POLICY RESPONSES TO TERRORISM

- A **cosmopolitan approach** treats **terrorist attacks** as criminal acts against humanity as a whole, requiring a legal and international response accompanied by a long-term strategy addressing the root causes of terrorism, such as global poverty and discontent. The cosmopolitan strategy resonates with important strands of **liberal, Marxist, radical, and feminist thought**.

- A **statist approach** treats **terrorist attacks** as acts of war that might require a forceful response not only against terrorist organizations but also against states that actively support or passively tolerate them. Advocates of a statist response are more inclined to see terrorism as rooted in a fundamental conflict of values, not social and economic conditions that can be eliminated by reform. This approach obviously has much in common with a **realist worldview**.
CRITICAL QUESTIONS

• What is terrorism?

• What motivates individuals and groups to engage in terrorism?

• Can terrorism ever be morally justified?

• Does terrorism work?

• What policies and strategies should nations pursue to deal with terrorism?
KEY ELEMENTS IN DEFINING TERRORISM

• First, terrorism involves the threat or use of violence. (How about cyberterrorism?)

• Second, this violence must be in pursuit of some broader political or social objective.

• Third, the violence is conducted usually without regard to who is harmed by it.

• Fourth, terrorism is something conducted by “a subnational group or non-state entity.”

• Note regarding #4, given that the term terrorism was first used after the French Revolution to describe the revolutionary government’s “reign of terror,” it would seem odd to argue that states, by definition, cannot commit acts of terrorism.
WHAT IS TERRORISM?

• terrorism - The indiscriminate use or threat of violence to advance social, political, economic, or religious objectives by creating a climate of fear.

• Watch Al Jazeera series Dining with Terrorists
  • 1. Death of the Freedom Fighter
  • 2. Global Jihad
  • 3. America’s Backyard
  • 4. Divided Island
  • 5. Fighting Occupation
  • 6. Return of the Freedom Fighter
TERRORISM OR TERRORISMS?
NATIONALIST/SEPARATIST TERRORISM

- The **IRA (Irish Republican Army)** was/is a fairly traditional terrorist group with relatively modest political objectives, fighting against what it sees as outside domination.

- Its tactics were also very traditional, involving small-scale bombings that caused several dozen casualties at most.

- **Nationalist or separatist groups** like the IRA “have tended to calibrate their use of violence, using enough to rivet world attention but not so much as to alienate supporters abroad or members of their base community.”

- The IRA had no desire to destroy Great Britain; it merely wanted to get the British out of Northern Ireland. The IRA would never have contemplated crashing airliners into buildings or using chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons. This is what made the attacks of **September 11, 2001**, so significant, **the scale of the attack**.
“They have nothing in their whole imperial arsenal that can break the spirit of one Irishman who doesn’t want to be broken.”
- Bobby Sands
RELIGIOUS TERRORISM

• Religiously motivated terrorist activities have been increasing since the 1990s. According to Hoffman,

• “only 2 of the 64 [terrorist] groups active in 1980 could be classified as predominantly religious in character.” The majority were ethnic or nationalist in nature.

• By 1995, however, religious groups “account[ed] for nearly half, 46%, 26 of the 56 known, active international terrorist groups.”

• Thus, the mix of international terrorist groups shifted in favor of those inclined to use greater levels of violence and more unconventional modes of attack.
AL QA’IDA

• **Al-Qaeda (“the organization”)** has more expansive political and social goals than the IRA, for instance. It is motivated by a particular form of **religious fundamentalism**.

• Not only are its **objectives** broader and more ambitious than that of IRA, but its **tactics and the scale of its attacks** are also on a very different level.

• The ultimate goal of Al-Qaeda is to reestablish the medieval Islamic caliphate that was destroyed by the Western influence, in their opinion, to unify all Islamic countries into one state.

• They see the West, and in particular the U.S., as the oppressor that exploits the Muslim nations and consider their attacks on the Western targets as a liberation struggle.
AUM SHINRIKYO

• **Aum Shinrikyo (the “Supreme Truth”)**, the bizarre Japanese doomsday cult (combining Christianity, Yoga, and Nostradamus) responsible for a sarin nerve gas attack on the Tokyo subway in March 1995 that killed twelve and hospitalized almost 5,000. Prior to this attack, Aum Shinrikyo had also released botulinum toxin and anthrax from rooftops and trucks in Japanese cities. Fortunately, these attacks failed.

• The intent was to spark what the cult’s leader predicted would be an apocalypse and nuclear war that would usher in heaven on earth. The cult’s members believed they would somehow escape destruction.

• These organizations may prove particularly dangerous because they possess few, if any, internal constraints on their use of violence. Most terrorist organizations use violence in pursuit of an identifiable objective, and as a result there is usually some level of violence that would be counterproductive.
RESPONSES TO TERRORISM

• **statist**

  Views terrorist attacks as acts of war and assumes that the most effective strategy for combating terrorism requires putting pressure on those states that actively support or passively tolerate terrorist organizations.

• **cosmopolitan**

  Conceptualizes terrorist attacks as criminal acts requiring an international, multilateral response within the context of international law and organizations. As a long-term strategy, it involves addressing the root causes of terrorism, which are usually identified as poverty, inequality, and discontent.
9/11 VS. OKLAHOMA CITY BOMBING

• Archibugi and Young propose that “the events [of September 11] be conceptualized as crimes, not as acts of war.” They suggest that we adopt a law enforcement model in response, not a military model.

• A parallel is drawn to the 1995 bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City in which 168 people were killed and 680 wounded. The U.S. government did not declare itself at war with Timothy McVeigh or the organizations he associated with.

• Though widely described as an act of terrorism, it was viewed as a criminal act, not an act of war.

• Conceptualizing the September 11 attacks as crimes against humanity, not merely against the United States, provides a framework for interpretation that leads to a cosmopolitan policy response.
OKLAHOMA CITY BOMBING
APRIL 19, 1995

• The bombing claimed 168 lives and injured more than 680 people. The blast destroyed or damaged 324 buildings within a sixteen-block radius, destroyed or burned 86 cars, and shattered glass in 258 nearby buildings. The bomb was estimated to have caused at least $652 million worth of damage.
COSMOPOLITAN APPROACH TO INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

• According to the proponents of the cosmopolitan approach to terrorism, in the case of 9/11:

  • the United States and the international community should have sought “the establishment of an international tribunal with the authority to seek out, extradite, or arrest and try those responsible for the September 11 attack and those who commit or are conspiring to commit future attacks.”

  • the United States should “refrain from any unilateral and precipitous military action. It must create a unified international coalition, with strong Islamic representation, to bring Bin Laden and other terrorists within the Taliban-controlled territory of Afghanistan to justice.”
ADDRESSING TERRORISM

• Advocates of a cosmopolitan response also urge that we address the deeper causes of terrorism, the root causes.

• The implication, of course, is that the root causes need to be identified in the hope that they can be eliminated or ameliorated.

• There are many terrorist groups around the world with many different agendas. Different manifestations of terrorism may have very different root causes.

• As a result, it should come as no surprise that the list of potential root causes is quite long, some applying to terrorism in general and others specifically to Islamic fundamentalist terrorism.
ROOT CAUSES OF ISLAMIST TERRORISM

• With regard to the Islamist terrorism, many cite

  • a long history of Western, especially U.S., support for repressive and authoritarian regimes in the Arab world,

  • often placing this pattern in the context of a long history of Western and Christian hostility to Islam reaching back to the Crusades,

  • Israeli treatment of the Palestinians,

  • U.S. support for Israel, and

  • the stationing of U.S. troops in Arab countries (particularly holy lands in Saudi Arabia.)

• This combination of historical and contemporary grievances helps explain a widespread sense of frustration throughout much of the Islamic world fueling terrorism focused on the United States and its allies.
MORE GENERAL CAUSES OF & SOLUTIONS TO TERRORISM

• At a more general level, terrorism is commonly seen as a response to poverty and economic inequality.

• The only long-term strategy to deal with the root causes of terrorism is a wholesale reform of those international and domestic institutions, political and economic, perpetuating the inequities and injustices that sustain terrorist organizations by providing fertile breeding grounds of anger and discontent.

• Attempts to combat terrorism with the sort of forceful response entailed by a war/military model will only exacerbate that problem.
INTELLECTUAL ROOTS OF COSMOPOLITAN STRATEGY
LIBERALS & COSMOPOLITAN STRATEGY

• Since liberals (and constructivists) have historically been more inclined to see international law and organizations as effective embodiments of shared values and interests, it makes sense to view this component of a cosmopolitan strategy as being derived from an essentially liberal logic of international politics.

• The basic assumption that we can identify and reform the social, economic, and political institutions and conditions that give rise to terrorism is consistent with the liberal approach to social conflict, which contains an element of optimism and faith in the ability of rational people to solve social problems.

• The guiding vision is that greater material prosperity, respect for human rights, and democratic government (all liberal values) will provide the antidote to terrorism. If the denial of justice leads to violence, the provision of justice will lead to its elimination.
The proposal that we deal with terrorism by addressing its root causes is a little ambiguous in terms of its intellectual foundations, potentially reflecting elements of liberalism, Marxism, and feminism.

Finding the roots of terrorism in poverty and economic inequality is consistent with a Marxist view of social conflict as rooted in economic inequality and exploitation.

Even when conflicts do not appear to be economic on the surface, Marxists assume that there is usually a critical economic foundation. Marxists believe that we should “expect, for every mobilization on behalf of religious or other nonmaterial ends, to find some antecedent frustration to the material interests of groups among whom the mobilization occurs.”
FEMINISTS & COSMOPOLITAN STRATEGY

• Feminists are eager to expand the “poverty as the root cause of terrorism” thesis to include all institutions and patterns of domination, including the oppression of woman.

• It is, they point out, no coincidence that regimes with some of the worst records when it comes to the rights of women (e.g., the Taliban in Afghanistan) are associated with support for terrorism.

• J. Ann Tickner (taking the connection between poverty and terrorism for granted) draws our attention to “the poor treatment of women as one of the major reasons for the region’s [the Middle East] lack of development.”

• Though feminists disagreed about the use of military force against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, it is fair to say that feminists generally favor a cosmopolitan strategy over the statist approach.
STATIST STRATEGY
CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS

- clash of civilizations

- The thesis, popularized by Samuel Huntington, that civilizational conflicts based on competing social and political values are replacing traditional national conflicts as the defining feature of contemporary international politics.

- The first to use the phrase and issue a warning about an impending “clash of civilizations” was the Princeton historian Bernard Lewis, an authority on Middle Eastern and Islamic history. In his influential essay, “The Roots of Muslim Rage,” published more than a decade before September 11, 2001, Lewis expressed his growing concern about several trends foreshadowing greater conflict between the West and the Muslim world.
• From the statist perspective, the war on terrorism is, even if indirectly, still a conflict among states. And one deals with this threat according to the same logic that guides responses to traditional threats—by “exact[ing] a price for terrorism so as to make it less likely that terrorist will want to strike again.”

• These costs need to be imposed not only on the terrorists themselves but also on states that provide active support or passively permit them to operate.

• In President Bush’s words, “we have to force countries to choose.” The option of last resort would be “regime change”: “If you replace the states that do support terrorism with those that don’t, you deny terrorists the kind of support that allows them to mount big operations against us.”
SUMMARY OF THE STATIST STRATEGY

• **First**, there is the admission that we will never eliminate all terrorism and the hope that we can is a fantasy.

• **Second**, we need to deal with terrorist organizations as threats to the national interest that must be either defeated or deterred.

• **Third**, states continue to be the critical players on the global level, even when it comes to controlling the actions of non-state actors such as terrorist organizations.