terrorists, with Ferguson (2001:119) going on to caution against not taking seriously the similarity of the pre-1900 terrorist wave with today’s wave. He notes similarities in the political religion of their ideologies, the diasporic—or transnational—nature of both sets of terrorists who often resided and planned attacks abroad, and the similarity of global political economic conditions at the end of the 19th and 20th centuries. Schweitzer (2002) argues that the major powers in 1900 would have considered giving terrorism top billing on their agenda as had President Bill Clinton at a Group of Seven meeting after the bombing of a U.S. compound in Saudi Arabia and that while 19th-century anarchist assassinations often were done by individuals, they were part of a larger movement of their time, of which the more general public was fearful, much like contemporary reactions to terrorism. If al-Qaeda is a reaction to American empire, as Johnson (2000) argues, then one could see earlier terrorist resistance in the form of pre-1914 terrorist groups attacking the empires of their day (the Serbian Black Hand versus the Austrian Empire; Inner Macedonian Revolutionary Organization versus the Ottoman Empire; and the terrorists of Narodnaya Volya versus the Tsarist Russian Empire). In the case of fundamentalist Islamic terrorism, a comparison with the Sudanese revolt of the Mahdi in the 1880s against the British Empire and bin Laden against the United States has been made by Ferguson (2001:124), who also notes that 19th-century Sudan probably would have been considered a “rogue state” in its time. Kennedy (2001:56) notes a similarity between the hatred of London as the financial center of world capitalism at the end of the 19th century and the hatred by “fanatical Muslims today” of the dominance of Wall Street and the Pentagon. Similarly, Davis (2001) links late 19th-century globalization of trade and finance to outbreaks of terrorist activity in the developing world, and Brooks and Wohlforth (2002:30) note a similarity between the growing multipolarity of the great powers at the end of the last century (like today) and the presence of anarchist assassinations.

### *Hegemonic Decline and Empire*

Terrorism and globalization seem to correlate at two periods in time. But this is not all, for these periods are also ones where the dominant state is in relative decline within the world-economy. Earlier it was Britain, and now it is the United States (Wallerstein 2003). These are also periods of imperial expansion, or empire. This has been more clearly documented for the British Empire, but in the early 21st century the United States is characterized in a similar way as having entered a period of empire, not unlike 19th-century England (Aronowitz and Gautney 2003; Ignatieff 2003).

Empire and hegemonic decline appear to be opposite movements, but decline in economic prowess triggers a defensive maneuvering to maintain militarily what implicitly was guaranteed previously through economic hegemony. Hence, hegemonic decline (economic decline) correlates with empire (defensive projection of military power). For example, the height of the British Empire was just before the beginning of the warfare over who would succeed British hegemony (1914); it was not the beginning of a new reign of British Imperial domination. It was just the opposite. Within the capitalist world-system, dominance or hegemony is predicated upon an

economic foundation, such that empire—the necessity to impose order by military force rather than Gramscian global consent (backed by force of course) is, in fact, more the product of weakness, than strength. Empire appears when economic hegemony slips; it is not a manifestation of economic predominance.

### *Terrorist Origination Zones*

Where there has been a wave of terrorism, there also has been globalization, hegemonic decline, and empire. To this list we can add another commonality. Both waves of terrorism emerge in distinctly autocratic semiperipheral zones of the global system—then the Russian, Ottoman, and Austrian Empires and now the autocratic states of the Arab-Islamic Middle East. And, interestingly, it was a terrorist incident (assassination of the Austrian archduke) that constituted the trigger for World War I.

## TOWARD A GLOBOLOGICAL MODEL OF TERRORISM

A comparison of these two waves of terrorism, then, suggests a set of common international conditions: (1) hegemonic decline; (2) globalization; (3) empire/colonial competition; and (4) terrorist origination in autocratic semiperipheral world-system zones. This suggests that terrorism has some relatively specific conditions under which it appears, and further that it may be part and parcel of the cyclical rhythms of the global system (Bergesen and Schoenberg 1980). For instance, the rise and fall of dominant, or hegemonic states, is a well-documented feature of the international state system, and if the periods of decline for Britain and the United States were also periods of outbreaks of terrorism, it is reasonable to look for a similar wave of terrorism during the decline of the earlier Spanish hegemony.<sup>3</sup>

To view this more clearly, we go back to the inception of the modern world-system in the 16th century, where the center of state formation was England, Spain, and France, the so-called first modern nation-states (Wallerstein 1974). Within this emerging interstate system, Spain was the predominant power of the 16th century but was in clear hegemonic decline by the early 17th century, which was the context for the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648). This was centered to the east of these states in Central Europe (Germany largely) in what was known as the Holy Roman Empire (HRE), a semiperipheral political form comprised of a loose federation of principalities and free cities. The important point to note is that the moment of HRE's demise corresponds with the cyclic undulation that is the inevitable decline of a hegemony as the world-economy moves on to a new center based on more advanced production techniques. But such transitions are not peaceful given the absence of a world state or any sort of global constitutional agreement for politically passing on productive advantage from one region-state to another. The principal transition mechanism

<sup>3</sup>It sometimes is suggested that the Dutch exercised hegemony in the 17th century, but if this is true it is only in a more limited sense of a short-term economic advantage. A full hegemony also would entail a political-military dominance, as seen in the Pax Britannica (1815–1914) and the present Pax Americana since 1945. This did not exist during the purported mid-17th-century Dutch hegemony, for this was the period of the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648). Therefore, we will count only as full hegemonies within the modern European world-system those of Spain, Britain, and the United States.

appears to be Schumpeterian “creative destruction” of Great Power war, which facilitates the passing of hegemony to another state. While this is well understood within world-system theory, there is another less understood transformation that occurs at these historical moments. The key observation here is that the Holy Roman Empire did not withstand the crisis of the Thirty Years’ War, and something similar happened at the next hegemonic succession struggle over who would succeed Britain. Here it is the Russian, Ottoman, and Austrian Empires that do not withstand the crises of World War I.<sup>4</sup> What this suggests is that older political forms (empires, dynasties, and so forth) collapse during periods of international war/crises and are replaced by polities more adapted to functioning within the expanding world-economy. Out of the Holy Roman Empire came Prussia/Germany, which went on to be one of the core powers that challenged for succession to British hegemony, losing out to the United States after two rounds of Great Power war (1914–1945). After the first round (1914–1919), three HRE-like structures suffered the same fate: the Russian, Ottoman, and Austrian-Hungarian Empires collapsed. Out of that came Russia, which would split some of the geopolitical spoils of the second round (1939–1945) in what was known at the time as the “Cold War” but what will be known increasingly as the Great American Peace under the hegemony of the United States that began in 1945 and continues into the early 21st century. But the American Peace shows signs of strain accompanied by, if not instigated directly by, the decline in American economic hegemony (Bergesen and Fernandez 1999; Bergesen and Sonnett 2001; Wallerstein 2003). The Franco-German entente formed in opposition to the American-led war in Iraq very well could reflect the beginning of something

<sup>4</sup>The international system for each of these historical periods is characterized by the particular manner in which the era’s major power begins to be challenged for its supremacy by other contenders. In the 17th century, the struggle in the German region became symptomatic of the growing inability of the then-hegemonic Spanish empire to contain multiple challenges to its dominance. The Low Countries were beginning to establish their independence from Spain, while the British were starting to test their naval supremacy. On the mainland, the French King Henry IV, sensing Castilian weakness, became a major backer of the anti Catholic movements spreading throughout Hapsburg lands. Without French support, it is doubtful that the general state of war that pervaded the first half of 17th-century Europe would have been generated. Further, French assistance of the Calvinist insurgents virtually guaranteed a major commitment by the Spanish, in effect debilitating their ability to fight war on multiple fronts even further. In the same vein, the 19th-century Balkan situation went from being a peripheral struggle for national identity among secondary Eastern European nations to a major conflict among the Great Western powers only after Germany displaced France as the most dominant power in Continental Europe with their victories against both Austria—in the seven weeks, war of 1866—and France in 1871, thus becoming a considerable threat to British international leadership. In the same way as French machinations led the Spanish to pay more attention to the Protest Principalities than they would have otherwise (against the backdrop of decreasing Hapsburg governance), German expansionist interests in the Balkans led the British to commit much more resources to the Balkan region than they would have desired under different circumstances (against the backdrop of decreasing Ottoman influence).

In the first hegemonic succession struggle, both Protestantism (in its Lutheran and Calvinist forms) and the second Pan-Slavism represent the defining ideologies galvanizing the peripheral conflicts of the respective ages. Each is characterized by its oppositional stance in relation to the dominant power of the area (Hapsburg Catholicism and Ottoman Islam), serving to provide those peoples with a belief system capable of articulating their plight and framing their issue in a context that transcended local cultural and ethnic differences. Pan-Slavism, while nominally a cognitive framework whose primary reference point was one emphasizing a primordially racial (“Slavic blood”) connection to the geographic area itself (“the homeland”), essentially was driven by its connection to Orthodox Christianity. Calvinism and Lutheranism, in a related manner, served as the framework with which to resist the repressive efforts of the Spanish and Hapsburg counterreformation. Both ideologies also could be manipulated similarly by marcher states with territorial ambitions. The Catholic rulers of France, for example, rejoiced in the spread of Protestantism in German lands, as the religion would help them in their struggles against the Spanish. During the 19th century, the strongest source of Pan-Slavic ideological propaganda was Russia itself, who viewed it as further weakening the Ottoman-Austrian stronghold in the Balkans, opening up opportunities to further her own expansionist plans. Fundamentalist Islam may perform similar functions today in the era of the third hegemonic succession.

equivalent to the alliance systems that dragged the Great Powers into the earlier succession struggles. For the Thirty Years' War, it was the Protestant and Catholic Leagues; for World War I it was the Triple Alliance and Triple Entente; and possibly for the coming Great Power war over American succession it will be a Moscow-Berlin-Paris axis versus that of Washington-Tokyo-Beijing.<sup>5</sup>

What does all of this suggest? Most generally, hegemonic decline and resultant Great Power competition and eventual war may lie at the heart of the reproductive dynamics of the world-economy, with a Schumpeterian-like "creative destruction" that not only ushers in a new hegemonic center and with it a new set of international rules, standards, and currency that constitutes the bedrock of the next phase of sustained global economic expansion but also ushers in state formation, as older empires/dynasties/autocratic regimes collapse, often to be replaced with states that will go on to partake in the next round of hegemonic succession struggles. What is the role of terrorism in this process? There seem to be a number of possibilities.

### *Canary in the Mineshaft*

Hegemonic decline destabilizes the global order, and outbreaks of international terrorism seem to serve as an indicator of growing international instability. Private violence by groups against states seems to precede state-to-state violence as perhaps a sign of the great unraveling the world-system periodically undergoes. Like the miner's canary warning of leaking gas, so international terrorism signals the coming of Great Power war.

### *Separation of War and Terrorism*

The most problematic component of this model is the clear identification of a wave of international terrorism during the first period. We are willing to admit that it may not have happened; after all, modern terrorism is thought to have begun with the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution at the end of the 18th century, and we are speaking of terrorism in the middle of the 19th century. But it also may be the case that in this earlier period international terrorism and interstate war were not differentiated structurally as yet within the violent politics of the European world-system. That is, terrorism appears during the Thirty Years' War as terror against civilians by roving bands of unemployed soldiers from various countries and regions of Europe. It may be that terrorism and war are fused and only differentiate later, such that by the next cycle, there is a clear period of international terrorism (1880s–1914) that precedes international warfare (1914–1945).

<sup>5</sup>In both the first and second succession struggles, local powers in the semiperipheral zone slowly acquired the character of illegitimate usurpers of power due to their reliance on the major powers of the era to support their rule over the peoples of the peripheral area. Local governing institutions, such as the Turkish *millet* system that subdivided all peoples according to their religion irrespective of language or ethnicity or the Habsburg Imperial diet designed to decree local law and requirements, acquired a progressively superfluous and outmoded cast. In the 17th century, the enforcers of the rule of the Holy Roman Empire strictly were dependent on Spanish military aid to control the rapidly converting (from Catholicism to Protestantism) German territories. In a similar fashion, the 19th-century Ottoman rule of the Balkan peoples would have been impossible if it were not for British and French (economic and military) support of the Turks.

*Instability Starts in Semiperipheral Zones*

Given that international terrorism breaks out in semiperipheral autocratic zones (HRE, Russian, Ottoman, and Austrian Empires; Arab-Islamic states), this suggests that the great unraveling that eventuates in the Great Power war begins in adjacent areas to the main contending states. Whether as Great Power rivalries (colonial competition, interventionism, and so forth) that generate backlash/blowback terrorism against empires and hegemonic centers; or as a weakening of hegemonic authority that empowers resistance to local autocratic rulers; or as a decline in support from the hegemonic center to dependencies in the semiperiphery that then encourages resistance in the form of terrorist attacks, it is the case that with hegemonic decline, terrorism tends to break out in the world-system's more semiperipheral zones. That is, international terrorism does not so much arise from the underdeveloped periphery or from the developed and powerful core as it does from this more middle zone.

*Trigger Event for Great Power War*

The violence in the semiperiphery and the succeeding violence among core states are not unrelated, for terrorist events have constituted the triggers for the previous hegemonic succession wars. It was the revolting Protestant Bohemians throwing the Catholic Holy Roman Empire's two ambassadors out of a second-floor window (the Second Defenestration of Prague) that triggered the Thirty Years' War, and it was the assassination of the Austrian Archduke that triggered World War I.

This general process, and examples from the three hegemonic succession crises, can be outlined in Table 1.

As seen by the question marks, there are some uncertainties, the most prominent being the identification of international terrorism for the first period. The others simply reflect the fact that history has not unfolded enough to determine whether the theoretical predictions of this model will be supported.

## CONCLUSION

Terrorism appears everywhere and is used by individuals, groups, and states. What is identified here is the use of violence by nonstate groups against noncombatants for symbolic purposes, that is, to influence or somehow affect another audience for some political, social, or religious purpose. Such events seem to cluster, or to bunch, in world history, and it is suggested here that this clustering may hold a key to their understanding. The clusters seem to appear at key transition times within the world-system—specifically, when the then-dominant state is in decline. The exact link between hegemonic decline and waves of terrorism are not understood fully. Terrorism also breaks out in very specific areas, the middle zone of the world-system, again, for reasons that are not fully understood

Table 1. Hegemonies, Terrorisms, Great Power Wars, and Empires from 16th to 21st Centuries

Hegemonic Decline	Terrorism	Triggers War	Crises for Semiperipheral States
Spain	?	Thirty Years' War	Holy Roman Empire
Britain Empires	1880–1914	WW I, II	Ottoman, Russian, Austrian
United States	1968–	?	Arab-Islamic States (?)

as yet. Given what has just been said, it seems like not much is known about waves of terrorism; that is probably true. The mapping of outbreaks of terrorism onto other international structures and events is just beginning; the sociology of terrorism is in its infancy. But like other violent events, terrorism would seem to be more endogenous than exogenous, that is, not a plague upon the world-system but something produced by the world-system. Like war, riots, strikes, and other forms of political violence, terrorism seems part and parcel of the global world in which we live. We are just newer at trying to link its appearance with the structural features of its social environment.

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