

**Chapter Thirteen**

**The Psychology of Political Terrorism**  
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Violence is a perennial problem of politics. Scholars and policy makers are rarely satisfied with their understanding of its sources or consequences—other than the manifest results of death and destruction, which only deepen frustration over being unable to prevent its occurrence. Terrorism used by underground organizations against state institutions and policies is a specific type of political violence, one that has attracted much attention in the past fifteen years. As terrorism has affected Western liberal democracies, it has shaken their faith in the possibility of the eradication of civil strife through political and social reform or through the material benefits of the welfare state. Terrorism has shown that the end of colonialism does not bring an end to struggles for national liberation. Indeed, Third World violence has inspired imitation in the West, as ethnic minorities revive hopes of separatism and as radical political organizations, often growing out of the student movements of the 1960s, move to join what they perceive as a global struggle against imperialism. After 1968 in Western Europe terrorism seemed to replace riots and protest demonstrations as a dramatic and violent disruption of stability, often disturbing to the public because of its unexpectedness in societies hitherto thought immune to serious domestic violence. Ideology has also motivated terrorist resistance to regimes in Latin America and the Middle East. In the latter region, religious fundamentalism is now combined with secular opposition as a source of violence. Although terrorism is not a historical novelty, changes in its form and scope have appeared in the past fifteen years.

As Greenstein (1973, p. 464) has noted: "It would seem necessary to identify functionally discrete types of violence and aggression in order to identify reasonably stable and distinctive antecedents." This observation is equally appropriate to the analysis of the consequences of violence. Terrorism is one of these discrete types of violence. The purpose of this chapter is to use terrorism as the basis for

a case study of the relationship between political violence and psychology. Terrorism, a rare and extreme form of political behavior, is dependent on the motivations of the small numbers who practice it. Because its effectiveness in influencing political events depends on arousing emotions, the psychological reactions of its target audiences are significant.

Before attempting to analyze the problem of terrorism from a psychological perspective, we must complete several preliminary tasks. First, the concept of terrorism must be defined. Second, a review of existing approaches to the subject of terrorism is needed to sketch the general state of theoretical advance in the area. Third, an explanation of the complexity of the phenomenon of terrorism suggests caution in generalization. Proceeding to the application of psychological theory to terrorism, a logical beginning is the question of individual motivation. Why do people resort to terrorism? A concept that serves to unify diverse interpretations of motivation is Erikson's (1963, 1968) theory of identity. An exclusive focus on the individual is, however, incomplete, since terrorism usually involves group activity. Patterns of small-group interaction are a significant part of the explanation of terrorism activity. The psychology of terrorism also concerns the effects of terrorism on audiences and victims. The fate of hostages, as the most intense experience of victimization, will be examined in some depth.

### **Definitions and Approaches**

Defining the concept of terrorism has proved difficult, in part because judgments about what terrorism is frequently depend on the circumstances in which violence occurs. Most writers on this subject rely on one of the earliest definitions, that of Thornton (1964, p. 73), who proposed: "In an internal war situation, terror is a symbolic act designed to influence political behavior by extranormal means, entailing the use or threat of violence." The violence of terrorism is distinguished from other types of political violence by its extranormality (terrorism exceeds the bounds of socially acceptable violence) and by its symbolic nature (the targets of terrorism are symbols of the state or of social norms and structure) (see Thornton, 1964, pp. 73-78). Terrorism is based on systematic and purposive violence, designed to influence the political choices of other actors more than to inflict casualties or material destruction. To achieve political influence, terrorism depends on its power to arouse emotions in audiences, including the neutral, the supportive, and the antagonistic. The emotional reactions to terrorism (which, of course, may be unanticipated by the terrorists although they strive to control them) may thus range from terror or acute anxiety to enthusiasm (see Hutchinson, 1972).

Thornton's conception, as expanded here, is restricted to terrorism against the state; that is, terrorism from below rather than from above. Terrorism is also practiced by governments, and some characteristics of its processes, effects, and perpetrators are similar to the characteristics of insurgent or agitational terrorism. For example, insurgent terrorist organizations may use terrorism to control their supporters and to enforce obedience. There are, however, such critical differences in the power, authority, and status of governments as opposed to non-governments that an undifferentiated analysis would be misleading. The potential magnitude of most government violence is incomparably greater than that of non-governments.

The literature in the field of terrorism is unsystematic, despite great popular and governmental interest in terrorism and the promise that the social sciences and psychology hold for its theoretical development. There are numerous ahistorical or alarmist treatments, but few scholars have turned their attention to terrorism, and among them fewer are familiar with the literature and attempt to build on the work of others. Nevertheless, there are signs that terrorism is becoming an established subject for research in the mainstream of American political science, including both quantitative as well as conceptual studies (for the former approach, see Hamilton and Hamilton, 1983; Sandler, Tschirhart, and Cauley, 1983). Even so, few psychiatrists, psychologists, or social psychologists have worked in this area. The present analysis of the state of the field is as much a sketch of what needs to be accomplished as an overview of achievements. It attempts to synthesize existing findings, to point out the areas of psychology from which future theoretical contributions might come, and to define the directions that psychological approaches to the study of political terrorism might take.

There are a number of reasons for the weak state of theoretical development in this area. First, terrorism is a controversial subject; it possesses normative connotations that make the mere use of the term a statement of approval or disapproval of the activity. As a consequence, Jenkins (1981, pp. 4-5), noting that the normative implications and controversiality of terrorism impede clear definition, proposes that terrorism be considered simply as criminal violence directed against civilian targets for political motives.

Second, despite its historical antiquity, terrorism is relatively new as a concept that has interested scholars, whose interest followed that of governments and the public when hijackings, hostage seizures, and attacks on diplomats became sensational news in the late 1960s, and early 1970s. Within the past ten years, the number of citations on the subject of terrorism has grown from fewer than ten to thousands (see Mickolus, 1980). The dramatic nature of the topic and the extremely rapid growth of the field have understandably produced even results.

Third, because terrorism is perceived as a threat to a government's reputation and international image, if not always to its stability, official bureaucracies are much more interested in the study of terrorism than in that of many other topics in scholarly research. Government attention has resulted in an emphasis on the particular aspects of terrorism that concern public safety – notably, the response to terrorism and the anticipation of future threats. Policy analysis and criminal justice approaches are more common than attempts to explain the motivations of terrorists and terrorist groups. These approaches frequently deny that the intentions of the terrorist are relevant at all, concentrating instead on terrorist capabilities and on government countermeasures.

Last, the difficulty of acquiring the sort of detailed information that would support psycho-biographical studies of individuals or make histories of group dynamics possible inhibits psychological theory building. Difficulties stemming from the mutual suspicion of terrorists and governments are inevitable, given the illegality and consequent secretiveness of terrorist organizations. Security and intelligence considerations can impede access to data. West German social scientists, for example, found it very difficult to interview members of the Red Army Faction and its successors; most were unwilling to meet with researchers (Jager, Schmidtchen, and Sullwood, 1981). They also found, somewhat paradoxically, that

local government authorities were reluctant to cooperate even though their study was commissioned by the federal Ministry of the Interior. The West German effort, however, was hampered most because researchers attempted to interview suspected terrorists who were under arrest or undergoing trial but who had not been convicted since interviews with social science researchers did not have the status of privileged communications, the researchers could have been subpoenaed to give evidence in the cases. Such conditions, as well as the often hostile and uncooperative attitudes of accused terrorists toward researchers whom they perceived as representatives of the establishment, made trust between interviewer and subject impossible to achieve.

On the other hand, Knutson (1980, 1981) did succeed in interviewing convicted terrorists in United States prisons. She found the authorities helpful and the prisoners eager for a chance to express themselves to a sympathetic listener; most felt that during their trials they had not been given an opportunity to explain the reasons for their actions. Differences both in method and in situation may explain Knutson's relative ease of access compared to the West German problems. Nevertheless, requirements of confidentiality mean that findings based on this research must be carefully formulated and that access to interview transcripts and other data is restricted.

In sum, although the total number of materials on terrorism is large, including primary documents such as trial records, research specifically relevant to this analysis is limited. This survey as a result is based on a small amount of available psychological data and analysis. It also considers some autobiographical materials, although these generally lack self-perception. Analysis of terrorism must be interdisciplinary, relying on secondary sources from history, political science, and sociology that provide case studies of individual terrorists and terrorist groups. Theoretical insights are often borrowed from other sources in psychology and adapted to an interpretation of terrorist activity and its consequences.

### **Complexity of the Problem**

In order to generalize about psychological influences on terrorism, one must take into account the diversity and variation of the phenomenon. One reason for the imprecision or bias of many definitions of terrorism is that the activity assumes different forms. For instance, terrorists claim to be inspired by ideological goals ranging from social revolution or national self-determination to reactionary or conservative defense of the status quo. Terrorist organizations range in structure from extremely hierarchical and centralized, with rigid role distinctions, to a decentralized or anarchical model. Terrorist strategies vary in degree of selectivity in targeting and in preferences for specific methods; some involve bargaining with governments by seizing hostages, while others are designed only for immediate effect. Some terrorists choose to operate on an international scale, while others restrict themselves to their domestic surroundings. Terrorist modes of operation change constantly, often as a result of technological opportunities or government pressures.

Furthermore, the situations in which terrorism occurs vary along a number of dimensions. Political contexts include democracies as well as authoritarian regimes and states ranging from strong to weak in coercive capability and political

stability. Legal systems may be flexible or rigid in dealing with violent opposition. Target societies may be homogeneous or heterogeneous, and history and political culture may be tolerant or intolerant of violence against the state. The international environment can be permissive or discouraging. Several types of terrorism occur in this range of contexts. The organizational forms and capabilities of terrorist organizations and the environments they operate in are related to both motivations and psychological consequences. Any model of terrorism must take into account the varieties and the interactive dynamics of the process.

To illustrate briefly differences in motivation, context, and status among contemporary terrorist organizations, one can compare the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) in the United Kingdom and Ireland to the Red Army Faction (RAF) and its successors in the Federal Republic of Germany. The Provisional IRA is the heir to a tradition of violent resistance to British rule, the "physical force" tradition that has its roots not only in Oliver Cromwell's depredations but in the mythology of the French Revolution. Although the majority of the citizens of Ireland and Northern Ireland do not actively support the IRA, belonging to the IRA in the divided society of Northern Ireland is more socially acceptable than belonging to the RAF in West Germany, where memories of violence against the regime derive primarily from the paramilitary extremists of both right and left under the Weimar Republic. In West Germany neither religious nor national divisions legitimize violence against the state. Most West German terrorists, whose organizations emerged from student protest movements, are from the middle or upper-middle classes; in contrast, members of the IRA are from working-class backgrounds. Whereas the aims of Irish Republicans focus sharply on creating a united and non-British Ireland, the vague and unrealistic goals of German terrorism center on the creation of an ill-defined socialist order. Many Irish, northern, southern, and American, sympathize with the IRA's goals of national unity and British withdrawal if not its methods. Few Germans (despite the publicity over "sympathizers") want a revolution. The IRA generally restricts its activities to the traditional methods of terrorism and guerrilla warfare-selective assassinations, bombings, troop ambushes, sniper fire-that accord with its self-image as an army against the British. The RAF, on the contrary, progressed to kidnappings and hijackings in order to compel the government to release imprisoned fellow terrorists. This form of bargaining with governments has since 1968 represented a significant innovation in terrorist strategies.

Even this brief description indicates that psychological motivations, processes, and effects differ from case to case and that one should exercise caution in proposing generalizations. Answers to the questions of why individuals are attracted to terrorism, why terrorism finds supporters among the population, why a terrorist organization chooses particular strategies, and why terrorism has extreme effects in some cases but not in others depend on political and social context and type of terrorist organization as well as on psychological theory.

Another element in the complexity of modern terrorism is its transnational character. The fact that terrorism is a transnational phenomenon-one that in crossing national boundaries escapes the control of governments-blurs distinctions among different national groups and their contexts. As terrorists collaborate among themselves, imitate each other, and seek foreign support, it becomes difficult to isolate causes and effects. Furthermore, transnationalism (a product of

modernization) means that terrorists can be both mobile and anonymous. Consequently, terrorists can be either close to or distant from the populations they target. Palestinian terrorism against Israelis in West Germany, for example, and Armenian terrorism against Turks in the United States will not have the same effects on its respective national audiences as indigenous terrorism would have.

Further complexities in analyzing terrorism arise from the widely held assumption that terrorism is intentional behavior, in which motivations of whatever sort, rational or irrational, lead to action that can be objectively identified as terrorism. However, the translation of intention into action is modified by chance and opportunity, neither of which can be satisfactorily predicted. Furthermore, in asking why terrorism happens, one must distinguish between the initiation of a campaign of terrorism and its continuation in the face of government reaction. One must also distinguish between why an individual becomes a terrorist and why an organization (already formed as a group) collectively turns to terrorism. Why terrorists persist despite the risks involved and the uncertainty of reward is an important question. Why terrorist organizations choose the particular strategies they do—bombings, kidnappings, or armed attacks, for example—is also significant.

Scholarly analysis should also be attentive to what is meant by becoming a "terrorist" or a member of a terrorist organization. Most people probably oversimplify the role of the "terrorist" into a mental picture of a wild-eyed nineteenth-century anarchist. Actually, complex role differentiation exists within terrorist organizations. First, there are significant differences between leaders and followers. The latter group is further divided into those who are active within the organization and those who are passive supporters, remaining outside the underground structure but providing needed services as well as channels for recruitment into the organization. Among active followers, one can distinguish a number of separate functions: public relations, propaganda, fund raising, forgery, weapons purchases, and logistics, as well as those related to planning and engaging in violence. A terrorist may be a sharpshooter, a builder of bombs, a specialist in armed attacks or kidnappings, or a guard for hostages. Terrorist violence need not involve physical interaction with victims.

Finally, constructing theories to explain the effects of terrorism on victims and on audiences is also hampered by the elusiveness of the phenomenon. It is difficult to separate the effects of terrorism from the effects of other social phenomena to which the public responds. It is somewhat easier to analyze the reactions of victims, especially former hostages. Yet even here, analysts are hard pressed to specify what it is about terrorism that accounts for its effects, or how much the strength of reaction lies in the predispositions of the victim or target audience.

### **Explanations of Individual Motivation**

It would be simplistic to base an argument about motivation on the premise that terrorism is solely a result of specific personality patterns or traits. As with all forms of political behavior, terrorism cannot be studied in isolation from its political and social context. The analysis of terrorism clearly deals with the intersection of psychological predispositions (which may be derived as much from prior experience and socialization as from psychological traits emerging from

early childhood and infancy) and the external environment. This interrelationship is the more compelling because the ostensible purpose of terrorist groups is to change that environment; terrorists invariably claim, in fact, that their behavior is the only logical response to external circumstances. Many indignantly reject psychological explanations. Terrorism, furthermore, is a results of group interactions as much as individual choice. Although isolated, individually motivated acts of terrorism can occur, the most important terrorist events are part of campaigns led by organizations.

Another problem with the study of individual motivation or predisposition toward terrorism is that it is difficult to go beyond a series of unrelated psycho-biographies and focus on common themes. Most analysts agree that there is no common "terrorist personality." Terrorism is not purely expressive violence; it is also instrumental. We are thus dealing with individuals who are extremely goal oriented but whose goals and means of pursuing their goals are influenced (not determined) by psychological considerations in interaction with the situation.

Nor does terrorism in general appear to be a result of mental pathologies. Rasch (1979, p. 80), a psychiatrist who has analyzed several members of the West German terrorist organizations, warns that "non conclusive evidence has been found for the assumption that a significant number of them are disturbed or abnormal." In Rasch's (1979, p.79) view, the argument that terrorism is pathological behaviors is an attempt to avoid discussion of the political and social issues raised by terrorism. Rasch's position is reinforced by the studies performed under the aegis of the West German Ministry of the Interior, which include information on 227 leftist terrorists in West Germany (Jager, Schmidtchen, and Sullwold, 1981, particularly Sullwold, pp. 101-102 and conclusions by Jager and Bollinger, p. 235). Similarly, Ferracuti and Bruno (1981, p. 206), who studied Italian terrorists, note that "a general psychiatric explanation of terrorism is impossible. To define all terrorists as mentally ill would be an easy way to solve the problem, simply by invoking evil spirits in order to exclude from normality those from whom we want to be as different as possible." Heskin (1980, pp. 84-85), in a study of the psychology of Northern Ireland, similarly concludes that IRA members are not psychopaths, predisposed to violence, or mentally abnormal. Corrado (1981) has critically reviewed theories that regard terrorism in Western societies as rooted in sociopathy, narcissism, the death wish, or physiological impairment (such as neurological disorders leading to antisocial behavior). He found that the mental disorder approach lacks the systematic clinical observation and reliable diagnostic criteria necessary for its substantiation; furthermore, he suggest, terrorism is more likely to be a product of frustrated but rational idealism.

A possible reason for the apparently small numbers of pathologically ill individuals among the ranks of terrorists is that most terrorist organizations, as conspiratorial undergrounds, are careful about whom they recruit. Centralized, efficient organizations screen out potential members who could be dangerous to the survival of the group. This practical rule of organizational security and maintenance excludes the person of unpredictable or uncontrolled behavior. In less hierarchical organizations, those with a loose structure and relaxed central direction in the anarchist model, there is less control over membership. Hence, group exclusivity would be less of an obstacle to mentally ill persons who might be attracted to terrorism. Thus, according to Ferracuti and Bruno (1981, pp. 208-209),

clinical analyses based on the few available case histories of individual left-wing Italian terrorists reveal that they rarely suffered from serious personality defects; in contrast, right-wing terrorists (who are more frequently examined by psychiatrists than are left-wing revolutionary terrorists because the insanity defense is more frequently employed at their trials) showed a much higher incidence of borderline or even psychotic personalities and of drug addiction. The glorification of violence in right-wing ideologies of terrorism may also explain their attraction for mentally disturbed individuals. The West German study, however, did not conclude that right-wing terrorists (of whom twenty-three cases were included) are more likely to be unbalanced, although it noted several distinctive personality traits (see Siillwold, 1981, pp. 110-113).

To argue that terrorism does not result from a single personality constellation or from psychopathology is not to say that the political decision to join a terrorist organization is not influenced or, in some cases, even determined by subconscious or latent psychological motives. The problem is to find some commonality in a heterogeneous group of individuals, especially in considering cross-national terrorism. One facet of personality or one predisposition to which analysts have been drawn is the individual's attitudes toward and feelings about violence and aggression. The question is complex, since for most of its adherents terrorism does not necessarily involve direct participation in violent activities. An attraction to violence does not appear to be the dominant aspect of their personalities- unlike, for example, the most violent of the Nazi storm troopers studied by Merkl (1980), who notes that these individuals showed an early, single-minded, and "awesome bent for violence" (p. 235). Terrorism involves reflective, not impulsive, violence and requires the ability to delay gratification through long and tedious planning stages.

Knutson (1981, p. 109) found that the terrorists she interviewed in American prisons were ambivalent in their attitudes toward the use of violence. Highly uncomfortable at being called "terrorists," they nevertheless admitted that a purpose of their action had been to cause fear. Yet they insisted that creating fear was less important than demonstrating their commitment to a cause through personal sacrifice. They also regarded terrorism as a last desperate alternative; it was almost an act of personal futility, used after all other options were exhausted, when there was nowhere else to go (Knutson, 1981, pp. 143-144). Certainly, the theme of "we had no choice" dominates terrorists' self-explanations, but it is difficult to distinguish motivation from rationalization.

Knutson (1981) also analyzed a single case in depth, that of Zvonko Busic, the Croatian hijacker of an American airliner to Paris in 1975, who in addition had placed a bomb in Grand Central Station that killed one policeman and injured three others. Busic had chosen hijacking precisely because he considered it "humane" violence, involving as it did the use of fake bombs. His attitude toward violence was conflicted; he looked forward not to frightening his hostages but to their relief, acceptance, and forgiveness when he exposed the reality that there were no explosive devices. He was unable to accept his own anger, felt remorse when he did have to face it, and thus denied it in order to preserve personality integration. Being unable to recognize or accept his own violent impulses, he separated the violent act from his own control and responsibility. Therefore, the bomb that Busic left at Grand Central was accompanied by instructions on how to dismantle



it; Basic did not consciously mean to cause deaths. Someone else had to be blamed: in this case the police. A trace of sadism is also revealed in Basic's direction of violence toward "safe" targets-airline passengers who were unable to respond in kind. Knutson's analysis leads us to suspect that psychological motives may influence the particular form that terrorism takes (for example, seizure of hostages as opposed to assassination) as much as the decision to become a terrorist.

Indeed, Knutson (1980, p. 197) maintains generally that "many terrorist events are carefully, painstakingly engineered to avoid ultimate responsibility for violent death." Many terrorists are "psychologically nonviolent" and spend much time trying to resolve the dilemma, devising ways to instill fear without assuming responsibility for deaths. Similar ambiguities in attitudes toward violence may lead other terrorists to adopt hostage taking as a mode of terrorism, a means by which the final responsibility for causing harm can be laid to the government that refuses to accommodate terrorist demands.

On the other hand, some evidence suggests that not all terrorists are ambivalent. Morl (1970), in an analysis of the early members of the Front de Liberation de Quebec (FLQ), found more explicit signs of an early interest in violence. Several FLQ members had already engaged in violent resistance to authority. As an adolescent, one had fought with the Belgian partisans in World War II. Another had lived through wartime air raids and subsequently fought with the French Foreign Legion in Vietnam and Algeria. Morl interprets the fascination with violence that he discovered in some individuals as compensation for feelings of inferiority.

Bollinger (1981), a member of the West German study team, also found that some of the terrorists he interviewed were attracted to violence-which he attributes to unconscious aggressive motives. Such motives, in his view, differentiate the terrorist from people with similar psychological features (resulting from early childhood traumas) who do not show the same behavioral outcome-some conforming to social norms and others choosing nonviolent yet nonconformist roles, such as membership in religious cults. The terrorist group represents an outlet for archaic aggressive tendencies, frequently rooted in youthful conflicts with step-fathers. Such aggressive tendencies reflect fantasies of omnipotence corresponding to the individual's own inner feelings of impotence and inferiority. The attraction to violence may also be a result of identification with the violent acts of father figures (a violence several individuals had actually experienced); that is, an identification with the aggressor (see especially Bollinger, 1981, pp. 222-224).

Jager (1981, pp. 167-169), however, found no common pattern in attitudes toward violence, neither ambivalence nor attraction, among the West German terrorists. Some individuals reported a strong prior aversion to aggression. They were conscious of a need to justify their behavior and felt a sense of limitation. Others reported that violence was simply not a problem for them. Jager concludes that these attitudes depend on individual socialization and are not particularly significant.

Possibly, rather than being attracted to the inherent violence of terrorism, some individuals are seduced by the lures of omnipotence and grandeur to compensate for feelings of inferiority or impotence. Kaplan (1981, pp. 41-42) contends that the self-righteousness of terrorism conceals the terrorists' insecurities and that "terrorism is a response to a lack of self-esteem." Sullwold (1981) believes that West German terrorists are people who have high aspiration levels but are inter-

nally conflicted and prone to failure because of unrealistic demands on themselves. They react to failure not by adapting to their realistic level of capability but by raising the level of their aspirations. Such neurotic behavior involves clinging to irrational goals regardless of outcomes, while refusing to engage in any activity that might test one's abilities. Failure leads to aimlessness and dissatisfaction, which make the individual susceptible to the appeal of terrorist organizations, whose goals are equally unrealistic. Such individuals are also prone to external attribution: to blame others for their failures and consequently to feel hostility toward the outside world (see Sullwold, 1981, pp. 89-96). Knutson (1981) noted a similar tendency to blame others. Bollinger (1981) observed in a limited number of West German terrorists the need to overcome feelings of inferiority.

Another possible psychological trait, which appears to have been neglected thus far by researchers, is stress seeking. Terrorism differs from other counterculture activity not only in its violence but also in its stress-producing character. The glamour and excitement of terrorism, perhaps the attraction for some individuals, lie partially in the physical danger it comports. Terrorists may be "stress seekers," who are attracted to "behavior designed to increase the intensity of emotion or level of activation of the organism" (Klausner, 1968, p. 139). Stress seekers carefully plan their behavior; they respond more to internal than to external imperatives; and they return repeatedly to stressful situations. Moreover, repetition of the stressful activity becomes not only obsessive but escalatory; the stress seeker is compelled to perform more and more difficult acts (see Klausner, 1968, pp. 143, 145). Not all stress seeking is socially destructive behavior; in fact, in many Western societies, the sort of adventurism it may produce is admired. Stress seeking would have to occur in conjunction with other predispositions to encourage violent defiance of government and society.

Stress seekers seem to fall into two types. The individualistic stress seeker is uncomfortable as a follower; he seeks attention to the point of being narcissistic. Such a person seeks self-affirmation in the face of danger. The group stress seeker, in contrast, wishes to abandon the self in the group. This type of stress seeker identifies with the group and merges himself completely in the collective personality (Klausner, 1968, pp. 143-145). This observation leads to an important distinction among terrorist roles between leaders and followers. Whereas leaders may be more likely to possess latent dispositions and traits (acquired through socialization) that make violent, stressful oppositional behavior attractive, followers may be attracted more to the group than to its activities. Followers exhibit strong affiliative needs. Sullwold (1981, pp. 103-106), for example, argues that a notable difference exists between leaders and followers. While there is no such thing as a typical terrorist, leaders are more likely to be people who combine a lack of scruples with extreme self-assurance. She found that leaders often lead by frightening or pressuring their followers.

Sullwold noted two types of personality traits among terrorist leaders. The first type is the extremely extroverted personality, whose behavior is unstable, uninhibited, inconsiderate, self-interested, and unemotional. (Although Sullwold does not suggest the concept of narcissism, these attributes resemble those of the narcissistic personality; see Rubins, 1983). Emotional deficiencies blind such individuals to the negative consequences of their actions. Such people also possess a high tolerance for stress. It is possible that this person is a stress seeker, for whom

the excitement of danger compensates for the absence of feeling. Such persons, furthermore, do not accept responsibility for their actions and dislike boredom and inactivity. The second type of terrorist leader is neurotically hostile. Suspicious, aggressive, defensive, and intolerant, he rejects criticism and is extremely sensitive to external hostility. For this type of individual, the terrorist movement serves as a projection of inner hostility. Sullwold (1981) asserts, as does Pomper (1979) in his biography of the nineteenth-century Russian terrorist Sergei Nechaev, that terrorism is a field of action in which personality defects that would be punished in a normal social setting are rewarded. The psychology of terrorist leadership has otherwise been little studied, although several leaders-Boris Savinkov (1931) of the Combat Organization of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party in pre-Revolutionary Russia, Saadi Yacef (1962) of the Algerian FLN, and Menachem Begin (1977) of the Irgun zvai Leumi-have written autobiographies.

The available evidence strongly suggests that, for the majority of terrorists who are followers, to become a member of the group is a dominant motive. Terrorists, in contrast to assassins, are not usually comfortable acting alone; terrorism is a small-group activity. The path to joining a terrorist organization is often through other groups, such as in West German residential cooperatives, communes, and prisoners' help groups. The recruitment process of the Basque Euzkadi ta Askatasuna (ETA) is slow and gradual, moving like the West German organizations from legal to illegal assistance, and is based on groups in Basque youth culture (Clark, 1983). Kaplan (1981, p. 45) also emphasizes the importance of the "merged collective identity."

In West Germany the communal life from which terrorist groups emerged was extraordinarily homogeneous; it formed a counterculture dominated by leaders with extreme political views. Almost three quarters of the terrorists in Schmidtchen's (1981) sample lived in a commune or residential cooperative before their involvement in terrorism. Many were also individuals whose break with family and society and whose rejection of bourgeois culture and values preceded the politicization of their discontent and was intensified by association with like-minded individuals in closed communities (see Jager, 1981, pp. 147-150). To many individuals the group substituted for family and filled needs for recognition, acceptance, warmth, and solidarity. Jager (1981, pp. 151-153) argues that it was above all in this phase of entering a group that latent motives rather than the group's political goals influenced individual actions. The group itself becomes the aim of many people. Jager also found that many terrorists expressed a need for the structure, discipline, and commitment they found in group life.

For West Germans entrance into the terrorist group was a gradual process- as it was for recruits into the Basque ETA-rather than an instantaneous conversion. As individuals joined groups that became more and more radical, they were drawn closer to the inner circles that espoused violence. Thus, the decision to use violence came only after association with the group; the choice was then between participating in violence or leaving the group. The individual who was already in need of the things a group could supply and who had over time become dependent on the group found it costly, in psychological terms, to go back.

Observers of terrorism in West Germany have also noted the importance of personal connections and relatives in the process of joining a group (Jager, Schmidtchen, and Sullwold, 1981; Wasmund, 1982). Wasmund discovered a large

number of couples and brothers and sisters participating in terrorism. This finding reinforces his argument that the terrorist group is a family substitute. Jager (1981, pp. 156-157) noted that in some cases relationships with other influential persons were so significant that without them the terrorist's personal development would have taken a different course. Leaders of terrorist groups often fill the role of mentor, becoming substitute parents. Similarly, in the Basque resistance, young recruits frequently joined under the influence of older militants (Clark, 1983). Couples also are commonly found in Italian terrorist groups, and Japanese terrorist Kozo Okamoto followed the lead of his older brother.

A last issue that should be discussed in relation to individual psychological traits and the turn to terrorism concerns the role of women. Some authors believe that female participation in terrorism is unique in character or motivation. For example, Cooper (1979, pp. 151-155) describes the presence of women in terrorist organizations as shocking and their behavior as "vicious," "ferocious," and "intractable." Cooper refers to "fatal proclivities" and unusually intense and personal emotional involvement—the results of women's sexual nature—and to the low self-image, alienation, and bitterness of women terrorists. Knight (1979), in analyzing the significant female participation in the terrorist branch of the Russian Socialist Revolutionary party, contends that terrorism would not have developed as strongly as it did without the critical role of women. Although, Knight argues, the women terrorists whom she studied were more emotionally than rationally inspired, their emotional needs were derived less from inherently feminine traits than from their isolated and frustrated position in a society that offers few outlets for women. She found women terrorists distinctively ethical and moral in their approach to violence, determined and absolutely committed, and bent on self-sacrifice and martyrdom. Their view of terrorism was highly subjective and personal; women valued the sense of importance they gained from participation. The fact that several later showed signs of instability Knight attributes to the trauma of the experience rather than predisposition.

Sullwold (1981, pp. 106-110) does not regard the causes of female participation in terrorism as unusual. She views such assumptions as the result of social stereotyping rather than objective analysis. Sullwold suggests that the significant contribution of women to left-wing West German terrorism, especially to its leadership, was not the result of social frustration and attempts at emancipation. Instead, this participation stemmed from the same factors that drove men to terrorism, although the influence of personal contacts might have been somewhat greater. (An account that illustrates the role of emotional dependence in terrorism is found in Alpert's 1981 autobiography.)

### **Identity as an Organizing Concept**

A theory is needed to integrate existing findings and link the psychological characteristics analysts have noted in individual terrorists to empirical observations. For example, take the fact that most terrorists are young. Many are students or recent students. Often they have already rejected society, choosing to live in a deviant subculture, or are members of ethnic minorities who reject the dominant culture and society. One attempt to link these factors is Feuer's (1969) theory of the "conflict of generations," which is based on a Freudian interpretation of

terrorism as a psychological reaction of sons against fathers, a generational phenomenon rooted in the Oedipus complex and, thus, in maleness. Terrorism is seen as a universal and inevitable outgrowth of student movements, independent of political and social context. Authority figures are identified as fathers against whom adolescent sons inevitably rebel. With maturity, terrorism ceases. Liebert (1971, pp. 187-188) criticizes Feuer's monocausal explanation and his confusion of psychodynamics and psychopathology. He contends that Feuer fails to explain why some students do not become activists, although they share the same unconscious impulses as others, or why females are present in contemporary student and terrorist groups.

A more sophisticated theory connecting individual psychology to society is found in the developmental psychology of Erik Erikson (especially 1963 and 1968). Erikson's sensitivity to the interaction between psychoanalytic and social explanations of human behavior is highlighted in his concept of identity, which is a reflection of the individual in a setting, familial or social. To Erikson (1963, p. 242) identity is as central to today's world as sexuality was to Freud's. The successful development of personal identity is essential to the integrity and continuity of the personality. Identity enables the individual to experience the self as something that has continuity and sameness, to act accordingly, and to be confident that one's sense of self is matched by one's meaning for others. Erikson's theory has influenced at least two specific analyses of the personalities of terrorists.

To introduce and clarify these contributions, it is useful to review briefly the part of Erikson's work that pertains to the study of terrorism. Erikson based his concept of personality on the child's development through a series of cumulative developmental stages, each of whom is a "crisis" (in the sense of a turning point rather than a catastrophe) that results either in matured integration of the personality or in the persistence of unresolved conflicts, which may torment the individual through later life (see Erikson, 1968, p. 96). Erikson considers the development of basic trust in the infant as the cornerstone of a vital personality. Early mistrust, accompanied by rage and fantasies of domination or destruction of the sources that give pleasure or provide sustenance, is revived when society fails to provide needed assurances. These conflicts of infancy and early childhood resurface in later extreme circumstances, especially in adolescence, when the crisis facing the individual involves finding a stable identity. Earlier failures to establish trust, autonomy, initiative, or industry handicap the adolescent's search for positive identity, leading in some cases to extreme identity confusion and in others to the formation of a negative identity. Identity is something found not alone but in a collectivity and is rooted in one's ethnic, national, or family past. It cannot, therefore, be separated from historical circumstances.

At the stage of identity formation, individuals seek both meaning and a sense of wholeness or completeness as well as what Erikson (1968, especially p. 232) terms "fidelity," a need to have faith in something or someone outside oneself as well as to be trustworthy in its service. Ideologies, then, are guardians of identity. Erikson further suggests that political undergrounds utilize youth's need for fidelity as well as the "store of wrath" held by those deprived of something in which to have faith. A crisis of identity (when the individual who finds self-definition difficult is suffering from ambiguity, fragmentation, and contradiction) makes some adolescents susceptible to "totalism" or to totalistic collective identities that

promise certainty. In such collectivities the troubled young find not only an identity but an explanation for their difficulties and a promise for the future.

Erikson's theories form the basis for Bollinger's (1981) psychoanalytic study of eight indicted or convicted members of West German terrorist groups. Bollinger found that his subjects had suffered serious traumas during critical stages of development, especially in failures to establish trust, autonomy, and initiative. Individuals who lacked the quality of basic trust failed to integrate excessive aggressive tendencies or maintain successful social relations. Bollinger believes that these disruptions at the stage where autonomy is developed were the fault of a non-supportive environment. Failure to develop autonomy resulted in destructive tendencies, insecurity, and fear of personality disintegration. In Bollinger's subjects over-controlling and unaffectionate parents had turned all relations with the child into a struggle for power, leading the child to clash repeatedly with outside authority. Upon reaching the formative identity period, these individuals found an ideology based on conflict between oppressed and oppressor highly attractive. Acquisition of weapons in an underground group made the "child" feel less small, weak, and helpless before the powerful authority. Bollinger found in these revivals of earlier power struggles an individual's need to control, to dominate, or even to inflict pain bound to feelings of childhood impotence, which were compensated for by illusions of grandeur and omnipotence.

According to Erikson, the rage that an individual feels at being helpless is projected onto the controlling figures; it may also engender guilt feelings, which lead to self-punitive actions. Thus, Erikson's theory can help explain the theme of self-sacrifice in terrorist behavior. Similarly, some individuals fail to surmount the crisis of initiative, so that on top of feelings of suspiciousness, self-doubt, powerlessness, and shame come inferiority and incompetence, feelings often resulting from social deficiencies and obstacles beyond the individual's control (such as weak educational background). Thus, for the individuals Bollinger studied, layer on layer of development and experience did not smooth over scars but reopened old wounds. Such individuals reached puberty and the crisis of identity formation already seriously impaired. They found themselves in social and political circumstances that for different reasons were not favorable to the acquisition of a positive identity.

Bollinger argues that joining a terrorist organization was the last of a series of attempts at identity formation. These potential terrorists were searching for meaning, structure, and a stable social role. They hoped to gain purpose and assurance from the terrorist organization. The group became the family that had never provided the warmth, protection, security, and support the individual had needed. The opportunity to join a terrorist organization allowed the individual to submerge himself in a collective identity and, thus, to lay down the burden of personal responsibility. The group met a need to idealize authority figures, to express aggressive tendencies, to feel omnipotent, and to belong. Its ideology of violent resistance to the state and to imperial domination allowed collective identification simultaneously with the victims of oppression and the aggressive authority figure, while neutralizing guilt through intellectual and emotional justifications. The group provided the structure and integration lacked by the isolated individual.

Knutson (1981) also used Erikson's conceptualization, especially his concept

of negative identity. Erikson (1968, p. 174) defines negative identity as "an identity perversely based on all those identifications and roles which, at critical stages of development, had been presented to them [patients] as most undesirable or dangerous and yet also as most real." It involves what Erikson frequently terms a "vindictive" rejection of the roles considered desirable and proper by the individual's family and community; it may result from excessive normative ideals demanded by ambitious parents or actualized by superior ones. This interpretation accords with the findings of Schmidtchen (1981) that many terrorists come from families who exert strong pressure for achievement. If a positive identity is not possible, the individual prefers being a "bad" person to being nobody or partially somebody. If early steps toward the acquisition of a negative identity are interpreted and treated by society as final, individuals may be pushed into conformity with the worst that people expect of them (Erikson, 1968, p. 88). Not only may such confused individuals find refuge in radical groups where certainty is assured, but they may be forced into a choice by others' interpretations of their behavior.

Knutson (1981, p. 112) also emphasizes the theme of government actions narrowing choices and pushing an individual into the assumption of a negative identity. Croatian terrorist Zvonko Busic was a member of an oppressed minority in a dominant culture, a situation Erikson (1968, p. 303) considers likely to engender negative identities because minorities may fuse the negative image held of them by the majority with the negative self-image of the group. Knutson found that economic constraints prevented Busic from pursuing his early goal of a university education. This disappointment, which Knutson compares to life disappointments experienced by several other terrorists, blocked me path to a positive identity and led to his assuming negative roles. As a child in Yugoslavia, Busic was socialized into strong beliefs in the cause of Croatian separatism and had a nationalistic cousin who was a role model. Similarly, many German terrorists came from families where the parents were social activists. Knutson's contention is that the negative identity is not totally negative; although deviant in some ways, it is based on values acquired through early socialization. This fact seems to contradict Erikson's 'original theory of negative identity as me antithesis of what parents and society value.

In cases of nationalist or separatist" terrorism, me concept of negative identity acquires a more subtle meaning. To become a violent revolutionary in the cause of Croatian, Basque, or Irish independence is not a totally negative identification. There is much more social approval within the minority community), for such actions than there is for violent undergrounds in homogeneous Western societies or liberal states, where nonviolent means for expressing opposition exist The choice of becoming a terrorist is extreme; but, for example, in the Basque region of Spain, the young man who becomes a member of the ETA receives strong social support from the Basque small-town milieu, although his family does not approve of the decision (mainly because of the dangers involved). After a period of under three years as an *etarra*, a young man usually returns to society (Clark, 1983). The opprobrium attached to violent dissent in Germany, Italy, or the United States is absent; the choice of joining the ETA would not represent an absolutely negative identity. Knutson argues that the negative identity actually reflects values instilled early in life and may reaffirm, albeit in a radical manner, ethnic roots and traditions. One should therefore be cautious about attributing all

terrorist activity to the individual's rejection of, or inability to pursue, a positive identity. Furthermore, not all acquisitions of negative identities are politicized; many young people rebel socially-in clothes and manners-without political purpose. Such individuals may have neither the inner needs (which are impossible to ascertain from the outside observer's viewpoint) nor the opportunity to join violent undergrounds.

Both Bollinger and Knutson agree that the government often plays a critical role in pushing certain individuals into violent opposition. Government surveillance or persecution were factors in closing off the path to a positive identity for Busic, who encountered suspicious police in Yugoslavia, Austria, and the United States. In West Germany people who were only on the fringes of radical movements found their way back blocked by government records that marked them as sympathizers, Bollinger found, for example, that many of his interviewees had been harassed or, in one case, jailed for quite minor offenses. In the Basque region of Spain, in the Franco era, even cultural activities had to be clandestine because of government persecution. In the nineteenth century, the Russian government's repression of nonviolent reformist activities was a factor in convincing a minority of activists that terrorism was their only mode of self-expression.

To individuals already suffering from identity confusion, the attention paid them by the government not only confirms a negative identity but makes them feel like "somebody," They are gratified to be sufficiently important to be the object of excessive attention, even if that attention is negative. Harassment or surveillance is preferable to being ignored by society.

Another contribution of Erikson's, apparently unnoticed by students of terrorism, helps to confirm the relevance of his theory to an understanding of terrorism. Discussing the developmental stage of initiation, Erikson observes that, in addition to aggressive "ideals," the child develops a sense of guilt and, thus, a conscience. Individuals whose conscience (or superego) becomes too controlling and over-inhibiting may become moralistic. If the parent who early served as a model for the conscience-that is, as the external authority imposing moral rules which are subsequently internalized in an inflexible way-subsequently proves unworthy of such a position, that parent can become the target of violent opposition and resentment. According to Erikson (1968, p. 119), the child becomes suspicious, vindictive, and prone to the suppression of others. Moreover, the assumption of a negative identity is rooted in a latent death wish against the parents and may result from over-demanding parents. Early feelings of moral betrayal by parents may be the basis for later acute sensitivity to perceived injustices by authorities, a trait noted in many terrorists. In West Germany, for example, children discovered that strict and puritanical fathers had been, if not Nazis, accomplices in the evil of the Hitler period. Such disillusionment, rooted in history and politics, can interact with excessive guilt or conscience to produce an individual disposed to violent action against a perfidious substitute for parental authority.

Erikson (1963, p. 189) also emphasizes a Freudian contribution that may explain an individual's choice of terrorism as a form of conflict with authority: "The individual unconsciously arranges for variations of an original theme which he has not learned either to overcome or to live with: he tries to master a situation which in its original form has been too much for him by meeting it repeatedly



and of his own accord." The child who feared to mount a violent challenge to parents may later try to overcome that fear by attacking external authorities, such as political or social elites.

An interesting question is the relevance of the theories of Frantz Fanon (see McCulloch, 1983) to this framework. Fanon's conception of violence as a part of the self liberation of the colonized person can be compared to Erikson's view of violence as reflecting unresolved childhood conflicts, the expression of which is not necessarily therapeutic. Certainly, Fanon's theory of the relationship between colonialism and personality links individual to social setting in a way compatible with Erikson's model. What Fanon saw as the psychopathology of the colonized could be the assumption of a negative identity.

### **The Social Psychology of the Group**

The foregoing discussion indicates that the group is central to terrorist behavior. The individual's path to becoming an active terrorist is often through groups and through personal contacts who introduce him to the organization. Student political groups in the United States, West Germany, and Italy, as well as Basque cultural and political youth groups, often perform this initiatory function. Belonging to the group, as has been suggested, can be critical to the integration of some personalities; the collective identity becomes the individual's identity. Therefore, the maintenance of this primary group or family substitute may become as important as political aims or events. Terrorist organizations are likely to be composed of people whose need is the group and others whose goals are to change their social and political environment. But both types are dependent on the organization.

The social psychological dynamics of terrorist organizations help determine not only why individuals join them but why they stay in and why they choose terrorism as a strategy. Some features are characteristic of all small groups; others are specific to underground conspiracies.

Terrorist organizations become countercultures, with their own values and norms, into which new recruits are indoctrinated (see Wolfgang and Ferracuti, 1982). They are in this respect similar to youth gangs or nonpolitical cults and sects (see Bainbridge and Stark, 1979; Balch, 1980; Levine, 1978; Stark and Bainbridge, 1980). They tend, as Erikson (1968) suspected, to be "totalistic," demanding the complete allegiance of members. Relations with "outsiders" are discouraged if not prohibited. (Security considerations also make this a rational precaution.) Clandestine organizations are isolated from the outside world, an isolation often reinforced by living "underground" with false identities. Even in more open situations, such as in Spain or Ireland, members of the terrorist organization tend to be exclusive and to trust only one another.

A similarity between terrorist organizations and religious cults underscores the group's dominance over individual members and the collective drive toward totalistic control. Both types of groups strictly regulate the sexual relations of their members. In some groups sexual contact with outsiders is banned. In others, such as the Weather Underground, monogamy is discouraged. Some exceedingly puritanical groups, such as the People's Will, encourage celibacy and asexual comradeship. It is impossible to know the meaning of these restrictions, beyond their

implication of total control by the group. In puritanical groups the image of rigid morality (it is not clear that obedience to such precepts is absolute) may be a reflection of the over-controlling superego and a rejection of society as immoral and inadequate. The appearance of morality may also be an attempt to prove that the group's political stand is equally superior, despite its deviation from the social norm. The deliberate promiscuity of the Weathermen seems to have stemmed in part from a male drive to dominate the females in the organization (Stern, 1975). Terrorist groups are similar to other groups whose goal is to transform not only society but the individual (see Wilson, 1973).

All primary groups strive toward cohesion and uniformity (Cartwright, 1968; Verba, 1961), and terrorist organizations exhibit stronger than usual tendencies toward solidarity and conformity. Terrorist organizations are formed of like-minded individuals who build their association on prior homogeneity, at least in political attitude, and on explicit commitment to political goals. The terrorist group is an association whose members share a "common fate," in that their futures and the achievement of group goals—indeed, their lives—are bound together. Members must trust each other not to betray the group or endanger it in any way. Under these conditions of mutual interdependence, members of groups have been shown to develop the high interpersonal attraction that creates cohesiveness (Collins and Guetzkow, 1964, pp. 140-145). The group necessarily stands or falls together. In such circumstances members have more influence over each other; they feel more responsibility toward each other and more agreement with each other's views. Hence, the group's power over its members increases with cohesiveness.

A distinctive characteristic of terrorist groups is that they exist under conditions of extreme danger and corresponding stress. As Janis (1968, p. 80) observes, "When people are exposed to external danger, they show a remarkable increase in group solidarity. That is, they manifest increased motivation to retain affiliation with a face-to-face group and to avoid actions that deviate from its norms." Janis's (1968) studies of soldiers under combat conditions are relevant to this analysis of terrorist behavior. He notes, for example, that social isolation—something that terrorists choose—also increases dependence on the group. External danger stimulates needs for reassurance, which are satisfied through interaction with other members of the group, leading to a strong individual motivation to stay in the group and to avoid the risk of expulsion. The threat of group disapproval suppresses inclinations to deviate from group norms.

A further source of increased cohesion and ideological solidarity is the individual's reaction to the death of comrades. Survivors often try to adjust to death and to counteract group demoralization by unconsciously identifying with dead (or, as is often the case in terrorism, captured) comrades. Via a process of introjection, or internalization of the lost object, this reaction leads to a form of "postponed obedience," or strengthened adherence to the standards represented by the fallen comrade. This "blood price" contributes powerfully to group conformity (Janis, 1968, pp. 84-85).

Members of terrorist organizations are also well aware of the unattractiveness of alternatives to membership in the group. Their former life was sufficiently unsatisfactory that they abandoned it; in any event, for revolutionary terrorists in Western countries, the path back to the outside world is closed. In groups less

isolated from society and for whom the option of return is open, one would expect less cohesiveness.

The consequences of strong cohesiveness and pressure to conform in terrorist groups are numerous. Naturally strong affective ties are formed among members, so that the dependence with which most members entered deepens. The rewards that members seek probably become more "interpersonal" than "task-environmental" (Collins and Guetzkow, 1964, pp. 74-80). That is, the approval of other group members becomes more important than the achievement of group goals. Approval is awarded not only for actions that move the group toward its political goals but also for conformity and correct ideological thinking. Under these conditions the goal of the terrorist organization may become self-maintenance more than the transformation of the political system (as happens with other political organizations; see Wilson, 1973). Members are now motivated by the desire to keep the group together. For example, terrorist organizations emerged from student movements in part because some activists were unwilling to see the group dissolved.

Another consequence of group cohesiveness is the tendency to encourage the pursuit of violence. As isolation deepens, most communication comes from within the group, and information about the outside world is filtered through the group. Growing misperceptions reinforce group beliefs and values. It becomes easier to depersonalize victims and to see the enemy as unmitigatingly hostile. The need to deflect internal conflict that might disturb a vital harmony may lead to extreme aggressiveness toward outside enemies. Desperate attempts by terrorists to free imprisoned comrades are clearly related to the mutual interdependence of the group. They may also be related to survivor guilt, as well as to what Janis (1968, pp. 85-86) terms the "old sergeant" syndrome, in that the individual is unable to see new group members as acceptable emotional substitutes for former comrades and leaders.

Because terrorism takes place in a group setting, a phenomenon known as the "risky shift" may occur. Individuals in groups are more likely to take risks than they would when acting alone. The increase in risk-taking propensity may encourage escalation, as terrorists become less inhibited by the prospect of negative consequences. Studies in experimental social psychology (Wallach and Kogan, 1965; Wallach, Kogan, and Bern, 1962, 1964; Wehman, Goldstein, and Williams, 1977) have shown that individuals associated in small, face-to-face groups will accept greater risks—largely as a consequence of group discussion—than they would if unassociated with a group. Although it would be incautious to equate the behavior of experimental subjects faced with loss of small amounts of money with that of committed political radicals confronting death or disgrace, participation in the terrorist group itself may increase the individual's propensity to accept the significant risks that participation in terrorist activity entails.

Membership in a primary group may also help individuals cope with guilt. Research has not established that individual terrorists actually feel guilt over their behavior. The group both creates and imposes its own standards and norms and forms a counterculture in which violence against the enemy is morally acceptable and, indeed, may even be a duty. Degree of guilt probably varies with individual personality and the strength of group influence over members. Nevertheless, peer pressure can induce people to perform acts that they would ordinarily be prevented from doing by moral restraints. If guilt creates more stress for the individual,

dependence on the group surely increases-with the result that group influence over the individual is strengthened, leading to the commission of more guilt-inducing acts. It then becomes difficult to leave the terrorist group, because the reformed terrorist would confront not only social opprobrium and legal sanctions but also remorse. Most individuals probably find it easier to continue to believe in the values and standards of the terrorist group. Some, however, do "repent," although their motivations remain obscure to researchers.

Other components of terrorist belief systems, common to most groups, may also provide means of coping with guilt. The often-encountered theme of self sacrifice, for example, may be a form of atonement. Terrorists engage in what Bandura (1973, pp. 238-239) calls "slighting aggression by advantageous comparison"-that is, emphasizing the gross misdeeds of the government as justification for terrorism against it. Schmidtchen (1981, pp. 54.,55) noted in West German terrorist groups a process of socialization resulting in a demarcation between friend and enemy that reserved all positive identifications for friends, all negative identifications for the enemy. The enemy was perceived as an abstraction, a structure rather than a group of individuals. Victims have no personal value to terrorists; they are merely representatives of institutions. In this regard it is useful to compare the process of dehumanization of the enemy in military combat units to that in terrorist organizations.

The image that terrorists often present of themselves-as soldiers acting only in the name of duty and a higher call-may also be a way of avoiding personal responsibility for acts of violence. This identification is a form of self-presentation as well as of self-perception. It is a method of coping with the prospect of physical danger as well as with the emotional consequences of harming others. Being a soldier means being part of a collective enterprise that is externally sanctioned. Ferracuti and Bruno (1983, pp. 308-310) have argued that Italian terrorists, by imagining themselves to be in a state of war with the government, are engaging in an important fantasy mechanism that makes their participation in violence possible.

A further consequence of group interaction, which may explain the escalation of terrorist violence, is the possibility of brutalization, or "graduated desensitization" (Bandura, 1973, p. 241), as the performance of acts of terrorism progressively extinguishes discomfort and self-censure. Dicks (1972, pp. 253-256) saw Nazi violence emerging over time from a triggering process shared by fellow Nazis in a facilitating group setting. This conditioning process, through which the individual comes to seek destructive power, is termed brutalization, a result of succumbing to group pressures and conforming to a new ethos. Even individuals who had at first shown anxiety and reluctance gave in to the group in the end.

In comparison, Liebert (1971) explains the shift in the Columbia University student movement from nonviolent protest to terrorism as a generational phenomenon; the second generation is recruited into a value system and socialized into a group that may be entirely different from the group that influenced the first generation. Value changes profoundly affect socialization: "When 'temporary' deviations from the humanistic tradition (such as terrorism) begin to characterize the tactics used to obtain the ends, these compromised values become internalized in the psychological organization of the members of the movement, particularly the younger ones who enter and are indoctrinated at that phase of the revolution.

The corrupted values then are passed on through the generations" (Liebert, 1971, pp. 244-245). For example, whereas the initial decision to use terrorism is probably a topic of heated discussion in the early stage of the development of the organization, the more violence is used, the less controversial its value and acceptability), become. The ends and means of actions are no longer separable; not only are values corrupted but the use of terrorism is tied irrevocably to the values it serves.

Another group characteristic that helps explain the conduct of a terrorist strategy concerns relationships between leaders and followers. Janis (1968, pp. 81-83) refers to the Freudian concept of transference to explain the motivation for group solidarity in military units. The individual's feelings of dependency, an unconscious need from childhood, are redirected to new objects. Janis describes in combat situations a "fear-ridden" dependency, based on the reactivation of early separation anxiety, which is likely to develop toward authority figures perceived as able to ward off danger. Social isolation is further likely to enhance such dependency. Transference also causes the follower to overestimate the power of the surrogate parent and to seek that parent's approval.

Verba (1961, p. 149) notes that while followers depend on their leaders, the reverse also holds: "The conflict between directing the group and maintaining one's acceptance by the group would seem to be the unique problem of the group leader." Leaders must spend as much time maintaining the group as in achieving instrumental goals. This balance is easier to attain when the leader is perceived as acting as an agent of impersonal forces and in the service of group norms (Verba, 1961, pp. 172-175). In terrorist as in revolutionary organizations, the ideological purity of the leader must be above question; the leader must be the chief interpreter and communicator of the group's beliefs and aims. Leaders are, thus, under great pressure to conform to group norms, making innovation or compromise difficult. Since the external power sources of terrorist leaders are surely few, their position depends on their interpretation of group goals and efficient direction of terrorist operations. In effect, the behavior of both leaders and followers is restricted by the terrorist group.

Another way the group facilitates terrorism is by creating an appropriate context for social learning. Bandura (1973) has argued that aggressive patterns of behavior are learned from observation or experience, rather than emerging from instinctual drives or frustration. His theory underscores the argument that participation in violent acts desensitizes the individual to guilt. Not only do individuals learn from their experiences in the organization, but they also are exposed to powerful external role models, whom they are encouraged to imitate. The narrow band of communication from the outside world, filtered through the perceptions of leaders, emphasizes the dramatic exploits of other terrorist groups. Terrorism, a symbolic action, is highly memorable; for this reason, as well as the ease with which it can be implemented, terrorism is almost ideally imitable (Bandura, 1973, p. 213; Midlarsky, Crenshaw, and Fumihiko, 1980). The terrorist subculture forms an environment in which violence is valued, and models such as the Tupamaros of Uruguay may be endowed with great prestige. The power of such models is not diluted by their objective failures. The 1960s revolutionary campaign of the Tupamaros, for example, culminated in a military dictatorship. The mass media, especially television, are often thought to be critical to the communication of information about models, but their actual influence remains undocumented.

If members of terrorist groups receive most of their information from other sources in the group or from an underground press, the popular news media would not be a primary determinant of the social contagion of terrorism.

Bandura (1973, pp. 215-216) has suggested that symbolic modeling may help to explain the surge and decline of terrorist incidents: "Social contagion of new styles and tactics of aggression conforms to a pattern that characterizes the transitory changes of most other types of collective activities: New behavior is initiated by a salient example; it spreads rapidly in a contagious fashion; after it has been widely adopted, it is discarded, often in favor of a new form that follows a similar course." Decline is explained by the development of effective counter-measures, the discrepancy between anticipated and experienced consequences, and routinization of the activity. The decline of an activity, then, may depend on its not being rewarded.

The dynamics of reward and punishment in the case of terrorism are as yet poorly understood. Since the individual motivation for terrorism may be psycho-logical, involving the acquisition of an identity or affiliation with a substitute family, the failure to achieve the organization's instrumental goals may not be a sufficient "aversive stimulation." Individuals who resort to terrorist behavior as part of the assumption of a negative identity expect and even seek social disapproval, which confirms their self-expectations. Some terrorists become disillusioned when anticipated social and political changes do not occur, but others continue despite the absence of positive external reinforcements. Given the small numbers of people required for the implementation of a terrorist strategy and a ready availability of recruits, terrorism can show remarkable persistence. A punitive government response may confirm terrorist expectations of coercive "enemy" behavior, provide a needed reward of attention and publicity, and generate resentment not only among terrorists but among the larger political or ethnic minorities from which they sprang. The government may wish, instead, to avoid creating obstacles to the reintegration of dissidents into society.

### **Psychological Effects of Terrorism**

The political effectiveness of terrorism is importantly determined by the psychological effects of violence on audiences. The physical destructiveness of terrorism is in general minimal, despite the tragedy it may cause for individual victims. There is some feeling that the significance of terrorism has been exaggerated, perhaps as a result of the media's adoption of international terrorism as a news issue. Whether because of the intrinsic drama of terrorist violence Or because of press and television hyperbole, hijackings, kidnappings, and other terrorist assaults have created large public concern (see de Boer, 1979).

In part because of public reaction, terrorism has become a salient policy issue for many governments. The general thrust of both public reaction and government response has been to resist giving in to terrorist demands or admitting the justice of their claims. The forceful reactions of the Israeli, West German, Egyptian, and American governments, respectively, in the crises of Entebbe, Mogadishu, Larnaca, and Iran were, in part, determined by the blow that terrorism dealt to domestic authority and international prestige. Terrorism is more a threat to image and reputation than to physical security.

Even Israel, surely the most directly endangered of all states affected by terrorism, is said to overreact (Alon, 1980). Although terrorism is perceived as a major threat by Israeli society, this assessment is based on subjective probabilities rather than a realistic estimate of the number of casualties caused by terrorism. Individuals feel both fearful and angry at the damage done to national prestige. Such perceptions are affected not only by the nature of terrorism but also by media portrayals and government countermeasures, which serve as a constant reminder of the threat. Alon (1980) concludes that the effect of terrorism should be downgraded; terrorism should be treated simply as one among many sources of casualties. Government resources should be allocated accordingly.

Despite the obvious importance of society's reactions to terrorism, there has been little research on general psychological and social effects. Gutmann (1979) argues that psychological studies neglect the audience for terrorism, although terrorists are shrewdly aware of the composition and attitudes of viewing groups. Even though the social arena – especially critical elites – is decisive to the success of terrorism, “liberals” have permitted the development of a terrorist mystique. Gutmann (1979) contends that academic elites are victims of a fatal fascination for terrorism, derived from their bourgeois midlife crises, the comfortable life they despise, and their idealization of the terrorist as a hero. In his opinion, those who study terrorism have made it respectable.

The practice of blaming intellectuals for the social ills they seek to explain, although common, is hardly conducive to the advancement of knowledge. Gutmann also reveals an ignorance of terrorism – placing the Tupamaros in Ecuador instead of Uruguay, for example – but his point that the study of audiences is neglected is obvious. However, neglect of the subject is due as much to the difficulties of studying audience reactions as to lack of recognition of their importance. Responses to terrorism are difficult to conceptualize and to measure.

Freedman (1983, pp. 399-400) has proposed a theoretical framework, a “model of terroristic resonance,” to solve what he considers a significant puzzle. The reaction to terrorism depends on the audience's perception of the terrorist as single-minded, willful, fearless, and unremorseful. Terrorism must be seen as violence of human agency. Terrorist attacks appear to the audience as anonymous, sudden, and random. The awareness of vulnerability undermines the victim's sense of autonomy and security. In this way terrorism arouses awe, anxiety, and a mystical dread. The id seems to be assaulting the superego, evoking infantile apprehensions.

The metaphor of resonance appropriately describes terrorism's effects, since acts of terrorism constitute a reasonably small stimulus that causes and intensifies an echo or vibration in the social system. This concept implies that the act of terrorism has to be properly attuned to its audience, so strike a chord, if it is to be effective. When the audience is responsive, the act of terrorism resonates or continues to sound beyond its immediate impact. However, a conceptual distinction must be drawn between direct and indirect audiences. The direct audience is composed of persons who identify with the victims of terrorism; they are potential victims because they belong to the same social category as the victims (such as judges, police, diplomats, airline passengers, foreign business executives). The indirect audience, in contrast, is not directly affiliated with the victims. Its members may be neutral or may even identify with the terrorists. The act of terrorism, if it

seems a threat at all, is experienced only vicariously. The indirect audience is not a party to the struggle the terrorists have initiated. Most terrorists, of course, try to choose their audiences strategically. They may widen the scope of the conflict by incorporating new direct audiences. For example, Palestinian attacks on non-Israeli targets, such as foreign tourists or pilgrims, converted people who were uninvolved into direct audiences.

For the indirect audience, terrorism is a spectacle more than a personal experience. Terrorism shocks because its milieu and its specific victims are unpredictable. Terrorism attracts attention because it unexpectedly breaks social taboos. For most indirect audiences, terrorism is a geographically distant phenomenon. Information about it is communicated primarily by the news media, especially television. In these cases the manner of presentation of information about terrorism can significantly influence audience reactions. Furthermore, in order to maintain its psychological effectiveness, terrorism must become more dramatic as the distance, both geographical and psychological, between the act and the audience increases. Otherwise, competing with other newsworthy events and with more immediate personal concerns, terrorism may lose the salience upon which its influence over audiences depends. Most terrorists, aware of the risk of audience distraction, direct their actions accordingly and strive for innovativeness and timeliness.

The same factors that make terrorism a source of concern and interest for indirect audiences make it a source of personal anxiety for direct audiences, whose feelings of invulnerability are diminished. The reactions of direct audiences to terrorism can usefully be compared to those of the victims of aerial bombing (see Hutchinson, 1972; Janis, 1951). Extreme anxiety, disorientation, feelings of helplessness and defenselessness, and demoralization can characterize reactions to terrorism, which is the type of indefinite and unidentifiable threat that classical studies indicate as difficult to understand or to act against (see Lowenthal, 1946, pp. 2-5; May, 1940, pp. 191-195; Riezler, 1950, pp. 129, 131; Sullivan, 1941, p. 282).

Since fear of terrorism is the fear of death or mutilation, extremely powerful emotional drives direct the political behavior of potential victims. The fear of terrorism often leads to popular demands for protection and prevention. Democratic procedures can also be undermined. Judicial processes, for example, can be subverted. In April 1977 the assassination of the president of the Turin Bar Association was followed by a request to be excused for medical reasons by thirty-six of the forty-two jurors preliminarily selected for the trial of Renato Curcio and twelve other terrorist leaders of the Red Brigades. This postponement followed an earlier delay resulting from the June 1976 assassination of the attorney general of Genoa (Pisano, 1979, pp. 186-187).

Terrorism and reactions to it can also effect broad and diffuse social changes in the direction of decreased openness and trust. Officials in both *czarist* Russia and contemporary Italy hesitated to appear in public. Businessmen travel with bodyguards in bullet-proof limousines, altering their route for each journey. Diplomats live unostentatiously. The White House is ringed with concrete barriers. The long-term psychological effects of suspiciousness, isolation, and mistrust are largely unknown; they are surely destructive of political community.

Northern Ireland, an extreme case of the effects of terrorism, has been the subject of several studies (for example, Fields, 1980; Heskin, 1980). Researchers are



divided on the question of how serious the psychological effects of terrorism have been in Northern Ireland. (This case is a reminder that it is difficult to isolate the effects of terrorism from those of other conflicts, social prejudice, and government countermeasures.) On the one hand, Fields (1980) and Fraser (1973) argue that terrorism has produced dramatic consequences, especially in the children of Northern Ireland. To Fraser children are being socialized into "a perpetual chaotic state of imminent violence" (p. 8). He notes the very high rate of youth involvement in the violence of Northern Ireland as a sign of how deeply children are affected. Although Fields is primarily concerned with the consequences of British repression more than of IRA or Protestant terrorism, she also foresees grave physical and mental harm and predicts a new generation of "militaristic automatons" who will require significant rehabilitation efforts if Northern Ireland is to survive as a society (p. 55).

Heskin (1980) is less pessimistic. He concludes, as have other observers of people living under conditions of pervasive insecurity, that life goes on as usual. Minor inconveniences no longer seem unusual; dramatic stress is seen in only a few places. He is cautious in interpreting the results of studies of the effects of violence on children; violence does seem to become more acceptable and normal, but this seems to come as much from watching it on television as from actually experiencing it. Violence also seems to have reinforced antisocial behavior, although to what extent is difficult to gauge. The data on the incidence of mental illness, most of which come from Belfast, are mixed and inconclusive. He agrees that increased psychiatric disturbance in the intermediate rather than the serious trouble spots may occur. These problems are more common in women than in men. There is less depression than usual, although attempted suicides (while still infrequent) increase (see Heskin, 1980, pp. 52-73). Heskin also warns, however, that the social and psychological resilience he observed may obscure hidden costs of adaptation to acute stress.

These studies point to a need to distinguish between different levels of terrorism as they affect audiences. In situations where the threat of terrorism is so constant as to be normal, it may be accepted as a fact of life. However, where the threat remains sufficiently random and unusual, its targets cannot adjust to uncertainty. For example, the "Document on Terror" (1952), purportedly a Communist instruction manual for the takeover of Eastern Europe after World War II, recommends that terrorism be applied scientifically in waves, in order to avoid producing the insensitivity that would diminish its effectiveness. The use of an analytical framework that distinguishes among levels of threat as well as among types of audience is essential to understanding the general psychological effects of terrorism.

### **Hostage Taking**

Interest in the psychological and physical effects that terrorism has on its victims has taken its most direct form in the literature on hostage taking and victimization (see Ochberg and Soskis, 1982). The seizure of hostages is a modern form of terrorism; it results from attempts by terrorists to bargain with governments rather than to make a declaration through an act of violence. It has usually involved holding passengers on airlines or trains, diplomats, or school children and demanding some government concession for their release. Government concern over this

problem has dominated research, leading to a focus on hostage reactions and terrorist behavior in order to improve negotiating tactics and policies. The issue, which first acquired relevance because of the rash of diplomatic kidnappings and seizures of embassies in the 1970s, became acute with the Iran crisis of 1979-80. The efforts of government and private psychologists and psychiatrists were concentrated on how hostages, held for long periods in captivity, coped with their plight

The issue has been analyzed most frequently from a criminal justice perspective, not only because it is intrinsically important to policy makers but also because hostage taking as a tactic is not the exclusive domain of political terrorists. Most hostage takers with whom police have to deal are criminals or psychotics. Consequently, psychological advice to practitioners is often based on a uniform model of the hostage taker. For example, one such work (Miron and Goldstein, 1979, p. II) assumes that "Many acts of terrorism are really acts of expressive suicide. They have as their sole purpose the establishment of the significance and importance of the perpetrator. They are acts designed to establish the perpetrator's importance through media coverage. Often the perpetrators mask these true intentions through the facade of some worthy, or at least respectable, cause."

Although Knutson (1980, pp. 195, 219) agrees that terrorism is more often expressive than instrumental, she criticizes the government approach as "myopic." Governments need a flexible and varied response, not one tailored to a single view of the hostage taker based on criminal and psychotic behavior. Negotiators, Knutson (1980, p. 202) claims, are reluctant to appear sympathetic to terrorists who are politically motivated: "This refusal is based upon the ill-advised wholesale transfer to the terrorist event of a rule which *can* alleviate similar events perpetrated for gain or out of major mental disorder: do nothing to enhance the psychological status of the adversary." Endowing a terrorist with formal adversary status is perceived as a loss of power and esteem. Because terrorism is a threat to the government's legitimacy, policy makers are under intense psychological pressure to act forcefully to end the crisis. Resisting this pressure to act in order to wait for a peaceful resolution of the incident is probably the most difficult problem the policy maker confronts.

In addition to recommendations on how to bargain with terrorists, governments have sought psychological explanations of the behavior of hostages in cases of kidnapping and temporary captivity. Recent research has applied many of the theories of stress, coping, and adaptation that were developed from the experiences of World War II (see Hamburg, 1974). The literature on concentration camp victims and prisoners of war has been found relevant (see, for example, Bettelheim, 1960; Stein and others, 1960). Some research is notable for establishing links between mental and physical effects of exposure to life-threatening circumstances.

In general, the experience of being a hostage is highly stressful, given individual variations in personality, situation, and duration of the incident. Eitinger (1982) has emphasized the deprivation of freedom and of physical movement or activity that might make extreme emotional stress more bearable. The victim suffers a loss of power and autonomy, becoming a symbolic object without personal identity or meaning. The outcome is unpredictable, but death is a realistic possibility. The hostage is forced to relate to the adversary, often in conditions of physical intimacy and extreme dependence, isolated from the support systems of family and society.

Accounts offered by former hostages (Jackson, 1974; Jacobson, 1973; Ochberg, 1982) confirm the threatening and uncomfortable aspects of the hostage situation. Although Roth (1982) finds that the hostage situation is theoretically interesting because it is stressful mainly for psychological reasons, physical deprivations—such as the lack of sanitary facilities, extreme temperatures, or inadequate food—weigh heavily with the hostages themselves. These discomforts may seem minor in comparison to those suffered by concentration camp prisoners or some prisoners of war, but they are, nevertheless, painfully real to those who experience them. Dwelling on physical details may also be a method of coping with the fear of death as much as an objective appraisal of conditions.

The stress of being a hostage has complex and, as yet, incompletely specified emotional and physiological consequences. Physical effects may include changes in the autonomic nervous system and in hormonal balance, which, depending on their severity and duration, may cause illness or even death (Roth, 1982; see also Bourne, 1971). Psychologically, the individual's ability to think and act is modified. Ochberg and Soskis (1982, pp. 113-114) found that, in addition to stress, victims also suffer guilt over not having fought back, over having lived when other hostages were killed, or over having been released early.

Most analysts agree that the effects of having been a hostage can be long-lasting. According to Fields (1981, p. 69), for example, traumatic effects that are both mentally and physically destructive can last as long as fifteen years. (Her study extends to the effects of government treatment on terrorist prisoners.) Most authors advise subsequent therapeutic intervention to minimize the effects of the experience.

Research on coping and adaptation has also been extended to terrorism. Researchers (Roth, 1982; Tinklenberg, 1982) draw a distinction between the largely unconscious psychological defenses that hostages first erect in order to handle the situation and the later coping strategies that they consciously adopt in order to survive. Various well-known defenses—such as denial of reality, task orientation, counter-phobias, reaction formation, intellectualization, creative elaboration, and humor—have been observed in the victims of terrorism. Coping with terrorism often requires deliberation and reflection. The victim must relinquish control over his fate; all psychological studies agree that it is best to submit and avoid provocation, within the bounds of retaining one's self-esteem. Maintaining self-control and emotional stability can be aided by various strategies, such as gathering information about the situation, establishing positive contacts with terrorists (in hopes of creating emotional bonds that will inhibit subsequent terrorist violence), establishing relationships with other victims, focusing on survival, and maintaining a will to live (see Tinklenberg, 1982, pp. 68-70). The memoirs of Geoffrey Jackson (1974), kidnapped British ambassador to Uruguay, are cited as a handbook of successful coping (Eitinger, 1982, p. 84).

If hostages are multiple, the individual's ability to cope with being a hostage may depend on the nature of the group. According to Caplan (1981), neurophysiological and other medical evidence indicates that social support reduces the likelihood of illness as a result of stress. As this chapter suggested earlier, with reference to the effects of stress on the cohesiveness and mutual interdependence of terrorist groups: "Individuals under stress usually show a spontaneous increase in their affiliative needs, accompanied by a rise in suggestibility and compliance"

(Caplan, 1981, p. 416). Whereas terrorists possess a preexisting social support system and concrete opportunities for collective action to relieve anxiety, their victims have not usually enjoyed prior association. Targets of opportunity, they are surprised and unprepared, in contrast to their calculating adversaries. Under such circumstances division seems as likely as unity, further hampering the individual's ability to cope successfully (see Jacobson, 1973, for an account of these problems in a hijacked airliner). The emergence of strong and adaptive leaders seems to be critical; for example, see Ochberg's (1982) biographical analysis of the experience of Gerard Vaders, a hostage on a train held in the Netherlands by South Moluccan terrorists in 1975.

Prior experience and training affect the individual's capacity for responding constructively to frightening situations; hence, government and business organizations devote extensive resources to preparing their representatives for hostage situations (Ochberg, 1979; Silverstein, 1979). A common prescription is to pursue adaptive coping mechanisms, such as planning physical activity and establishing positive personal relationships with one's captors.

The potential hostage reaction that seems to have most preoccupied policy makers is the "Stockholm syndrome," a phenomenon initially noted during a bank siege in Stockholm in 1973 (Lang, 1974). Officials, reporters, and the public were astounded and puzzled by the apparent friendliness that developed between bank robbers and hostages and by the corresponding hostility the hostages exhibited toward the police and the government. Swedish psychologists suggested that what had transpired was a neurotic mechanism termed "identification with the aggressor" (Lang, 1974, p. 78). This form of identification is an essentially passive and regressive defense that had been noted among concentration camp inmates and prisoners of war. The concept of identification with the aggressor has been employed in both popular and academic circles. Miller (1980, pp. 37-60), for example, sees the Stockholm syndrome as a version of the process of transference. As a result of physical intimacy and stress, hostage and captor develop emotional bonds that make it difficult for the terrorist to kill the hostage. Miller urges government negotiators to stall for time, in hopes that the terrorists will become reluctant to kill their hostages. At the same time, he reminds negotiators that the development of affective bonds is not automatic. Intimacy may be precluded by terrorists who are particularly abusive or in situations where ethnic, religious, or political differences between terrorists and hostages make identification impossible. Miller also contends that it is more likely for hostages to feel an emotional tie to their captors than vice versa and that terrorists manipulate such dependencies.

The diagnosis of the Stockholm syndrome as a form of identification with the aggressor has been criticized. Eitinger (1982, pp. 78-80) sees it as a misinterpretation; emotional closeness between victim and terrorist is a result not of latent needs but of relief, as the hostage's initial fear of death dissipates. Intimacy grows as terrorist and hostage are forced to solve practical problems together. Nor should observers assume that hostility between hostage and terrorist is natural; "neutral" victims who do not have a side in the political conflict the terrorists represent may become sympathetic if the terrorists are sufficiently persuasive. Brockman (1976), a passenger on the airliner hijacked by Zvonko Busic and his Croatian compatriots, observed with some indignation that the pilot of the aircraft and many passengers applauded the terrorists as heroes. Eitinger (1982) points out, as does Miller (1980),

that emotional ties are unlikely to emerge in situations where strong differences between terrorists and hostages are manifest from the start, as in the 1976 Entebbe crisis, when Palestinian terrorists held exclusively Jewish passengers.

Other analysts (Knutson, 1980, p. 204; Strentz, 1982, pp. 149-163) argue that affinity between hostage and terrorist has a realistic basis. Hostages are aware that governments are under pressure to act and that any moment may bring the use of force. They may also know that hostages are most endangered during police or military assaults. Hostages are in a situation of extreme dependency, one in which they are encouraged not only by their situation but by professionals to be friendly to their captors. In order to avoid the cognitive dissonance that must arise from pretending to be sympathetic, hostages must surely come to believe in the positive feelings they express. It is also natural that hostages should blame the government for their misfortunes. Displacement of aggression is a familiar phenomenon. The government is blamed not only because it is responsible for the hostages' plight (having failed to protect them) but also because, being absent, it cannot punish the hostages for their anger. The physical discomfort of the situation is blamed on the government, on whose account is laid the responsibility to provide food, clothing, blankets, and sanitary materials. Grievances of a practical nature, bitterly felt, are attributed to government neglect or incompetence. Since what the hostages can do to influence the government is minimal, they must orient their attempts at persuasion and conciliation toward the authority in place.

Another problem with interpretations of the "Stockholm syndrome" is that they often assume sexual implications. For example, Miller (1980, p. 46) reports that a woman hostage in the original bank robbery initiated sexual relations with her captor. According to the original account of the episode (Lang, 1974, especially pp. 90 and 92.), such was not the case. There does not appear to be any factual evidence that women hostages experience stronger emotional dependencies than men.

### **Conclusion**

Although uneven and sparsely developed, psychological studies of political terrorism against the state are important to understanding this extreme form of political behavior. Psychology helps answer questions of why the individual becomes a terrorist, how terrorist groups are formed and act, and why publics and governments react with alarm despite the minor physical menace of terrorism. Psychological findings dispute the assumption that personality abnormalities explain terrorism. Instead, they point to the significance of the small cohesive group in determining behavior. In many cases the purpose of the terrorist organization becomes the maintenance of the group as much as the achievement of its external political goals. Moreover, the psychological effects of terrorism are critical to its political effectiveness. Because terrorism is both frightening and dramatically symbolic, it influences distant as well as immediate audiences.

Existing psychological research on terrorism suffers from a lack of coherence. Some inconsistency is explained by the ambiguity of the central concept of terrorism. Terrorist activity is extraordinarily complex and varied; the very definition is disputed. For example, recommendations on how to handle negotiations with political terrorists who have seized hostages are not likely to be appropriate, and may even be harmful, if based on an analysis of what is actually criminal

behavior. The field lacks systematic inquiry that builds on the work of other scholars and integrates psychology with what is known about the historical phenomenon of terrorism. More systematic and comprehensive theories are needed to develop cumulative knowledge and to fit the analysis of terrorism into larger theories of political behavior and social change. Definitive statements about the relationship between terrorism, psychological determinants, and sociopolitical change must be preceded by tentative and middle-range hypotheses closely linked to empirical data. Many puzzles remain to be solved.

These puzzles include questions related to both the causes and the consequences of terrorism. On the one hand, terrorist decision making is imperfectly understood. Studying this problem is difficult: Researchers usually have access to terrorists only after the fact, not while they are engaged in the activity, and there are impediments to conducting interviews, such as government reluctance and terrorist hostility. Research on the perceptions and beliefs of terrorists ultimately depends on government cooperation. Despite these complexities, comparative inquiry should work toward answering questions such as why terrorists exercise restraint. Apparently, some terrorist organizations have not taken advantage of the technological resources available to them, such as the possibility of exploiting nuclear capabilities. On the other hand, psychological factors may be at the root of the escalation of terrorism. Perhaps under pressure from the government, members of terrorist organizations grow desperate and lose control. What kinds of pressures and perceptions increase tendencies toward counterproductive violence? Innovation in terrorist strategies is another area of research to which psychology could contribute. Why, for example, did terrorist organizations shift to bargaining tactics after 1968? The answer to the question of why terrorism ends may also lie in the psychology of the terrorists rather than in the countervailing power of the government. Why some terrorists "repent" while others persist to their deaths is an important question. The role of terrorist leaders in restraint, escalation, and innovation may be critical. What are the bases of authority in violent undergrounds?

Understanding the psychology of the terrorist is also relevant to analysis of the government policy response. Appropriate countermeasures must be tailored to accurate assessment of terrorist behavior. How terrorists perceive the threat of government coercion may determine whether or not policies of deterrence will work. How terrorists interpret success and failure may be critical to policy effectiveness, since what the government regards as a threat of punishment may be considered by the terrorist as a reward. Policies intended to inhibit terrorism may instead lead to its escalation.

Surveys of the attitudinal reactions of different audiences could also help explain the consequences and effectiveness of strategies of violence. Is the seriousness with which governments take terrorism justified by the public insecurity it causes? Additionally, government decision making in terrorist crises is an important but neglected subject. Stress affects policy makers as well as terrorists. Are there similarities in government and terrorist reactions to each other, leading to conflict spiral syndromes? Do policy makers perceive foreign and domestic terrorist crises differently? Are terrorists considered to be unusual adversaries? The literature on crisis management could be useful in examining policies toward terrorism. It seems especially important in dealing with terrorism that political and military

leaders learn to expect the unexpected and to cope with adversaries they perceive as irrational. Part of the explanation of why terrorist surprise succeeds lies in the mind-sets of government officials. Reliance on operational routine, inflexible doctrines, and narrow conceptions of the normal in politics may prevent policy makers from successfully anticipating terrorist innovations.

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