

# **SECTION VIII INTRODUCTION: A COOPERATIVE APPROACH TO COUNTER-TERRORISM POLICY DEVELOPMENT\***

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**A**l-Qaeda proved to the world on September 11, 2001, that cooperation, integration, and outright mimicry is a successful strategy in warfare, achieving a learning curve by tactical and strategic information sharing that is normally seen only in scientific circles. Such terrorist entities have engaged in vicarious adaptation, learning from the mistakes and successes of others, and so were able to quickly hone their strategies to a far sharper point than would be possible if they were limited to their own experiences. In stark contrast, the United States, the primary nation-state that opposed these organizations, has traditionally been locked into a mentality that it can normally solve its own problems without seeking help from other nations. In a schoolroom this mentality would be laughable. In the wild such behavior would be fatal. In international relations, however, it is called independence.

The United States is in a unique position in the international community, being the only nation in recent history that can honestly claim to be the trendsetter in almost every political field. Most other nations have learned that cooperation and idea sharing is the way to go, but the U.S. has learned that it can generally achieve its goals by innovating new ideas rather than borrowing from others. This does not mean that the U.S. shuns international cooperation; rather, it philosophically limits cooperation to policy *implementation* instead of policy *development*. All nations to some degree demonstrate the tendency to believe that they know best in certain areas; the United States simply makes this assumption for more areas. Until recently, the concept of Homeland Security was one of those areas. However, as newly appointed U.S. Homeland Security Adviser Frances Fragos Townsend put it, Homeland Security is not, as many believe, a uniquely American problem.<sup>2</sup> Panels like this one demonstrate the United States' migration to the vicarious approach of combating terrorism.

As is usually the case, the academic community, with its tradition of sharing information, has been leading this crusade for change. The Center for Security Studies hosted a two-day conference last year which discussed the counter-terrorism policies of eight countries.<sup>3</sup> The International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism in Herzlia, Israel, is now host to a cooperative academic endeavor called the International Counter-Terrorism Academic Community (ICTAC), composed of academic experts and researchers in counter-terrorism and related fields. This network, including not only independent experts but schools and businesses, set the following goals for itself:

- To advance, deepen and coordinate international academic cooperation in the field of counter-terrorism;
- To promote comparative international research initiatives in counter-terrorism;
- To locate and encourage potential sources of monetary support for academic research in counter-terrorism;
- To formulate and promote new international counter-terrorism policies and initiatives;
- To create a global communications network for counter-terrorism researchers and professionals;
- To organize international conferences, symposia, “think-tanks” and other meetings for members of ICTAC and relevant experts worldwide;
- To supply applied research that will contribute to more effective counter-terrorism policy decisions.<sup>4</sup>

It is an encouraging thought that such endeavors exist, and with time the policy community will undoubtedly lean more toward accepting this quintessentially academic mentality of cooperation.

### **The Definitional Problem**

Before any cooperation can be truly useful, though, the interested parties must reach a common definition of the phenomenon, which will be one of the most difficult hurdles of all. While entire libraries have been written on the definition of terrorism, the final word currently belongs to a 20-year-old analysis by Alex Schmid, who spent over 100 pages before conceding that no single definition could completely encompass this nebulous concept.<sup>5</sup> While the oft-quoted reason for this is that “one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter,” the definitional problem runs deeper. Even if we limit ourselves to *political terrorism*, a difficult concept to define on its own, different breeds of political terrorists want different things, follow different ideologies, and therefore behave quite differently. Most terrorism scholars recognize four principal types of

terrorist groups: nationalist-separatists, social revolutionaries, religious fundamentalists, and right-wing groups.<sup>6</sup>

- *Nationalist-separatists*, also known as ethno-nationalists, like the Provisional Irish Republican Army, the *Euzkadi Ta Askatasuna* (Basque Fatherland and Liberty) of Spain, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, who wish to form a separate sovereign state based on ethnicity or other identifiable social characteristics (i.e. Basques or Palestinians).
- *Social revolutionaries* are the quintessential Marxist rebels seeking to overthrow the capitalist system, such as *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path) in Peru and the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC—Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia).<sup>7</sup>
- *Religious fundamentalists* believe that they are doing God’s work, and that they only answer to God. Even though the most well-known of these are Islamic groups, such as Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement), Islamic Jihad, or Hizb’allah (Party of God), Jewish, Christian, and Sikh radical fundamentalist extremists also exist.
- *Right-wing terrorists* are “those groups seeking to maintain an extant political order or to return society to an idealized ‘golden age’ of the past in which ethnic relations more clearly favored the dominant majority,” such as neo-Nazi groups, racist groups like the Ku Klux Klan and Aryan Nation, and anti-government survivalist groups.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Cooperative Solution**

It is no surprise that different nations have a difficult time reconciling their counter-terrorism policies. With such different types of terrorism, even as simply defined as above, who is to say that a strategy that works in one location with one type of terrorism will apply in other situations? By sharing information and ideas that are ultimately not useful the participating nations have only wasted time. But, by not sharing information because of the *presumption* that the ideas will not be useful, they could very well waste lives. With each symposium, conference, or academic exchange that takes place on counter-terrorism issues, the world is that much closer to developing a cohesive strategy to combat the phenomenon.

This panel in particular hopes to bring three of the most relevant philosophies to the same table—philosophies shaped by long and bloody experience with the issue. The European Union, itself an example of one type of cooperative model, is still facing difficulties reconciling member nations’ different approaches to the problem of terrorism. Israel has undoubtedly the most violent experience with the predominant terrorism today, Islamist Fundamentalist terrorism, and can demonstrate both the right way and the wrong way to ensure Homeland Security, an idea it has

embraced since its formation. Lastly, a look into the counter-terrorism policies and philosophies of the Arab states, the homes of many of the terrorists and their financiers, will show the other side of this unique brand of terrorism. In the Arab states, the terrorists we see as foreign threats are domestic individuals, more akin to the European separatists than to an outside army, and the Arab states face the relatively different problem of combating terrorists who are not actually terrorizing them in many cases, an idea somewhat foreign to the Western concept of Islamist terrorism.

These widely divergent problems and their possible solutions, described and discussed at the same table, will demonstrate the massive undertaking that is a consistent, practical approach to counter-terrorism. The terrorists have been practicing this integration for decades. It is time for the international community to catch up. When counter-terrorist “training camps” like this conference and others begin to spring up around the world, the international community will truly be ready to fight the terrorist network with a network of its own.

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<sup>2</sup> Frances Fragos Townsend, Speech presented at American Bar Association Standing Committee on Law and National Security Breakfast Meeting, Washington, D.C., 17 March 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Center for Security Studies, International Expert Conference on National Counter Terrorism Policy, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zürich, Zürich, Switzerland, 24-26 March 2004.

<sup>4</sup> The International Counter-Terrorism Academic Community (ICTAC), International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism. <http://www.ict.org.il> (accessed March 18, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> Alex P. Schmid, *Political Terrorism: A Research Guide to Concepts, Theories, Data Bases and Literature* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1983).

<sup>6</sup> Jerrold M. Post, M.D., Keven G. Ruby, and Eric D. Shaw, “The Radical Group in Context: 2. Identification of Critical Elements in the Analysis of Risk for Terrorism by Radical Group Type,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 25 (2002): 111-112. A 5<sup>th</sup> principle type does exist, the nontraditional religious extremists, which includes “new religions” like Aum Shinrikyo and other closed cults, but they normally keep to themselves unless provoked, and so are really not necessary for this paper. Aum Shinrikyo was quite unusual in this respect.

<sup>7</sup> While many would argue that these groups are insurgents and not terrorists, overthrowing the capitalist system by insurgency is the expressed *raison d'être* of all social revolutionaries, and these only differ because they have been successful enough to gain territory.

<sup>8</sup> Post et al., *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 112.