

4-25-1997

## 21st Century Terrorism: The New Face of the Hydra (Part I)

James A. Kinnison

Follow this and additional works at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp>



Part of the [Terrorism Studies Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

James A. Kinnison (1997) "21st Century Terrorism: The New Face of the Hydra (Part I)," *International Bulletin of Political Psychology*. Vol. 2 : Iss. 4 , Article 1.

Available at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp/vol2/iss4/1>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in International Bulletin of Political Psychology by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact [commons@erau.edu](mailto:commons@erau.edu).

International Bulletin of Political Psychology

Title: 21st Century Terrorism: The New Face of the Hydra (Part I)

Author: James A. Kinnison

Volume: 2

Issue: 4

Date: 1997-04-25

Keywords: Terrorism

Abstract. The IBPP Editors are pleased to publish this article by Mr. James A. Kinnison, a graduate student in the Political Science Department at the University of New Mexico, who is specializing in international relations and national security. Part of the work for this article was done while Mr. Kinnison was an extern at Sandia National Laboratories. (Of course, the views in the article are solely his own.) A version of this article was presented at the international academic conference on Science, Technology, and the 21st Century: New Eden or Armageddon?" at Cameron University, Lawton Oklahoma on March 21, 1997. This first installment describes some terrorist trends and includes an IBPP editorial commentary.

"Yes, we have slain a large dragon... but we live now in a jungle filled with a bewildering variety of poisonous snakes." (James Woolsey, former Director, Central Intelligence)

As we assess the international security environment and its possible directions in the coming century, the millennium brings with it a bleak future. Rather than a new world order, we face a highly fluid and volatile new world disorder that is perhaps more unstable and uncertain than any other period of history. The new security threats facing the international system are not easily countered by traditional tools of statecraft and have been termed "Gray Area Phenomena (GAP)" (i). Simply put, these threats are the biblical Horsemen of the Apocalypse joined by a variety of new riders that include ethno-religious-nationalistic conflict, weapons proliferation (both conventional and weapons of mass destruction), conflict over scarce resources, AIDS and other infectious diseases, economic warfare and conflict over technology, famine, emigration, the globalization of organized crime, drug trafficking, and terrorism.

These riders are both new and uncomfortably familiar. Terrorism is a prime exemplar of GAP, for while it has a long history and has been studied in depth, it is undergoing a transformation--a transformation which makes it even more complex and more lethal. My intention is not to offer a portent of a bleak and dismal future, but to offer an assessment of the emerging trends in terrorism: technology, underlying motivation, and challenges to law enforcement and the intelligence community.

The Threat of Religious Terrorism.

Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
are full of passionate intensity.

-----W.B. Yeats, The Second Coming

## International Bulletin of Political Psychology

As a starting point for this analysis, I would suggest that terrorism encompasses all forms of political violence and non-conventional warfare executed by non-state actors (ii). It is without a doubt a type of warfare and as such can be expected to go through evolutionary stages. Most of the terrorism in the post-World War II period was based on anti-colonial, nationalistic movements with clearly defined political goals. Over the last fifteen years, however, there has been an increase in the number of terrorist groups motivated by a religious imperative.

Religious terrorism is hardly a new phenomenon. History is replete with examples of religiously driven acts of violence from the Ismaili Shi'ite Assassins of 12th century Syria to the attempted destruction of Parliament and assassination of King James I by Catholics in 1605. More recent examples include the bombing of the World Trade Center by Islamic fundamentalists in 1993, the murder of 29 Islamic worshippers at Hebron in February 1994--also the site of the massacre of 69 Jews in 1929--and the assassination of Israel's Prime Minister Rabin in 1996.

The concern over the resurgence of religious terrorism stems from the terrorist worldview of serving as an instrument of divine will. Rather than appealing to a vaguely defined political movement, the religious terrorist appeals to the masses in terms of ancestral history, racial purity, and the defense of the faith against the godless. Consequently, the mechanisms of legitimization and justification, concepts of morality, and the calculus of violence are radically different. While secular terrorists carry out actions intended to appeal to both actual and potential sympathizers, religiously driven terrorists are engaged in a total war, with no audience other than themselves and their communities (iii).

Of equal concern are the Millennial groups, such as the cult AUM Shinri Kyo that launched the sarin gas attack in a Tokyo subway station in 1995. Millennial groups are even less constrained than other religious terrorists because they may see themselves not only as the instruments of divine will but the chosen survivors of a global Armageddon. Followers of Shoko Asahara--fanatically devoted to a worldview based partially on Buddhism, partially on Apocalyptic literature--not only prepared for the end of the world but attempted to encourage its progress. Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the cult was the extent of its following and its resources. Reportedly, the movement had 10,000 members in Japan, 20,000-35,000 in Russia, as well as unknown numbers of followers in the United States (US), Germany, and Australia with estimated financial assets US\$1.2 billion (iv). AUM gained access to Russian military training, obtained a Soviet nerve agent detector, and actively sought to obtain nuclear weapons or materials from the FSU.

Whether motivated by religion or secular goals, terrorist actions are dependent on shock value to bring attention to their movements (v). As the public becomes increasingly numbed by media accounts of terrorist attacks, terrorists, in all probability, will carry out actions intended to generate higher casualties or greater economic loss. Although the number of casualties from terrorist actions has been decreasing, the lacing of the World Trade Center bomb with cyanide, the downing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Scotland, and the plot uncovered in the Philippines to bomb airliners over the Pacific suggest that terrorism is about to enter a more violent phase.

Additionally, we must recognize that an increasing number of terrorist strikes will occur in the United States. For too long we have been lulled into a false sense of complacency, believing that "Fortress America" was invulnerable. We may see more terrorist actions directed against targets in the US, not only by foreign terrorist groups, but also by our own home-grown terrorists. These actions may occur through the spread of ethnic-nationalistic movements, emigrant enclaves, militia groups, white supremacists, or even ultra-conservative religious groups such as the "Soldiers of God," who have

International Bulletin of Political Psychology

claimed responsibility for bombing an abortion clinic and a gay bar in Atlanta. Professor Francis Stanza of the University of Chicago estimates that the number of militia groups in the US is nearly 400 separate groups. While these groups are not organized under any type of central authority, they are highly motivated by their belief systems. Although they have access to high-tech weaponry, they are just as capable of effectively using low-tech weaponry to achieve their goals.

Technology and the Terrorist: Soft Targets and Innovators.

The hallmark of terrorist and guerrilla movements has been the successful application of limited resources against technologically, economically, and militarily superior forces. As a consequence, terrorists are highly skilled at determining weaknesses in targets and are extremely resourceful. While terrorists tend to be conservative in nature, preferring to use tried and tested tactics and weapons, they are also imitative. Once a new tactic has been attempted, or a new timing device has been used, other groups are likely to follow suit (vi).

In terms of technological innovations, terrorists have been adept at building their own weaponry. Groups such as the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and AUM Shinri Kyo have been highly successful in recruiting college-educated scientists or technicians capable of designing and building weapons. The bomb which brought down Pan Am Flight 103 over Scotland used a sophisticated, multi-phased timing device (vii). The IRA offers a prime example of the utilization of both high-tech weapons and whatever materials are at hand. In terms of high-tech weaponry, sophisticated bombs and incendiary devices have been used in London department stores. On the lower end of the technology spectrum, sewer pipes placed on the back of stolen trucks have proved to be deadly mortars. The mortars are usually equipped with timing mechanisms which allow the terrorists plenty of time to leave the area before the attack and help them to avoid arrest (viii). Also, explosives are often produced from diesel fuel and fertilizer--materials which are readily available and unregulated.

Terrorists may also be able to gain access to high-tech weapons through state sponsors, organized crime syndicates, or drug cartels. Lacking support from Moscow, terrorist groups are seeking connections that will provide the capital and logistical support necessary to carry out their goals. Sendero Luminoso created an alliance with drug smugglers in order to strengthen their control of the Peruvian countryside and obtain badly needed funding (ix). In terms of weaponry, shipments to the IRA of stand-off weapons such as RPG-7 rocket launchers and Redeye surface-to-air missiles have been intercepted. Also, an IRA-attempted purchase of Stinger surface-to-air missiles was foiled by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) (x). Stand-off weapons such as light anti-tank and anti-air missiles may be more readily available on the black market than we would like to believe (xi).

IBPP Commentary. For purposes of dialogue with the IBPP readership and with the author, we offer another definition of terrorism--the achievement of political objectives through the psychological effects on political decision makers of violence and/or the threat of violence. In this definition political entails any situation in which there is a disparity between the real and the ideal--what one has or is and what one wants or wants to be--in the context of need being greater than existing resources to meet the need. And this definition suggests that terrorism may be implemented by and against state and non-state actors alike. Also the definition leads to a basic equivalence between the political and religious terrorisms differentiated by Kinnison. Although the two may differ in overt mechanisms and in surface characteristics, they are quite similar in underlying processes and in underlying source characteristics. For example, the psychologies of the respective ideologies are characterized by similar psychodynamic needs and social psychological phenomena of compliance, identification, and internalization. Also, both

## International Bulletin of Political Psychology

political and religious terrorisms may or may not have clearly defined goals. Finally, IBPP would posit that gaining access to high-tech weapons through state sponsors, organized crime, drug cartels, and the like is more than possible and has in fact already occurred. (IBPP encourages readers to post their own opinions concerning Kinnison's first installment and the IBPP commentary on the IBPP Open Forum at our web page.)

(Note: The second installment of this article will be published next week and provides opinions on chemical, biological, and nuclear terrorism as well as challenges to intelligence and law enforcement.)

(Notes. ((i) Holden-Rhodes, J.F., and Lupsha, P. *Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Gray area phenomenon and the New World disorder*; (ii) Terrorism is defined by the U.S. State Department as "...premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience." U.S. Department of State. (April, 1996.) Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism. 1995 *Patterns of Global Terrorism*, p.2 of accessed report (gopher://dosfan.lib.uic.edu). The FBI states that "Terrorism is the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof in furtherance of political and social objectives." Hoffman, B., and Riley, K.J. (1995.) *Domestic Terrorism: A National Assessment of State and Local Preparedness*. Santa Monica, California: RAND, p. 3; (iii) Hoffman, B. (1995.) *Holy terror: The implications of terrorism motivated by a religious imperative*. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 18, 272-273. See also Ranstrop, M. (Summer, 1996.) *Terrorism in the name of religion*. *Journal of International Affairs*, 41-62. Mark Juergensmeyer suggests that there are three types of religious nationalism. Ethnic religious nationalism politicizes religion as a means of employing religious identity for political ends, e.g., the IRA. Ideological religious nationalism religionizes politics by placing political issues in a sacred context--as witnessed by the rise of the Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran. Ethno-ideological religious nationalism combines elements of ethnicity and ideology and induces double sets of enemies--ethnic rivals and their own secular leaders. Hamas is a prime example of this type of movement, simultaneously attacking Israel as an ethnic rival, and sparring with Arafat's Palestinian Authority, often carrying out attacks against Israelis intended to discredit Arafat. See Juergensmeyer, M. (Summer 1996.) *The worldwide rise of religious nationalism*. *Journal of International Affairs*, 1-20; (iv) Croddy, E. (November, 1995.) *Urban terrorism-Chemical warfare in Japan*. *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 521. See also Brackett, D.W. (1996.) *Holy Terror: Armageddon in Tokyo*. NY: Weatherhill Inc. and Kaplan, D.E., and Marshall, A. (1996.) *The Cult at the End of the World*. NY: Crown Publishers, Inc.; (v) As expressed by Brian Jenkins, former terrorist expert at RAND, "Terrorism is a campaign of violence designed to inspire fear, to create an atmosphere of alarm which causes people to exaggerate the strength and importance of the terrorist movement. Since most terrorist groups are small and have few resources, the violence they carry out must be deliberately shocking." Jenkins, B.M. (November, 1975.) *Will terrorists go nuclear?* The RAND Paper Series, No. P-5541; (vi) For example, Jeffrey Simon, a former terrorist expert at RAND, points to the evolution of air-jacking--from individuals forcing planes to Cuba in the 1960s, to Palestinians copying the pattern but seizing aircraft and hostages for longer periods of time and eventually blowing up planes on the ground, and finally destroying aircraft in the air in the 1970s. Similarly, suicide car and truck bombs are innovative tactics initially developed to counter the United States Marine presence in Lebanon in 1983. Simon's prophecy for the future is grim: "The post-Cold War environment is likely to present new opportunities for terrorists to try new methods of killing." See Simon, J.D. (1994.) *The Terrorist Trap: America's Experience with Terrorism*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 356; (vii) Kupperman, R. (Summer, 1995.) *A dangerous future: The destructive potential of criminal arsenals*. *Harvard International Review*, 80; (viii) Boyne, S. (August, 1996.) *Uncovering the Irish Republican Army*. *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 346; (ix) Tarazona-Sevillano, G. (1990.) *Sendero Luminoso and the Threat of Narcoterrorism*. The Center for Strategic and

International Bulletin of Political Psychology

International Studies. NY: Praeger Publishers. Brigadier General Eduardo Bellido Mora, Commander, Huallaga Military Command, states that Sendero Luminoso receives more than \$100 million yearly from drug-related activities. See Holden-Rhodes, J.F. (1994.) Sharing the Secrets: Open Source Intelligence & The War on Drugs. Lexis-Nexis Government Information Services. Albuquerque: NM: The University of New Mexico Printing Services, 110; (x) Boyne, S. (August, 1996.) Uncovering the Irish Republican Army. Jane's Intelligence Review, 344; (xi) Sloan, S. (1995.) Terrorism: How vulnerable is the United States? In S. Pelletiere (Ed.) Terrorism: National Security Policy and the Home Front. The Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, p. 3 of accessed report (<http://www.kimsoft.com/korea/terror.htm>.) (Keywords: Terrorism..)