

# **THE EVIL OF TERRORISM**

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Uriel Rosenthal** is professor of government studies at the Faculty of Behavioral and Social Sciences of Leiden University and chairman of COT Institute for Safety, Security and Crisis Management in The Hague. He is chief editor of the *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management* (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, UK) and serves on the editorial board of *Administration and Society*. He is also chairman of the center-right Liberal Group (VVD) in the Dutch Senate.

He has been active in many academic projects and advisory activities concerning terrorism and antiterrorism policies in the Netherlands as well as internationally. At this moment, one of his responsibilities bears upon a comparative research project for the Commission of the European Union on transnational terrorism and the rule of law.

He has published and edited many books, among which are *Complexity in Urban Crisis Management* (James & James, London, 1994), *Coping with Crises: The Management of Disasters, Riots and Terrorism* (Charles C Thomas, Springfield IL, 1989), and *Managing Crises: Threats, Dilemmas, Opportunities* (Charles C Thomas, Springfield IL, 1999).

**Erwin Muller** is professor of Safety and Security Law at the Law Faculty of Leiden University and director of COT Institute for Safety, Security and Crisis Management in The Hague. He is a member of the Dutch Advisory Council for the Interior.

He has been the chief of staff at the Reorganization Committee of the Dutch intelligence service and has been on the board of the Assessment Committee of the Dutch military intelligence service.

He has published many books and articles on international terrorism. He is the chief editor of the authoritative ten-volume series on Dutch safety, security, and criminal justice.

# THE EVIL OF TERRORISM

Diagnosis and Countermeasures

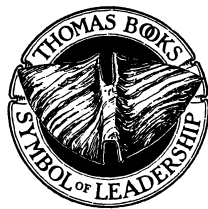
*By*

URIEL ROSENTHAL

*and*

ERWIN R. MULLER

*Leiden University and COT Institute of Safety  
Security and Crisis Management  
The Hague*



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## PREFACE

We are still at the very beginning of the twenty-first century, but in the first years of this new era the world has experienced the new terrorism in its most appalling form. The United States and other countries throughout the world have suffered from catastrophic terrorism causing mass casualties. Elsewhere, terrorists have taken the lives of prominent people in ostentatiously cruel ways. There is no reason to expect a reduction of the new terrorism in the foreseeable future. On the contrary, experts and intelligence services predict new waves of terrorism, including attacks with unconventional means.

The threat of terrorism is a greater than ever risk, but in many parts of the world the sense of urgency is waning. While writing this book, we have been well aware of these undeniable facts. For that reason, we have tried to state our case in a vigorous manner. We accept the idea that Western democracies should strike a balance between antiterrorism policies and upholding the rule of law. We are convinced, however, that democracies and the rule of law are best served by tough strategies, policies, and concrete measures that defend and protect citizens against the ordeal of new terrorism.

We wish to thank those many scholars, politicians, diplomats, military and police officials, intelligence experts—from both the academic community and intelligence services—and students with whom we have exchanged and shared our ideas over the last fifteen years. We are grateful that we have the opportunity to be actively involved in both the academic community and the worlds of politics and administration. We hope this has prevented us from falling prey to academism on the one hand and overplaying the practitioner's hand on the other.

U.R.  
E.M.

The Hague  
May 2007



## CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
<i>Preface</i> .....	v
 <i>Chapter</i>	
<b>1. TERRORISM AND TERROR</b> .....	<b>3</b>
New Terrorism, Catastrophic Terrorism .....	3
Old Terrorism: Not Over .....	4
Relative Importance of the Distinction Between Old and New Terrorism .....	6
New Terrorism: A Further Interpretation .....	7
Catastrophic Terrorism: Still a Long Way Off? .....	8
Catastrophic Terrorism: Coming Closer .....	10
Terrorist Threat .....	13
Old Terrorism, New Methods .....	19
The Terrorist's Patience .....	21
Terror .....	23
The Netherlands .....	25
Conclusion .....	26
 <b>2. THE TERRORIST VIOLENCE</b> .....	 <b>29</b>
Legitimate Force, Just Wars, The Evil of Terrorism .....	29
Just War .....	31
The Government's Monopoly on Legitimate Force .....	33
Legitimate Force Against the Government .....	35
The Evil of Terrorist Violence .....	37
Conclusion .....	44

<b>3. CAUSES</b> .....	.47
Searching for the Deeper Causes .....	.47
Towards the Deeper Causes of Terrorism? .....	.49
Incantations .....	.50
Shifting Responsibility .....	.51
Causes and Motives of Terrorism .....	.53
Radicalization and Terrorism in Europe .....	.61
Conclusion .....	.64
<b>4. COUNTERTERRORISM: POLICIES</b> .....	.67
Breaking the Vicious Circle .....	.67
Five Missions for the Government .....	.69
1. Do Not Deny the Most Serious Threat .....	.70
2. Making Life as Difficult as Possible for Terrorists .....	.72
3. Acute Crisis Management .....	.82
4. Disaster Relief .....	.86
5. Channeling Collective Stress .....	.89
Conclusion .....	.91
<b>5. COUNTERTERRORISM: ACTORS</b> .....	.93
Threat Assessment .....	.93
The Authorities .....	.94
Central Government .....	.95
Parliament .....	.96
The Judiciary .....	.96
Ministries .....	.97
Local Government .....	.98
Citizens .....	.99
Companies .....	.100
Intelligence and Security Services .....	.102
Police, Fire Department, and Medical Services .....	.103
The Armed Forces .....	.104
Religious Organizations .....	.104
The Media .....	.105
Conclusions .....	.106



<b>6. IN THE INTEREST OF THE DEMOCRATIC STATE</b>	
<b>AND THE RULE OF LAW</b> .....	107
Antiterrorism Measures and Opposing Views .....	107
What Is It Really All About? .....	108
The Rule of Law Against Terrorism: The Facts Speak for Themselves .....	111
The One-Sidedness of Constitutional Criticism .....	122
Conclusion .....	125
<b>7. DEMOCRATIC STATES AGAINST TERRORISM</b> .....	127
The World of States .....	127
In Need of the Strong State .....	129
The Strong State: Obstacles .....	131
Failing States and Rogue States .....	136
The United Nations and the International Community .....	139
Alliance of Democratic States .....	141
Conclusion .....	143
<b>8. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN INTERNATIONAL</b>	
<b>TERRORISM</b> .....	145
Endemic Terrorism .....	145
The New Terrorism .....	146
“It Is Not About Whether But When It Will Happen To Us...” .....	148
Globalization .....	149
Connections With Other Events and Developments .....	149
From Terrorism to Terror .....	150
Successes In the Fight Against Terrorism .....	150
Laws and Regulations .....	151
Conclusion .....	152
 <i>Index</i> .....	 155



# **THE EVIL OF TERRORISM**



## Chapter 1

### TERRORISM AND TERROR

“From the Old Terrorism to the New: The First World Trade Center Bombing. At 18 minutes after noon on February 26, 1993, a huge bomb went off beneath the two towers of the World Trade Center. Six people died. More than a thousand were injured. An FBI agent at the scene described the relatively low number of fatalities as a miracle.” (The 9/11 Commission Report, Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, 2004, p. 71)

“This is only the beginning.”(Walter Laqueur, commenting on the Madrid attacks of March 11, 2004, NRC Handelsblad, March 13, 2004)

“*Choc et peur à Amsterdam*” [Shock and fear in Amsterdam]. (in connection with the assassination of filmmaker Theo van Gogh on November 2, 2004, *Le Monde*, November 10, 2004)

#### NEW TERRORISM, CATASTROPHIC TERRORISM

To distinguish it from the terrorism of the last century, some people simply call it the new terrorism.<sup>1</sup> Others say that it concerns the ominous combination of catastrophe and terrorism: catastrophic terrorism. We still have not grown used to it: terrorists who kill or threaten to kill thousands of innocent people for the purpose of intimidating millions of people in this way and arousing fear in democratic

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1. W. Laqueur, *The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1999; I.O. Lesser et al., *Countering the New Terrorism*, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, 1999.

societies. For a long time we have quoted the Chinese aphorism about terrorism as the height of evil: “Kill one, frighten ten thousand.” We now know that there are people for whom this is not enough. Their motto is “Kill thousands and frighten millions.”

Neither have we grown used to terrorists sending not only adults but also children to their deaths without showing any compassion, nor to the extreme brutality with which they kill people in a calculating and cold-blooded manner for the purpose of arousing terror and attempting to disrupt society. In this case, traditional terrorism exploits new methods and blends with catastrophic terrorism. The terrorism of the twenty-first century is the terrorism that beats all previous records. In France it is called “hyperterrorism.”

In the twenty-first century we are facing dangers we thought we had left behind. It was only a few decades ago that many predicted the definitive victory of democracy. The end of the Cold War had removed the continuing threat of a nuclear confrontation between the two superpowers: the United States and the Soviet Union. Some experts warned that even though the world was going to be a safer place as a result of it, it would also become a more unstable place. True enough, many new hot spots emerged. Some conflicts—such as the tragedy in the Balkans—came perilously close and claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. Apart from the exceptions in Africa and Southeast Asia, these conflicts did not expand all the time and drew to a close after a few years. The arrival of international criminal justice boosted the idea that the world was heading in the right direction. The terrorism confronting many countries in the second half of the last century did not affect this sense of optimism. It was limited to a number of disputed areas—Ireland, the Basque country, Israel and Palestine—and it died out in some countries, such as Germany and Italy, after some time.

### **OLD TERRORISM: NOT OVER**

The history of terrorism can be traced back to hostage-takings in Hellenic times, targeted assassination campaigns launched by the Hashshashin in the early Middle Ages, the deployment of plague-infected soldiers and civilians in sieges, and the anarchist propaganda of the deed at the end of the nineteenth century. We need not go back

into the past that far to grasp the differences between the old and the new terrorism, because the terrorism that gripped many countries for a shorter or longer period since the 1960s also differs greatly from the new terrorism, which now strikes so much terror in our hearts. This terrorism was and still is characterized by a clearly defined objective and the use of more or less limited violence. This is true of terrorist organizations that lay claim to the area or a region of a sovereign state: the Front de Libération de Québec (FLQ), the Irish Republican Army (IRA), Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA), and Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO); or terrorist groups that are after an ideological revolution: the Red Army Faction (RAF), the Red Brigades (Brigate Rosse), the Japanese Red Army, the Tupamaros in Uruguay, and the Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso) in Peru.

Old-style terrorists sought, and still seek, to press home their territorial or ideological demands to the maximum extent possible. They manage to present these demands in a clear and transparent manner. They use reprehensible methods for this purpose: targeted assassinations of public figures, hostage-takings, hijackings, and kidnappings. They entail violent intimidation. That is all the more true when they resort to the terrorist detour: taking arbitrary residents, passersby and passengers—"dummies"—hostage or threatening them in order to put pressure on public opinion and the government. The last thing these terrorists are after is to kill the dummies, because these residents, passersby, and passengers are used as bargaining chips in negotiations with the authorities, and the terrorists lose these bargaining chips when they kill these chance victims. They will sometimes kill a number of hostages to emphasize how serious their action is, but they know that this will only diminish the chance that the authorities will give in to their demands. For the same reason, old-style terrorists will usually warn the authorities that they have planted a bomb in a shopping street, building or tourist resort shortly before the explosion takes place. They prefer "a lot of people watching than a lot of them dead."<sup>2</sup>

An example of the old terrorism is the hostage-taking of the Turkish embassy in Ottawa carried out by members of the Armenian Revolutionary Army (March 1985). The terrorists took twelve embassy staff members hostage and planted explosives in and against the building. They established contact with the Canadian media and were

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2. M. Jenkins, *International Terrorism: A Balance Sheet*, in *Survival*, 17(4), July–August 1975, p. 158.