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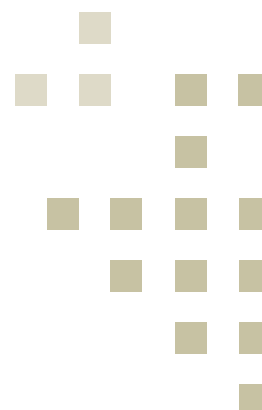
## The Rhetoric of Hegemony
How the extended definition of terrorism redefines international relations.

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# The Rhetoric of Hegemony

How the extended definition of terrorism redefines international relations

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**[Abstract]** This paper looks at the rhetorical extension of the word "terrorism" to cover what used to be called guerrilla war, separatism, civil war, armed resistance and all other forms of political violence, down to and including non-lethal sabotage and vandalism. It begins by reflecting on how political power must be buttressed by legitimacy, which in turn involves the de-legitimisation of challengers. This is often achieved by assimilating political dissent to the "criminality" that by definition governments are created to combat. When governments use the term "order" to mean their own convenience, and the converse, this can effectively evoke the individual citizen's fear of personally suffering violence, even when he is in fact more at risk from the government itself than from its critics. In much the same way, "terror" no longer means government violence against citizens (as in the 19th century), nor solely violence against civilians by dissident groups; it has recently mutated to mean any armed resistance to the party deploying the rhetoric, even in conventional military forms. The terrorist label is the ultimate delegitimising technique, which may be employed to mobilise metropolitan populations to support a globally-coordinated suppression of resistance to the new world order.

**INTRODUCTION**

This paper sets out to illuminate the ways in which the definition of the term 'terrorist' has changed in recent years. The thrust of these changes has been to embrace categories of political violence that used to go under other names, such as sabotage, resistance, insurgency, separatism and civil war. The purpose of such a semantic shift can only be to de-legitimise such forms of political violence; in other words, to enhance political mobilisation in the interests of the parties against whom the sabotage, resistance, insurgency and separatism are directed.

The first section is a reflection on how political power can never rest on naked force alone, but must be supplemented by legitimacy, which in turn involves the de-legitimisation of challengers. The rhetorical devices by which governments assimilate political dissent to the 'criminality' that by definition they are created to combat are analysed, and we suggest how governments use the term 'order' to mean their own convenience, and the converse. We follow this with a brief historical survey of the concept of 'terror', which started as a term for government violence against citizens, then meant violence against civilians by dissident groups, and has recently mutated to mean any armed resistance to the party deploying the rhetoric, even in conventional military forms. Finally, we consider how the changed meanings of the concept of terrorism may be used for globally-coordinated suppression of resistance to the new world order.

**POWER AND RHETORIC**

"Power grows out of the barrel of a gun", said Mao Tse-Tung. And yet this cannot be the bottom line, since the gun has to be held by someone, and this someone has to have reasons for pointing it at you. His reasons may be 'personal', for example, you have something he wants or you have done something bad to him previously; or they may be 'political', that is, someone has induced him to point the gun at you by shaping his view of the world.

In past ages the process of inducing such political action has been dignified by terms such as 'political ideas', 'political philosophy' and 'political communication'. However, these terms come trailing clouds of earnestness, and suggest a good faith that may not answer to any actual reality. We confess ourselves fonder of the modern expression, 'spin', because it seems to us to be more rooted in what human beings are best at, namely deceit. All animals act, but only Man can describe his own actions in language; all animals act, but only Man can make someone else carry the can; all animals act, but only a man can, through language, persuade others to act in his interests and against their own.

Very few governments rest on naked force alone. Someone has to apply the force, and then there is a trade-off between a small apparatus that the rulers can afford to remunerate so that each member has a direct personal interest in the ruler's service – that is, he is paid in gold, girls and glory -- and a larger apparatus that cannot be guaranteed such a direct interest, because there is not enough to go round. The small coercive force risks being overwhelmed by an exasperated populace, the larger coercive force is likely to split into competing and plotting factions. For that matter, history shows that even elite palace guards are rather good at murdering their employers, confident that their perks will be maintained or increased by the next

unfortunate to occupy the throne. A wise prince will therefore master the black art of *divide et impera*, the juggling of mighty subordinates, the playing-off of interest-groups against one another, and the creation and exploitation of complex hatreds, so that he may occupy the still eye of the hurricane.

Few rulers have dared live by the motto of *oderint dum metuant* – a wise prince seeks also to be obeyed through love as well as fear. The fastest route to this end is to exploit the programming of the human family structure, so to speak piggybacking on hardwired imperatives to love and obey our parents, even when they appear to be treating us badly. In what we may call 'neural subversion', the ruler may present himself as our father, or as the viceroy of God, which is effectively the same thing. It would be both arduous and superfluous to list the polities whose rulers have claimed either divine honours or the fatherhood of their people. A second route to the affection of the subject is to become the embodiment of the 'nation', which means that we love our own reflections in the mirror of the prince.

Relying on such affective transference alone is, however, dangerous. Human passions are apt to transform themselves into their opposites without warning. According to Freud, we want to kill our fathers; which may be unfortunate for the prince who is posing as the father of his country. Reality must therefore be shaped for his subjects in an additional way; power is supplemented by authority. By 'power', we mean the ability to make us do what the prince tells us. By 'authority', we mean the ability to make us say, to ourselves and one another, that we *ought* to do what the prince tells us. Freud described the superego as created by "the introjection of the parental veto"; in the same way, political legitimacy is clearly, at least in part, an internalisation of power-relations in individual psychology and national culture.

To explore or even discuss all the ways in which government legitimises itself by inducing people to think that they 'ought' to obey it, irrespective of their own interests and the government's actions, is naturally an immense task. The honest purchase of political legitimacy by the provision of actual services and benefits to the populace does not concern us here. Neither do the venerable doctrines of social contract theory, whereby people are understood to assent to being ruled, on the basis of a historical delegation or an ongoing bargain with their rulers.

Our interest is rather in the rhetorical devices by which a government may de-legitimise, discredit and even demonise those who oppose it, whether or not such opposition is supposedly legitimate under the current rules of the game. By opposition, we mean both domestic and foreign opponents, as the rhetoric involved so frequently combines the two into a single enemy image. By rhetorical manipulation of language, a government can shape the cognitive structure of the population, and of foreign populations too, so as to enjoy a level of support for its agenda that it could never hope to receive were the audience for the rhetoric left to consider its own interests in peace.

**TREASON, SEDITION AND OTHER DISSENT**

One of the primary ways in which a government increases its legitimacy and induces its population to support it above and beyond what their own interests dictate is by assimilating the concepts of 'opposition' and 'crime'. It goes without saying that governments are meant to act against 'crime', at any rate crime committed by their less powerful subjects, as this is part of the definition of a government. The social contract theory of the English Empiricist philosophers, upon which much of our political thinking is based, and which most people in the West probably utilise instinctively, saw the essence of government in the delegation of the individual's right to self-defence. The simplest example of this is when a Wild West township elects a sheriff; the two things that are supposed to happen thereafter is that the sheriff arrests criminals and that everyone else assists him (in the *posse*), or at least refrains from interfering with him. Conversely, when a government reaches a certain level of incompetence in combating crime, it is customary to speak of 'law and order' as having 'broken down', or even of the government having 'collapsed'. To the distress of the believers in voluntary association and mutual aid, we generally call this 'anarchy' – meaning 'no rule', for the essence of rule is justice and punishment.

A government, then, persecutes crime by definition, and only a small minority will object to its doing so.  This primal function of government, allied to vicarious popular bloodthirstiness, creates a stock of 'affective capital' on which the government may be tempted to expect an ever-higher rate of return. That is, it may be tempted to declare anything that inconveniences it to be a 'crime'. And a government is not an abstraction or even a body corporate that has no interests other than governance; it is composed of men and women who have particular economic and social interests, and would have them outside government; indeed, these interests are quite possibly the reason they went into politics or government service in the first place. In addition, even if a government is not crudely Marx's "committee of the bourgeoisie", then it will certainly be more attentive to the interests of some classes and groups of people than others. The temptation will then be to declare anything that inconveniences these client interests to be a 'crime' as well, so as to induce the rest of the population to help defend them. When an elite talks about 'society' and threats to that society or 'social structure', what it actually means is threats to its own power and wealth.  The trick is to get the majority of the population behind its defence of its privileges.

In a way we are here starting from the wrong end, inasmuch as the notion that political opposition need not necessarily lead to the dungeon or the block has, historically speaking, been the exception rather than the rule. We do not, however, wish to discuss the political science of the spectrum between 'oriental despotism' and 'liberal democracy'. Our interest is rather in the rhetorical terminology of opprobrium employed by governments, even those that supposedly permit a measure of dissent, in order to legitimise the persecution of those who dissent a little too much. In addition, we will be concerned with the use of the language of common criminality for what is actually political resistance.

We will first clear out of the way some terms from the age of the Divine Right of Kings that are rarely encountered but which, as we shall see, are really of a piece with less obsolete language. *Lese-majesty* is now generally used in a jocular or ironical

manner for failure to do justice to a megalomaniac politician's dignity, but was no laughing matter four hundred years ago; offence against the sovereign majesty was another way of saying treason. Addressing the Lord's Anointed in the manner of a hostile press conference today would assuredly have counted. In the same family are other terms that had meaning within the now antiquated conceptual framework of the ruler as father of his country, which is itself a corollary of the equally antiquated conceptual framework of the *paterpotestas* or total authority of a father over his children. In this world, political opposition is ***insubordination, frowardness, impudence*** and ***insolence***. A similar reproach to dissenters is that they ***do not know their place***. This phrase relies on the assumption that people are born into an estate in which they should remain. Magnates might disagree among themselves, but the lower orders have no business taking an interest in the doings of their betters.  In the same way, ***tub-thumper, demagogue*** and ***ranter*** suggest the disdain for the public space of those accustomed to rule from gentlemen's clubs; while ***rabble-rouser*** as term of abuse functions only among the like-minded, those who are quite sure that they themselves cannot be mistaken for rabble.

None of these derogatory terms for the opposition involve what we would now consider a crime. We must therefore move on to rhetorical expressions that do carry implications of some kind of criminality.

The first thing to note is that the up-front expressions ***political crime*** and ***political offence*** are not used by modern Western democracies about themselves. Their primary reference is to Soviet-style states and other benighted dictatorships that have the effrontery to jail their oppositions. A secondary usage is by Western radicals attempting to draw parallels between their own countries and these reprehensible Others. At this point things get complicated, because in the Soviet Union 'political offence' tended to mean something that Western democracies purport to consider lawful political activity, such as criticising the government in print and grass-roots political activity outside Party control, whereas the radical domestic usage tends more towards violence committed for political purposes. For example, British radicals might attempt to call an IRA bomber a 'political criminal' or, when caught, a 'political prisoner'. The British Government always denied the existence of such a category, and conservatives in particular used to insist that the IRA were "nothing but common criminals".

Each side was right in its own way. The radicals were trying to say that a man who murders for a political cause is a different beast from a man who murders for gain or in anger, and must be treated differently; not necessarily more leniently, but, whereas one does not negotiate with common criminals, and there is anyway no central criminal leadership to talk to, states may one day be obliged to negotiate with the 'murderers' of their separatist or rebel movements. It is not unusual for the movement's leader to be in jail or condemned in absentia when such talks begin. For their part, conservatives 'hear' the radical expression as a denial that IRA bombers are any kind of criminal. If 'political' means 'you should be able to do it', then 'political criminal' becomes not a modified noun but an offensive oxymoron suggesting that it is 'all right' to murder for a cause.

It is very important for a Western democracy to suppress the notion that it is possible for someone to commit such a thing as a 'political offence' on its own soil. Such things only happen abroad. If there is no such thing as a political offence, then it follows that anything the government decides to prosecute must be not a political matter but a *criminal* offence, in the usual sense of the word criminal. In this way the government's case will benefit from the public opprobrium attracted by criminals, and the government will enjoy a return on its affective capital. To do this the state will find or make a law against which the act is an offence, even if uncharitable observers might wish to call that act political. To take two UK examples: whistleblowing will often be a violation of the Official Secrets Act and thereby a form of treason, and being sufficiently rude about public figures can attract a prosecution for the newly-invented offence of 'criminal libel'. It is not then likely that anyone on the government side is going to remind the public that the offence for which so many were sent to the Gulag was, in fact, "slandering the Soviet State".

It is, of course, a truism that **treason** is always a crime, unless it is successful. "Treason doth never prosper; what's the reason? For if it doth, none dare call it treason." Like war crimes at Nuremburg, treason is about the justice of the victor, this time in an internal battle. When a rebellion or coup d'etat, perhaps supported by a foreign power, succeeds, it is called a revolution or a liberation; when it fails it is high treason. It should be noted that such events are not always violent and do not always inconvenience anybody except the ruling individuals, who may or may not have had it coming. In the case of the bloodless coup the line between treason and the normal political process, if any, can be very thin indeed.

Equally thin is the line between betrayal of the 'country' or people, the betrayal of the 'state' and the inconveniencing of particular individuals. Much the same goes for the near-synonyms of treason, **disloyalty** and **perfidy**. This is what treason actually means, but the latter terms make the content clearer to the modern ear. As such, they beg the question, faithlessness to what or whom? It is naturally in the interests of the power-holders to identify inconvenience to themselves with treason against the nation. Whether they are right to do so will be in the eye of the beholder; for 'no man is a villain to himself', and even quislings may imagine that they are acting in the true interests of the nation. This ambiguity offers plenty of scope for claiming that the criminal is 'really' political, and that the political is 'really' criminal.

There was once a time when **party** was a term of great opprobrium, meaning the same as **faction** and **schism**; it was considered to be a criminal rending of the fabric of the body politic. The usage was alive and well under Soviet-style Communism, in which 'splittist' was the prelude to purging. To modern Western ears, accustomed to organised parties as the vehicles of politics, the use of 'party' as an expletive has a strange ring. However, the underlying assumption is not yet dead even in our society, for we constantly hear people grumbling about the 'bickering' of politicians and asking why people cannot 'all pull together'. But in which direction? The same goes for **intrigue,** which is just a name for 'politics that we don't like', with an added flavour of something sinister and criminal. Demanding that there should be no party, no faction, no schism, no intrigue and no politics amounts to requiring that 'everyone do just what I say, and jump to it'. And yet dictatorships are, of course, as riddled with faction and intrigue as any other system.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, *sedition* means violent party strife accompanied by rioting. This definition may be unhistorical, in that various Sedition Acts have criminalized political opposition, and in practice sedition means plotting against the state or the people in charge thereof. Newspapers can thus be closed for 'sedition', without the editors or journalists having rioted in the streets. Once again, interests of the rulers is in assimilating dissent and protest to a phenomenon that their citizenry will agree is criminal, namely riot and destruction.

An even more common term is *subversion*. This is simply Latin for overthrowing. Other people's regimes are overthrown whereas one's own is subverted. As always, the intention is that people not ask exactly *what* is being subverted and *why*, so that punitive action against subversives appears to be a law of nature.


**RESTORING ORDER**

This brings us to a whole family of rhetorical devices that emphasise the link between political opposition and unsafe streets. In the UK, the criterion for reading of the Riot Acts and thereby the use of deadly force against the citizenry involves the causing of fear in a strong-minded person. As we saw, enabling people to walk the streets with no fear of violence is essentially what the State is *for*, and so branding an opposition with responsibility for the endangerment of life and limb from *affray, tumult, riot* and *disturbance of the peace,* on the part of *canaille, mischief-makers, troublemakers, rowdies, hooligans* and *brawlers,* is a powerful technique.

In reality, such *mob violence* is not always a hazard to innocent civilians. We would venture to suggest, for example, that life is far more alarming for the residents of London when Scotland are playing England at Wembley than when a political demonstration has turned nasty. Confrontation between demonstrators with their *anarchist* fringe and the police is arguably an organised sport, and far more ritualised even than football hooliganism. Police forces sometimes harass, irritate and provoke an initially peaceful march into hostilities; like Voltaire's God, if violence at political protests did not exist it would have to be invented, since it brings the protest message into disrepute, and there is only one side that benefits from this.

The family of terms that concentrate on disturbance of the peace, such as *law and order, disorder, crimes against the social order, lawlessness* and so forth, have one thing in common. Namely, they all assume that the state of affairs protested against can properly be characterised as peaceful, orderly and lawful. Frequently it is none of these things. If, for example, people are protesting against government corruption, the latter is no more lawful than the protests and probably less lawful, even by the state's own laws.

Some unsubtle governments give the game away by criminalizing protest marches while at the same time mobilising support demonstrations that can be just as riotous, and even turn into pogroms; for some strange reason the latter are never considered a breakdown of law and order. Violence against oppositionals is never a crime, and bussing in miners to beat up students is never disorder. 'Maintaining order' and 'Restoring order' are frequently euphemisms for imprisoning or executing large numbers of inconvenient citizens.

Three more terms that share the same assumptions are ***sabotage***, which takes the image of an essential machine that is violently broken and applies it to 'society', whereas in fact it is by no means certain what it means to sabotage 'society' as a whole, as opposed to interference with particular political and economic interests. The use of ***malcontent*** as a de-legitimising term implies that everyone ought to be content, and that there is something very wrong about not being so; the implication is that the malcontent suffers from a personality disturbance (mal- as in malady) rather than a justified discontent with specific abuses. ***Agitation***, outside communist circles always carrying a negative charge, implies that discontent never happens by itself, in response to social conditions, but needs to be stirred up by troublemakers. How people who have no grievances of their own can be so excited by ***fomenters*** of mischief is never explained. It was, in fact, a conservative who said that "revolutions are not fomented, they are provoked", but his wise words are generally ignored; criminalizing the protest is less strenuous than redressing the grievances.

As for peace, some consider that this requires more than the mere absence of violence, but includes justice as well -- the 'shalom' concept. However, the state very much resembles the patriarch who defines 'the happy family' in terms of his doing and saying whatever he likes, and proceeds to describe any objection as 'destroying the harmony of the family'. Peace, then, means that certain individuals are allowed to amass power and riches without disturbance.

In short, sometimes political protestors commit crimes and create disorder, and sometimes what they are protesting is itself a crime and what the government does to stop them itself creates disorder. However, in the latter case the government will never admit anything of the kind; the fundamental principle here is that whatever a state does in the way of oppression and massacre, it will invariably call by the name of 'order'. Because of the way the state is rooted in the social contract of obedience in return for maintenance of order, such tendentious rhetoric will usually have the desired effect at the newspaper-laden breakfast-table.

When governmental oppression and violence are so horrendous that only the most authoritarian or gullible newspaper-readers in the country itself are falling for the 'law and order' rhetoric, foreign readers and policy-makers may continue to be taken in. Or else the foreign policy-makers may be on the same side as the murderous government and consequently instruct their newspapers to preach the 'restoration of order' in that country. The foreigners may then intervene militarily in order to help that government 'restore order'. The mirror-image situation is also common; the foreign state complains of the 'disorder' in a neighbouring state, such disorder being variously real, imaginary or created from nothing by the intervening state ('destabilisation'), and invades in order to put a stop to it.

Since cross-border incursion is a practice as old as borders, a settled nation will indeed frequently be discommoded by a revolution-exporting country or 'failed state' next door. Just as in the case of the domestic criminal, therefore, there is a real threat (cross-border attack) to which a government is by definition obliged to respond, and this real threat represents a stock of affective capital upon which governments can expect a return -- in the form of public support for many kinds of intervention to

'restore order'. These days, such cross-border nuisances are called 'terrorists', and we must therefore turn to how this word has been and is now defined and used.

## FROM ROBESPIERRE TO RESISTANCE

The Seventies and Eighties saw much academic attention paid to 'terrorism'. This was partly because the tactics of the PLO, such as the simultaneous hijacking of four airliners, had a major impact on global politics, and partly because the terrorism of the Baader-Meinhof was such a puzzle. In the latter case people wanted to know why the rebelliousness of middle-class youngsters in a rich and advanced country had turned so lethal. However, defining 'terrorism' in a scholarly way – that is, creating precise and unambiguous inter-subjective definitions that could then be used to measure the incidence of the phenomenon in the real world -- turned out to be very difficult.

One reason for this is that the 'ism' suffix is normally associated with an ideology, and the definition of an ideology can usually begin with its creator or objectives (for instance 'Marxism' and 'communism'); yet 'terrorism' is not an ideology but a method. We do not speak, however, of 'votism' or 'general-strikism'. Both of these sound like designations of communist heresies; an –ism attached to a method is always derogatory. The first thing to be noted, therefore, is that these people are denoted in terms of the methods they use rather than what they are trying to achieve, or the grievances about which they are complaining. This is very convenient for the authors of those grievances.

We consider it more correct to consider 'terrorism' in terms of different people doing different unpleasant things to different victims for different reasons. In much the same way, 'accidents' are a wide variety of occurrences, united only by the fact that they are unwanted and happen to us.

The academic attempt to demarcate 'terrorism' from other forms of lethal political violence, including war, has focused primarily on (1) whether the targets are civilian or military, (2) whether these targets are chosen for their intrinsic nature, or to send a message to, frighten or destabilise the wider society, and (3) whether the perpetrators are non-governmental organisations. The first dimension attempts to distinguish terrorism from separatist, insurgent and guerrilla warfare; the second differentiates terrorism from tyrannicide, assassination or strikes at political organisations and economic assets; and the third involves the controversial question of 'state terrorism'.

We consider, however, that scholarly discussion of such tricky nuances is doubly pointless. Firstly, as suggested above, the conversion of a method used by such a variety of actors for a variety of purposes into a hypostasis, an abstract *thing*, an –ism, is in fact a tool of state rhetoric specifically designed to prevent people asking the question of who is doing what to whom and why. Secondly, the inter-subjectivity of the definition of terrorism, which was never in the best of health, has now collapsed completely. By this we mean that there always was a partisan usage, often summarised and satirised as 'I am a freedom-fighter, thou art a guerrilla, he is a terrorist', but that now the situation is even worse. We shall argue below that the concept of terrorism has been extended, quite deliberately, to encompass all three of the categories excluded by the Eighties definition and a few more into the bargain.

Before we look at the extension of the definition over the last decade, we shall pay a visit to the historical roots of the word itself. Ironically enough, the earliest political use of the word Terror referred to political violence by state authorities. The word was coined for that phase of the French Revolution in which the Committee of Public Safety was most assiduous in the guillotining of aristocrats. The nineteenth century called such sanguinary episodes Red Terror when perpetrated by Jacobins and other revolutionaries, White Terror when perpetrated by royalists. Throughout that century, use of the words terror, terrorist and terrorism to refer to violence against a government was the exception to the rule. The last couple of generations before the First World War were severely afflicted by conspiracies of assassins and bomb-throwers, but these were generally called 'anarchists' or 'nihilists'.

The next big milestone is encountered in the two world wars. Kaiser Wilhelm proclaimed a policy of 'Schreckligheit', usually translated as Frightfulness but arguably an equivalent to Terror as well. The second world war saw the rise and rise of 'terror-bombing' of civilian populations on the theory that they would revolt against their rulers or at least lose morale – a theory that proved quite unfounded. Terror-bombing was thus something we did to them, as well as something they did to us. Subsequent generations found the honesty of the term too much for them, and so it was replaced by 'strategic bombing', 'countervalue strikes', 'collateral damage' and now, most recently, by 'Shock and Awe'.

It should also be recalled that the German authorities in occupied Europe denoted the 'commandos' of the British Special Operations Executive as 'terrorists' and executed them on the spot. The same applied to native resistance movements. Some of these operations, as for instance when the Norwegians blew up and sank the Telemark heavy-water ferry with civilian casualties, were in fact 'terrorism' under the standard Eighties definition – unless, that is, one believes in a right of resistance to enemy conquest and occupation.

The use of the word Terror for large-scale government murder of dissidents survived into the second half of twentieth century, up to and including the title of Robert Conquest's book on Stalin's blood purges, "The Great Terror". However, it does not seem to have survived much longer. For nobody called Pol Pot's bloodbath a 'terror'. Instead, they called it 'genocide'. Originally meaning an extermination of an entire people or an attempt thereat, the paradigm case being the Jews, nowadays the word 'genocide' sometimes means the same thing (Rwanda), but is frequently diluted to mean 'the killing of an awful lot of people', while the previous term for that act, 'massacre', now seems to mean the killing of people by the dozen, or even by twos and threes.

The replacement of 'terror-bombing' by the various circumlocutions of Pentagonese, and of 'Terror' by 'genocide', so to speak 'privatised' terrorism. Both terminological changes signalled that 'terrorism' is no longer something that governments do, only something that individuals do.

The idea of an internationally binding proscription of terrorist organisations, identified with a broad brush, long predates the notoriety of al-Qaida. A UN Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism was enacted in 1999.

One of the sponsors and first signatories was the government of Sri Lanka, which had long been fighting an armed insurgency supported by the Tamil diaspora. It thus had a clear interest in drying up the funds of its enemy, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). For several reasons this issue repays a closer look. The Tiger cause is an ethnic separatism invoking the principle of national self-determination, but confronting a government for whom the 'unitary' (that is, non-federal) state was a shibboleth; a massive vote for independence had been met with military occupation and repression.

In this way the Tamil insurgency resembles many others in which the non-governmental players are called 'rebels', 'separatists' or 'guerrillas' – as the BBC still terms them. However, in this particular case the Sri Lankan government was unusually successful in attaching the label of 'terrorist' to its rebels. If we look at the three dimensions mentioned above, we find that the vast bulk of the LTTE's activity consisted (past tense because we are writing during the ceasefire and peace talks) of battlefield operations in uniform, that is, against the government's armed forces. There were even prisoner and body exchanges under the Geneva Conventions, through the ICRC. They also engaged in covert operations, but these were usually 'countervalue' strikes under the second criterion, rather than random – namely, a huge number of political assassinations. There were also some indubitably terrorist acts, presumably but not certainly by the LTTE (which never used to either confirm or deny responsibility). The Tigers rarely went in for urban bombing, and with the probable exception of the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, they did not carry out actions abroad. As regards the third criterion, they run a *de facto* state in the 'liberated areas'. They are thus far more like, say, the Eritrean Popular Liberation Front (which is their role-model) than they are like the IRA, the ETA or the Baader-Meinhof.

It would be both understandable and accurate if they were called a 'rebel army that also conducts some terrorist operations in the capital'. In the same way, when the Viet Cong blew up a building in Saigon, that was terrorism, but they were not called terrorists when they engaged in a firefight with the US Marines in the Delta, and neither was the North Vietnamese Army.

The Sri Lankan government and media, however, produced a terminological innovation that has proven to be globally infectious. Namely, the application of the word 'terrorist' to one's opponent in conventional military operations by land and sea. They thus wrote about 'terrorist artillery', 'terrorist armour' and 'terrorist naval vessels'. If the Tigers had aircraft, that would be a 'terrorist air force'. In other words, when there was a pitched battle or an assault on a fortified military base, the one uniformed military force was an 'army' and the other uniformed military force (which, being better motivated, trained and led, was frequently victorious), was 'terrorists'. One reason for this terminology is the refusal, for almost two decades, to admit that they were fighting (and failing to win) an ethnic war; another is to mobilise foreign states to help them win it.

We could envisage a questionnaire study, presenting both policymakers and ordinary people with questions that ask them to define 'terrorism' in the abstract, and questions that ask whether a particular incident was 'terrorism' or not, all of them buried in a mass of questions on other subjects. It would be our hypothesis that what we might call the formal and the ostensive definitions vary greatly; that, when asked about the

formal criteria of terrorism the respondents would agree, for example, that the casualties had to be civilian, but that, faced with a specific attack on a military entity they would call it terrorism.

It used to be the case that public figures killed for political reasons by dissident groups, rebel movements, foreign intelligence and so on were 'assassinated'. However, if the assassination is performed or attempted by a group that has already been labelled terrorist, there is a temptation to call the assassination 'terrorism', even though this is by no means a random attack on civilians in order to create a climate of fear. In this way no distinction is made between the IRA's car bombs and its attempt to blow up Mrs. Thatcher. The killing of Rajiv Gandhi, presumably by the LTTE, is sometimes called assassination and sometimes terrorism. It would be interesting to chart every assassination since Sarajevo 1914 to see if the incidence of labelling them as 'terrorism' is increasing.

Saddam Hussein is said to have attempted to assassinate the elder Bush; both before and after this, there was a lot of talk in the USA about assassinating Saddam. In the post-911 climate, we feel entirely confident that any attempt to kill the younger Bush, whether indiscriminately with a bomb or surgically with a sniperscope, will not be called assassination but terrorism. Such a question could be posed hypothetically in the questionnaire suggested above. However, the attempts to find and kill Saddam, continuing as we write, will never be termed 'terrorism', no matter how great the collateral damage.

Although the classic three dimensions took the lethality for granted, there has been a startling rise in the use of 'terrorism' for activities that do not cause injury to people at all. Although infuriating and costly, Internet virus-mongering and hacking are rarely lethal, and yet we have 'cyber-terrorism'. In the US the 'war on drugs' and the 'war on terrorism' are converging, which may ultimately justify the stigmatisation of potheads as 'terrorists'. Letting mink and lab rats out of cages is now no longer 'vandalism' but 'animal rights terrorism', while putting sugar in the tank of a forestry machine is no longer 'sabotage' but 'eco-terrorism'. In these cases it is not certain who or what is supposed to be feeling the emotion of terror. Clearly terrorism now includes damage to property, but neither ecological destruction nor maltreatment of animals counts – some property is more equal than others.

Another type of non-lethal modern 'terrorism' is the demonstration that turns violent. The United Kingdom's new legislation defines terrorism in terms of all political violence, whether premeditated or not. Theoretically, therefore, when demonstrator Smith punches the nose of policeman or counter-demonstrator Jones, this is terrorism; whereas when Brown punches the nose of Black for spilling beer on his shirt, this is ordinary assault-and-battery. So far from idealistic political motives being an extenuating, they are now an aggravating factor, and Smith can be subjected to far more draconian procedures and penalties than Brown. We are reminded of the way that, in the Gulag, it was much better to be an ordinary criminal murderer than a political offender.

The first dimension of the Eighties-type definition of terrorism was that it involved attacks on civilians. That was meant to exclude military-type operations against

purely military targets, lest the word be degraded to mean simply 'the enemy'. We have seen, however, how the Sri Lankan government resolutely refused to call the Tigers anything but terrorists, even when they were overrunning its heavily-fortified army camps by human-wave attacks supported by artillery and even captured armour. Another recent example is al-Qaida's attack on the USS 'Cole', a purely military affair that is nevertheless universally called 'terrorism' by the media, and the same applies to the Hizbollah attack on the US Marines in Beirut. It is morbidly amusing to hear people explain how the WTC strike was terrorism because it killed civilians, and the USS Cole strike was terrorism…… for some other reason.

One of these possible other reasons is the factor mentioned in our third dimension, that the terrorist should be a non-governmental entity. If we accept this criterion, we can no longer talk of 'state terrorism', which is, of course, the whole point; on the other hand, if war between states is described as terrorism, then everything is terrorism and the concept becomes useless. One would think that states, especially those that fight a lot of wars, would be the prime movers behind any restriction of the term to exclude government actors, so it is surprising that the United States has stigmatised the Iraqi resistance as 'terrorists', whether they are detonating car-bombs or shooting at soldiers. This usage began with the unilaterally declared 'end to hostilities', which means that an invader can choose whether his enemies are soldiers or terrorists. The resisters were, it was thought in the beginning, remnants of the Iraqi Army, Republican Guard and the Fedayeen, and were fighting on the direct orders of their head of state, who had very emphatically declined to surrender. So far from denying this continuity, which undermines the non-state-actor criterion, the American authorities incessantly emphasised it – no doubt because the alternative was to admit that ordinary Iraqis might not love them.

Unsurrendered armed forces of a sovereign state invaded by the USA, therefore, are henceforth also 'terrorists'. The logical next step, and indeed the only step left to take, would be to designate the entire armed forces of a sovereign state as 'terrorists' at the outset, before the war even begins. There is reason to think that this final step will be taken within the next year or two. Its conceptual underpinning will be the concept of the 'terrorist state'.

This is not entirely a new concept, having antecedents in the 'pirates' of the Barbary Coast. A few years ago it took the form of 'states that sponsor terrorism'. Naturally, the list of those states never included France, for blowing up the "Rainbow Warrior", or the USA, for devastating Nicaragua by proxy. It always meant 'states we don't like and do the same as we do'; the chief sin was not what was done, but that it was done to *us*. This is an old story, and we mention it solely because of the latest twist in the tale – the contraction of 'states that sponsor terrorism' into 'terrorist state'.

The linguistic difference is by no means as minor as it may at first sight appear. For 'state that sponsors terrorism' lays the emphasis on the first element, the state, and thus implies that sponsoring terrorism is something that this state chooses to do, presumably for what it considers a reason, and is therefore something that it may perhaps be persuaded to stop doing. 'Terrorist state', on the other hand, lays the emphasis on the adjective, suggesting that it is the very nature of this state that is wrong; it cannot be persuaded and must therefore be destroyed. Cognitive attribution theory may be invoked here; *we* do 'wet work' because we are regrettably obliged to

counter the actions of the terrorists, or to save the world from liberal-socialist-communist subversives, whereas *they* do it because they are Evil.

As ancient and medieval philosophers might have put it, in the case of 'states that sponsor terrorism', the terrorism is an 'accident' of the state; in the case of 'terrorist states', the terrorism is its 'essence'. The 'terrorist state' is thus a separate ontological category, a different order of being, from 'our' democratic freedom-loving states. This means that comparisons of actual behaviour are both unnecessary and downright unpatriotic, and also that said state enjoys no rights.

The rhetorical device of the 'terrorist state' threatens the complete breakdown of the international system sometimes identified with the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648; namely, that states respect one another's sovereignty and treat one another in accordance with agreed rules, even when they go to war. The United States' last two wars were conceptualised as being somehow a 'police action' against terrorism and a 'war' against states at one and the same time, offering the US the benefits of both and the drawbacks of neither. Aerial bombardment is not generally a police method, while warfare implies a legitimate opponent with whom one can sign a peace treaty. (It is true that Korea was also called a 'police action', but this was on a rather stronger foundation in international law.) The 'war on terror' offers the other side the status of neither suspect, nor convict, nor enemy, nor state. Indeed, American authorities have invented the new concept of 'illegal combatant', solely in order to argue that detainees are not protected by the Geneva Conventions since 'they are not prisoners of war but criminals', and simultaneously that they are not entitled to a trial and counsel because 'they are not criminals but prisoners of war'. And heads of state and government officials are conceptualised as criminals to be hunted down and disposed of – no due-process Nuremburg Tribunal appears to be planned for Iraq.

In short, all the criteria that once attempted to distinguish 'terrorism' from other forms of political violence have now been swept away, and most especially the principle that the definition of an act should be independent of who it is who commits it. The variety of acts and actors now stigmatised as 'terrorist' by the architects of the 'war on terror' is so wide that the only common feature appears to be that they involve something unpleasant or inconvenient to <u>us</u>. In other words, 'terrorist' has been mapped onto 'opponent'.

In the first phase of this subversion of the international state system, the offence given by the opponent, namely knocking down the World Trade Center, was so outrageous as to attract little sympathy from most observers. The affective capital generated by this undeniable terrorist attack was then re-invested in the second phase. Here the offence given by the opponent was much more complicated, as evidenced by the constant flux in the reasons cited for the conquest of Iraq. Here the impression was given that responsibility for 911, support for other terrorism, possession of weapons of mass destruction and domestic tyranny are all inter-connected and somehow equivalent. It has now been established, at any rate in the mind of Tony Blair, that if you conquer and occupy a sovereign state that was not responsible for 911 and did not have weapons of mass destruction, this is still a legitimate campaign in the war on terror, because the regime was such an unpleasant one. Waging aggressive war for a bad reason is thus entirely permissible, provided that a better reason is discovered after you have won. In fact, in a most perfectly circular argument, the Iraqi resistance

is now being used as proof that it was right to invade in the first place, because it shows that the Iraqis are 'terrorists'.

In this way, the specific terrorist criminal and the more general geopolitical opponent may be further confused and identified. The 'terrorist state' does not actually have to *do* anything terroristic – it is sufficient to *be* a state that is vehemently opposed to the new hegemonic project.  Since war, conquest and occupation of sovereign states tends to make other sovereign states somewhat alarmed and upset, such opposition is likely to increase; and with or without new terrorist acts, this growing opposition can then be parlayed into the concept of 'terrorist state' to justify new wars, conquests and occupations. It is a runaway feedback process.

The bipolar world of the USA versus the USSR, likewise the half-dozen Huntingtonian civilisations, indeed all the models of yesterday's political science, will alike be superseded by a different kind of bipolar world – the World-Empire versus the Terrorists. This term will subsume all manner of resistance to an imperial authority conceived of as resting on a divine mandate. The United States will be perpetually mobilised for war, as it has been ever since 1941, but even more so, indeed a 'garrison state'; but this will be without the usual conceptualisation of 'war' as an affair between parties with equal standing in international law.

In limited war the enemy may be negotiated with, in total war unconditional surrender may be demanded, but in the 'war on terror' the only possible aim is extirpation. That is, extirpation of 'terrorism', but what is that? How do you extirpate a method? It must mean extirpation of terrorists, but who are they -- people who have carried out terrorist attacks, people who are planning terrorist attacks, people who might one day plan terrorist attacks, or people who simply don't much like the Hegemon? Allied to the Neocon doctrine of 'preventive war' against all possible future threats, that is, against all possible foci of resistance to its own hegemony, this conceptualisation risks creating a logic that sooner or later must culminate in a war of extermination against whole nations or religions.   'They will create a desert and call it peace'.


**THE NEW AGE OF METTERNICH**

The extended concept of terrorism, which now includes everything from property damage to disciplined rebel armies, amounts to a criminalisation of all political resistance to perceived national, ethnic, class, religious or other oppression. 'Terrorism' is thus the inheritor of the rhetorical terms we outlined in the third section of this paper, such as subversion, sedition, anarchy and so on. This is a new move in the old game of condemning any objection to one's own oppressive rule as 'disorder', and calling the massacre of opponents the 'restoration of law and order'.

Just as it is in the interests of the rulers to assimilate domestic dissent and protest to a phenomenon that their citizenry will agree is criminal, namely riot and destruction, it is in the interests of the Hegemon to assimilate dissent, protest and rebellion against its dominance to a phenomenon that its own and allied citizenry will agree is criminal, namely 'terrorism'. Punitive acts against restless natives in the subjugated regions will now appear to be the discharge of normal police functions, and causes such as self-

determination will now become very difficult to argue. One may consider granting independence to separatists and rebels, but terrorism 'must' be put down.

The very specific connection between the rhetoric and the clear and present danger to the man in the street may explain why the 'terrorist' label is so resistant to the erosion that generally afflicts rhetorical devices. Before the public can contract the disease of cynicism from the application of the terrorist label to people who release mink from cages, for example, they are re-vaccinated by some new massacre of office-workers or bus passengers, even if this occurs a long way away. Individual fear is thus transmuted into collective action against the threat, and thus against anyone the government can successfully associate with that threat. Just as the vocabulary of order and disorder worked on the ordinary citizen's fear of being assaulted on the street or in his own home, the vocabulary of terrorism works on his fear of being blown to bits on the subway or at the airport, even though many of the movements that are or will be designated as terrorist are not remotely interested in doing any such thing. An organisation designated as part of 'international terrorism' is a frightening thing, even if it has never committed any outrages abroad. In this way the international public can be mobilised to help oppressive regimes fight their insurgents.

Many guerrilla, separatist and civil wars are fought in countries of which the man in the street has never heard. Left to himself, he would be unlikely to care about them. The Domino Theory was an attempt to make him take an interest and support the efforts of Western governments to maintain their client dictatorships in these distant parts. When the Vietnamese domino fell yet unaccountably failed to take Thailand, Indonesia and Australia with it, the theory became much harder to apply, and the collapse of the Soviet Union destroyed it completely -- there is no longer any 'communist' for countries to 'go'. The only method now available for mobilising the man in the street to support the suppression of national liberation movements 'in far-away countries of which he knows nothing', therefore, is telling him that they are part of 'the global network of international terrorism'.

In almost every period of history, states have supported dissidents and rebels in other states. Guerrilla armies have enjoyed sanctuary in other countries. Liberation movements have been supported by both ethnic diasporas and *bien-pensants*. We are moved to enquire what would have become of Nelson Mandela, who had been duly convicted and imprisoned under terrorist legislation, if the rest of the world had been bound by treaty to refrain from giving aid and comfort to the ANC. His cause was considered by most Westerners to be just; the Convention on the Financing of Terrorism, however, not only takes no account of the justice of a cause – as of course by its very nature it cannot --  but also mandates signatories not to tolerate the justification of terrorist acts "by considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or other similar nature" (Article 6), and forbids the refusal of extradition for political offences (Article 14), without defining that term. We would also note that UN Resolution 1373, adopted unanimously without any public debate, does not define the terrorists whose international suppression it demands. Coupled with the extension of the terrorism concept to all armed opposition that is increasingly dominating Western propaganda, no clearer denial of the right of resistance in which we have believed since John Locke can be imagined.

Despite a signal in Article 15 to the contrary, the proscription of funding for "charitable, social or cultural goals" (Preamble), naturally intended to deal with front organisations, is wide-open to abuse by a state waging war against ethnic or religious minorities to destroy their identities. Ironically enough, it is precisely the Baader-Meinhof type of fringe terrorist who is unlikely to be affiliated with organisations pursuing charitable, social or cultural goals and the national liberation movement with a genuine popular base that is likely to possess such affiliates. Another factor here is that a government's agent provocateurs may, by terrorist attacks falsely attributed to organisations that imagined themselves devoted to promoting a cultural identity, succeed in triggering global sanctions against their innocent activities.

Article 2 offers a good, Eighties-style definition of terrorism, both excluding guerrilla operations against soldiers and by implication including state bombing of civilian populations. In fact, the theoretical inclusion of state terrorism may be a signal that this definition is only there to be ignored. As far as we can see, the new system does not involve any mechanism for reviewing whether a signatory state that designates its opponents as terrorists, thus triggering denial of sanctuary by the other signatories, is right to do so.

For the whole idea of waging war on the armed forces of a state without harming any civilian – not even once – is wildly unrealistic. For all their talk about surgical strikes and minimising collateral damage, governments themselves always fail to achieve this goal, even when they genuinely try. We would argue that it cannot be done, that the impact of all armed conflict on civilians ranges from bad to horrendous, and always will. Fighting a relatively clean war is the best we can do, and it is deliberately fighting a dirty war that should be reprobated. This, however, should apply to both sides; perhaps we should rewrite the Geneva Conventions so as equally to promote not only less-horrendous interstate warfare, but also less-horrendous separatist and liberation warfare. Then *both* resistance movements that bomb station concourses *and* governments that massacre villages can face international sanctions, while resistance movements that attack army bases and governments that send troops into their fastnesses need not.

This of course, is not going to happen. What is going to happen is the global criminalization of any resistance movement that kills or even injures any civilian, even once, and even as a sideshow to honourable battlefield combat. What is going to happen is the denial of overseas sanctuary to each and any armed resistance movement, or even an unarmed and violent protest movement. Provided, of course, that this resistance is directed against the Hegemon and its friends; Cuba, for example, when attacked by Miami-based exiles, need not apply. Nor need India, facing massive Kashmir-related terrorism, and certainly not China, facing terrorism in Tibet.

Structures of ethnic, religious, class and economic oppression that benefit the US are from now on to be sacrosanct, and the international community is to be mobilised to help suppress any resistance. The Condor Plan, by which the Latin American juntas of the Seventies agreed to help one another suppress their respective dissenters, is about to go global. Now, 'resistance' implies that someone is doing something to someone that the victims find objectionable; the use of the extended terrorism concept to stigmatise all resistance means that what the Hegemon wishes to do to any group will be hereafter non-negotiable. Lip-service will undoubtedly be paid to promotion of

change through the ballot-box, while any inconvenient change will be suppressed. Indeed, John Ashcroft has said that terrorism is about threats to 'social structure'.

We mentioned Nelson Mandela as the paradigm case of the 'terrorist turned statesman' – national leader or even head of state. Jomo Kenyatta, Menahem Begin, Yasser Arafat, Xanana Gusmão and many other names also come to mind. It is worth noting Norway has not signed the Convention, because that would oblige it to proceed against the local representatives of the Tamil Tigers, at the same time as it is attempting to broker peace on the island. When persons or organisations are designated as 'terrorists', it is not impossible for them to become respectable negotiating partners, but it takes very much longer than when the opponent is designated 'rebel'. Rhetorical intoxication with one's own courageous 'refusal to negotiate with terrorists' is all very well and good, and may be a sound way of dealing with demented groupuscles and hostage-takers, but if the so-called terrorists are actually a national liberation movement or some other uprising of the dispossessed, such self-intoxication will cause an inability to comprehend what is really happening. In fact, there is a danger of reproducing, on a global scale, the outlook of the caste society referred to in the third section, where the wretched of the earth are loftily reprobated as 'malcontents', and economic and social misery is moralised or psychologised away as shiftlessness and depravity. We are seeing precisely this psychologising in the current Israeli notion that Palestinians are becoming suicide bombers, not because they have any actual grievances, but solely because evil outsiders are brainwashing and paying them to do so.

The 'war on terror' will, we fear, become transformed into a war of the miserly rich against the rebellious poor. In much of the world, real change can only come through armed rebellion and/or massive protest supported by friendly foreign powers. In the bipolar epoch such rebellion or protest was opposed by the United States but supported by the Soviet Union, or contrariwise. Thanks to the Convention and other similar instruments that will doubtless be enacted in the years to come, using the rhetoric of the global 'war on terror', the hegemonic powers will be better able to put the squeeze on small liberal countries that have hitherto been sympathetic to liberation movements --- see for instance the role played by Norway and its churches in undermining South African apartheid. A rhetorical framework is being created to prevent such a thing ever happening again; the lid is now to be put on such politics and screwed down.