

Theories of Terrorism: Instrumental and Organizational Approaches

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It is possible to think in terms of two basic explanations for how the conspiratorial organizations that practice terrorism behave.¹ In turn, each analysis yields different policy recommendations. These two approaches, which are derived from established bodies of theory, will be presented sequentially in order to set out the logical premises and the policy implications of each. However, both views may be necessary to understanding terrorism and its consequences.

The first explanation is based on the assumption that the act of terrorism is a deliberate choice by a political actor. The organization, as a unit, acts to achieve collective values, which involve radical changes in political and social conditions. Terrorism is interpreted as a response to external stimuli, particularly government actions. An increase in the cost or a decrease in the reward for violence will make it less likely. However, the second explanation focuses on internal organizational processes within the group using terrorism or among organizations sharing similar objectives. Terrorism is explained as the result of an organization's struggle for survival, usually in a competitive environment. Leaders ensure organizational maintenance by offering varied incentives to followers, not all of which involve the pursuit of the group's stated political purposes. Leaders seek to prevent both defection and dissent by developing intense loyalties among group members. The organization responds to pressure from outside by changing the incentives offered members or through innovation. Terrorist actions do not necessarily or directly reflect ideological values.

The Instrumental Approach

In this perspective violence is seen as intentional. Terrorism is a means to a political end. Government and adversary are analyzed as if engaged in a typical conflict, in which each party's actions are aimed at influencing the behavior of the other. The classic works on the strategy of conflict, such as those by Thomas C. Schelling, suggest that terrorism is one form of violent coercion, a bargaining process based on the power to hurt and intimidate as a substitute for the use of overt military force.² As such, it is similar to other strategies based on 'the power to hurt' rather than conventional military strength. Terrorism is meant to produce a change in the government's political position, not the destruction of military potential.

The non-state organization using terrorism is assumed to act on the basis of calculation of the benefit or value to be gained from an action, the costs of the attempt and of its failure, the consequences of inaction, or the probability of success. Terrorist actions may occur for several reasons: the value sought is overwhelmingly important; the costs of trying are low; the status quo is intolerable; or the probability of succeeding (even at high cost) is high. Extremist groups may act out of anticipation of reward or out of desperation, in response to opportunity or to threat.

This strategic perspective is a conceptual foundation for the analysis of surprise attack.³ Terrorism is par excellence a strategy of surprise, necessary for small groups who must thereby compensate for weakness in numbers and destructive capability.

Explanations of why surprise occurs frequently emphasize the defender's lack of preparation as much as the adversary's intentions and capabilities. The enemy's intent to surprise is taken for granted. Intelligence failures may preclude warning of impending attack, or, paradoxically, an overload of warnings, especially if they are imprecise, may induce complacency or the 'cry-wolf syndrome'. Specific tactical warnings of impending terrorist attack are rarely received. More seriously, government leaders are likely to be insensitive to warnings they do receive.⁴ For example, the political costs of acting in anticipation of an attack may outweigh the advantages to be gained by striking first. Nor may governments wish to expose intelligence sources by revealing the receipt of warnings.

The actions of the attacker are determined by perceptions of incentive and opportunity.⁵ The existence of opportunities for surprise attack may generate a political incentive for terrorism where none existed before. An organization may not consider translating its ideological goals into action until the possibility presents itself. Such an opportunity could stem from the vulnerability and availability of symbolic targets (such as the presence of American Marines in Beirut, Israeli forces in southern Lebanon, or British troops in Northern Ireland) or from the offer of resources from foreign governments. In turn, a prior incentive or ideological direction may lead to a search for opportunities, which determined and risk-prone groups may be adept at creating.

What strategic conditions promote surprise? Surprise may simply be aggressive, aimed at winning quickly and cheaply. The short-term victory may involve a propaganda gain that demonstrates the government's weakness. Terrorism may appear to have compelled a government to withdraw from a position to which it was publically committed as, for example, the American withdrawal from Beirut. In such cases, the attack may stem from the opposing organization's perception of its position as dominant. Yet surprise may also be a result of strategic weakness. Terrorism may occur in anticipation of government pressure. Extremist groups may be most dangerous when they feel beleaguered and on the defensive, with little to lose from a suicidal attack. As is characteristic of a balance of power international system, a party may attack because the

ratio of forces is likely to become even more unfavorable in the future rather than because an advantage exists in the present.

Bringing about surprise, from an operational viewpoint, is often a matter simply of timing.⁶ Governments often know that a terrorist attack is probable and what the likely targets are, but cannot predict the day or the hour of the attack. In addition, surprise may be achieved through technical or doctrinal innovation. Terrorism, frequently referred to as 'a new mode of warfare', is in itself such an innovation. Since the beginning of the modern wave of terrorism around 1968, terrorists have developed new and elaborate methods of hostage-taking, including aircraft hijackings, seizure of embassies or consulates, and kidnapping of diplomats and business executives. As these tactics became familiar to governments and corporations, they ceased to surprise. Furthermore, defending states devised effective protective measures. Terrorism then shifted to bombings that were shocking in their massive and indiscriminate destructiveness and in the apparent willingness of their perpetrators to die with their bombs. The purpose of innovation in terrorism is to maintain the possibility of surprise because it is critical to success.

An organization's success or failure is measured in terms of its ability to attain its stated political ends. Few organizations actually attain the long-term ideological objectives they claim to seek, and therefore one must conclude that terrorism is objectively a failure. The reason it continues in the immediate is that extremist organizations frequently achieve their tactical objectives, particularly publicity and recognition.

Should there be obvious disunity or factionalism within an organization, the instrumental model would interpret it in terms of disagreement over political goals or strategy. The Palestine Liberation Organization, for example, is divided over the questions of how best to defeat Israel and the character of the future state. The Irish Republican Army split in the aftermath of the civil rights movement in Northern Ireland, as rival leaders disagreed on how to respond to the demands of the Catholic population.

Since the specific intentions of any adversary, particularly a clandestine organization, are intrinsically difficult to determine, it is tempting to focus on the adversary's capabilities and to assume intention from actions. If terrorists are instrumental and calculating, the means they use are logically related to their ends. The targets of terrorism, for example, are symbolically related to the organization's ideological beliefs. Predictability and interpretability of the act of terrorism – whether or not it is understood by the watching audience as its perpetrators mean it to be understood – depend on the existence of this link between victim and purpose. Terrorist ideology, no matter how unrealistic, must be taken seriously as a guide to intentions. Coupled with analysis of capabilities, it provides a basis for expectations. Organizations such as the Italian Red Brigades, for example, which seek to involve the masses in the political struggle, are unlikely to commit acts of violence which might alienate potential supporters. Ideology can thus be a factor in self-restraint. On the

other hand, organizations which have no desire for an earthly constituency and possess the necessary resources, such as the followers of the Ayatollah Khomeini, are unlikely to practice moderation.

The escalation of terrorism is a problem that requires explanation. In terms of the strategic approach, escalation is similar to innovation in being primarily a response to government actions. Opponents are sensitive to the strengths as well as the weaknesses of governments; terrorists engage in a process of constant adaptation to the strategic environment. Moving to greater destructiveness may be a reaction to a need to retain the initiative as governments find means of countering existing capabilities.

Moreover, if terrorism is a means to an end, then substitutes are possible. The absence of alternatives to terrorism will be important; organizations that do not rely solely on terrorism may be more likely to abandon the strategy in the face of failure. A constant failure to achieve stated goals would presumably lead to internal strife and ultimate collapse. Terrorism will end through consistent failure, when costs are high and opportunities for violence closed.

In meeting a threat that is interpreted in such terms, the government has two basic alternatives: *defense* and *deterrence*. As Glenn Snyder proposed in a classic formulation of the problem, *defense* means forcefully preventing an enemy from attaining his physical objectives. Defending territory and values may involve not only passive defensive measures – guarding potential objects of attack or erecting barriers – but a tactically offensive response. An effective defense prevents attack by making it impossible. Offensive tactics in the interest of halting an attack would engage an enemy before he reached the target rather than at the point of attack. Anticipatory actions to remove enemy capabilities are of two sorts. *Preemption* occurs when an enemy attack is believed to be imminent. It aims at halting an adversary who is poised to strike. The use of force in the interest of *prevention*, on the other hand, is intended to incapacitate an enemy who plans a future attack but has not yet mobilized. The exercise of prevention is based as much on estimation of enemy intention as of capabilities.

Both preemption and prevention require exceptional intelligence. Decision-makers are unlikely to get the kind of precise warning of impending attack they need in order to preempt effectively. In fact, an indication of an intent to preempt in order to avoid being surprised may provoke premature attack or postponement. Preventive attack to disarm the terrorist at an earlier stage of preparation may be even more demanding of intelligence. It involves detecting preparations for mobilization rather than mobilization itself. Because of inherent uncertainties of information and because public disclosure would compromise intelligence sources, it may be difficult for governments to justify preemption or preventive use of force to their citizens.

Intelligence is also the major problem of response to warning. Governments may be prevented from responding to warning by a variety of constraints that make rational strategy impossible. Domestic public

opinion, for example, may restrain governments in the preemptive use of military force against terrorists. Intelligence warnings alone are rarely decisive and concrete enough to use as public evidence. The government may also be insensitive to warning because of doctrines or assumptions that discount the threat. In Beirut, for example, because the American military command was committed to the conception that American forces were on a peace-keeping mission they did not believe that their presence could be construed as hostile. The Long Commission Report noted that perceptual difficulties regarding the nature of the American mission led decision-makers to neglect changing political conditions in Lebanon.⁸ Once the United States appeared to have sided with the Christian faction, the tacit immunity once granted American forces was withdrawn. Warnings were then incorrectly interpreted.

In contrast to defensive measures, the purpose of which is to limit the objective opportunities available for terrorism, there is the strategy of deterrence. Its purpose is to influence the adversary's perceptions of opportunity and incentives for attack. Deterrence purports to prevent conflict by convincing the adversary that the costs of the action he contemplates far outweigh any potential benefits he may gain. The defending government influences the opposing organization's decisions by threatening unacceptable damage to collective values should an act of terrorism occur. The value-maximizing adversary will presumably react to an effectively communicated and credible threat by desisting. For the defender, the problem lies in communicating the threat, making it credible, and devising it as a serious threat to the opponent's values. The most feasible and hence most credible threat may not always be the most painful to the adversary. Nor is certainty of implementation always a virtue to the defender. The threat that leaves something to chance may be more potent.

Two forms of deterrence are open to the defender, according to Snyder. The first is *denial*, a strategy resembling and indeed in implementation basically identical to defense. The purpose, however, in deterrence through denying gain to the adversary is to raise the immediate cost of contemplated actions. The prospect of paying a high price for any gain may act as a deterrent.

Yet denial is conventionally thought to be the weakest form of deterrence. It is difficult to make this sort of battlefield cost unacceptable, especially if organizations can recruit members willing to take high personal risks. The demonstration of willingness to die in the attempt may compensate for failure. (And it is of course the followers and not the leaders of the organization who pay this price.) Schelling quotes a memorable passage from Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* to illustrate this obstacle to deterrence. A paradox of deterrence is that it does not always pay to appear rational. The character of 'The Professor', whose only aim in life is to find the perfect detonator for his bombs, carries with him at all times an explosive device wired to go off with the squeeze of a trigger he holds in his pocket. When questioned as to whether he would

actually go through with self-destruction, he explains his true intention is not the point: 'What is effective is the belief those people have in my will to use the means.'⁹

The second type of deterrence is its more widely recognized form. Punishment or retaliation involves the threat of the use of military force in response to an attack after it has been committed. The prospect of retaliation is presumed to deter the enemy from attacking regardless of the state of the government's physical defenses. This feature makes it attractive for combatting terrorism. Given the terrorist proclivity for civilian targets, for the outrageous, and for the unexpected, defense may require the protection of too many weak links.

Retaliatory threats may be either symmetrical or asymmetrical. That is, the defender can threaten to respond in a manner tailored to the offense, for example, by attacking the base from which a terrorist attack was launched. Given the uncertainties and the unverifiability of intelligence, it is more likely that the defender will issue (and carry out, if deterrence fails) the more credible asymmetrical threats to retaliate against any object of value to the terrorists and to reserve the right to escalate. The government in effect states that punishment may not be in kind or on the same level of damage. Something may be left to chance. Such threats may be effective because they are credible; however, the punishment inflicted on the terrorists may be less severe than symmetrical retaliation against a nerve-center or against leaders. Asymmetrical retaliation may also be less justifiable in the eyes of the public.

If deterrence is a recommended policy against non-states, it should be doubly applicable to the states that sponsor the terrorism of others or engage in it directly. States have a wider range of identifiable values. For states, supporting foreign terrorists is not likely to be an interest of sufficient value to justify limitless sacrifices, whereas for a non-state resistance movement there may be no cost too great to justify abandoning the struggle. Theoretically it should be easier to alter a state's cost-benefit calculations. The US raid against Libya in April 1985 was explicitly described in terms of deterrence of future terrorism, as well as an effort to encourage the overthrow of the Quaddafi regime.

Policy responses consistent with the instrumental explanation of terrorism depend on both denying opportunities for terrorism (mainly a matter of defense) and on affecting incentives to use it. The problem for intelligence is as much to discover the values of a shadowy adversary as to learn locations and plans. Reducing opportunities may also minimize incentives for terrorism. Calculating extremists are presumed to be repsonsive both to raising the cost of attacking and to threatening subsequent punishment.

This approach to combatting terrorism is not without drawbacks. The difficulties of a timely response to prevent surprise attack have been established. Warnings are insufficiently precise and susceptible to misinterpretation. The use of force in anticipation of or in response to terrorism is potentially a contentious domestic issue. Prior conceptions,

public opinion, the personalities of leaders, and the emotional frustration terrorism provokes all interfere with control of the defender's response. Deterrence is never simple, and deterring adversaries whose values and risk-taking propensities are imperfectly understood is problematic. Furthermore, the lessons of experience in using coercive diplomacy show that it is ineffective against adversaries with superior motivation.¹⁰ In addition, the use of force may provoke escalation and broadening of conflict. Actions that are intended as defensive may be perceived by others as aggressive.

Organizational Process Theory

This explanation focuses on the internal politics of the organization. In suggesting that terrorism can become self-sustaining regardless of its political consequences, it assumes that the fundamental purpose of any political organization is to maintain itself.¹¹ Terrorist behavior represents the outcome of the internal dynamics of the organization rather than strategic action. The minimal goal of any organization is survival, but the goals of the people occupying roles in an organization transcend mere survival. Leaders, in particular, wish to enhance and promote the organization. Their personal ambitions are tied to the organization's viability and political position.

The incentives the organization provides for its members are critical to its survival. However, the relationship between actual rewards for membership and the organization's stated objectives is not straightforward, since recruits often join an organization for reasons other than ideological commitment. Leaders maintain their position by supplying various tangible and intangible incentives to members, rewards that may enhance or diminish the pursuit of the organization's public ends.

The incentives for joining a terrorist organization, especially one that is already established and of known character, include a variety of individual needs: to belong to a group, to acquire social status and reputation, to find comradeship or excitement, or to gain material benefits. The popular image of the terrorist as an individual motivated exclusively by deep and intransigent political commitment obscures a more complex reality. Under certain conditions, membership in an underground organization is a valued social relationship, winning the militant the respect and admiration of peers and family. Joining an organization in order to enhance one's appearance in the eyes of others is characteristic of nationalist and separatist groups, where a popular constituency exists that may deplore the method but applaud the goals of the organization. The practitioners of terrorism in liberal democracies may be acting in terms of a non-indigenous reference group with whom they identify. The radical may genuinely see his or her actions as the continuation of a historic struggle led by distant heroes in the Third World, winning the respect of other revolutionaries. Many West European groups compared themselves sentimentally to the Tupamaros of Uruguay. Since many

terrorists are adolescents, joining may be a sign of personal daring or social rebellion more than political belief. Other incentives are those intangible benefits of association in a group: a feeling of belonging, acceptance, and solidarity.

Most organizations offer a mixture of incentives. The issues or causes which the group supports may shift with the organization's need to offer new incentives to members. The Rand Corporation, for instance, notes that in France the group Action Directe, 'in chameleon fashion, rapidly refocuses on the most attractive antigovernment issues'.¹² Since 1979 the organization has opposed nuclear energy, imperialism, Israel, the Catholic Church, and French intervention in Chad. Organizational goals are not necessarily consistent. The operational interpretation of ideology will vary according to the need to ensure organizational survival. The chance for action, no matter what it accomplishes, may be a dominant incentive. Circumstances may alter incentive structures. If an organization is forced into inactivity, substitute incentives must be found. Some groups might shift to dealing in drugs, for example.

However, purposive incentives remain strong for a number of reasons. Collective goals appeal to the individual's sense of satisfaction at contributing to a worthy political cause. Many members sincerely identify with the organization's purpose; others will be afraid to admit that they do not. In organizations devoted to violence, a premium is placed on group solidarity and cohesion. Relationships within the organization are highly authoritarian.

James Q. Wilson also suggests that there are different categories of political purpose, which affect the stability of the organization.¹³ The first purposive incentive offers the pursuit of a single specific objective. The Rand Corporation describes such narrowly-focused groups as 'issue-oriented' and notes that they are common but short-lived.¹⁴ On the other hand, what Wilson terms ideological incentives are based on beliefs that constitute a systematic, comprehensive rejection of the present political world and the promise of a future replacement. These incentives might be distinguished as protest versus revolution. The third incentive is redemption, the appeal of organizations whose efforts concentrate primarily on changing the lives of their members. As violent examples of these moralistic groups, Wilson cites the nineteenth-century anarchists and the Weathermen of the 1960s. These groups are likely to focus on self-sacrifice, on living by stringent moral codes, or on conversion. Wilson suggests that since such groups can never succeed, their despair often results in extreme destructiveness and willingness to take risks.

Such redemptive groups may resemble religious cults as much as ideological organizations. Religious or sacred terrorism falls in this category. Violence has a personal meaning for the individual. It is a path to individual salvation, regardless of the political outcome for the collectivity in the real world. The motivation for terrorism may be to transcend reality as much as to transform it.

Wilson concludes that conspiratorial organizations tend over time to substitute group solidarity for political purpose (whether protest, revolution, or redemption) as the dominant incentive.¹⁵ This development seems likely to be characteristic of tightly compartmentalized underground organizations. Progressive isolation from the environment reduces the amount and quality of the information members receive about external events. They become less concerned with the achievement of political goals and more concerned with maintaining the group. Single-issue groups, whose members are usually part-time rather than professional members of the underground, may find it easier to adapt by creating new incentives through switching issues. Changing position on a single issue is simpler than changing comprehensive belief systems. Given this apparent flexibility, it seems paradoxical that single-issue groups tend to be shorter-lived. Perhaps they are more likely to achieve their goals. On the other hand, when they do not succeed, they cannot recover by offering substitute incentives such as status or solidarity.

Organizational analysis explains not only why terrorism continues regardless of political results but why it starts. It implies that structural explanations of civil violence are of limited use. The objective conditions likely to inspire grievances and hence incite violence are permanent, whereas violence is not continuous or universal.¹⁶ The formation of organizations, not environmental conditions, is the critical variable. Entrepreneurship is an essential ingredient; the leaders who establish an organization must skillfully create and manipulate incentives to attract members. The founders must have an exceptional commitment to the group's purposes and an exaggerated sense of the group's likely efficacy. In a potentially violent organization, this sense of efficacy might come from assessing the government's weakness, observing the apparent success of other, similar groups, or acquiring the support of foreign governments. The existence of a demand for the organization from some actual or potential constituency is also helpful. The extent of mobilizable resources, in turn possibly dependent on foreign assistance or on public support, is another determinant of the establishment of organizations. A third essential condition is that the presence of skilled and determined leaders and some broader demand for action coincide with 'the salience of purposive incentives'.¹⁷ The prominence of ideas that legitimize violence as well as examples set by predecessors contribute to making the organization's purpose salient. If potential terrorists believe that matters of concern to them are being affected by a government whose behavior can be altered – a belief that is likely to emerge when a highly visible enemy appears to pose a serious threat to their values or those of the group with which they identify – they are likely to organize and to act. Organizations are much more responsive to the environment during their inception than in the course of subsequent operations. The older the organization, the more its behavior is explained by organizational imperatives.

Emphasizing organizational maintenance explains why terrorism may persist in the face of evident failure to achieve political purposes. If

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purposive incentives are overshadowed by others such as social relationships or financial reward, terrorism becomes self-sustaining. In fact, the organization's leaders may be reluctant to see purpose accomplished and the organization's utility ended. They are likely to seek incremental gains sufficient to sustain group morale but not to end members' dependence on the organization.

A second general theory of organizational behavior focuses on the prevention of decline in firms.¹⁸ Although the comparison between business firms and radical undergrounds may at first seem bizarre, the resemblance has also been noted by the Rand Corporation: 'Organizations are dedicated to survival. They do not voluntarily go out of business. Right now, the immediate objective of many of the world's hard-pressed terrorist groups is the same as the immediate objective of many of the world's hard-pressed corporations - that is, to continue operations.'¹⁹ Albert O. Hirschman's economic theory of organizational imperatives supports Wilson's idea that organizations are more sensitive to their members than to government policy. Yet the implication of his theory is that organizations are fragile; they struggle and often fail to prevent decline. A fundamental precept is that organizations behave differently in competitive than in non-competitive environments. In general, most terrorist organizations appear to confront rivals who have similar political purposes: the Irish Republican Army competes with the Irish National Liberation Army; the Italian Red Brigades compete with Prima Linea; Fatah competes with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and a host of other factions.

Hirschman proposes that dissatisfied members of an organization have two options: 'exit' or 'voice'. Each is exercised under different circumstances. 'Exit', as it applies to the special circumstances of clandestine extremist organizations, refers to the possibilities of (1) joining another, rival organization that appears more satisfactory, or (2) splintering off and creating a new group. Exit often occurs after a failed attempt to exercise 'voice', or the articulation of complaints in order to persuade the group to follow another direction. Although extremist organizations consistently attempt to define exit as betrayal, factionalism is not uncommon. The possibility of exiting to a rival group of course depends on the existence of an attractive alternative. Where there are no competitors, the dissatisfied must create a new group. The exercise of this option apparently occurs when the most extremist members chafe under the restrictions imposed by the relatively moderate and demand an escalation of violence. The Provisional IRA, for example, developed from the refusal of the parent or 'Official' IRA to adopt a strategy of terrorism against Protestants and the British in the wake of the civil rights movement. To prevent the departure of a sub-group, especially if it endangers the survival of the organization, former moderates may consent to collective radicalization. The Official IRA subsequently followed the Provos into terrorism - both against the British and against each other. Only if there is no possibility of exit can the organization's leaders resist the demands of members for change.

Exit can thus hasten organizational decline. Yet the exercise of 'voice' can also be destructive. Most underground organizations strongly (even forcibly) discourage the expression of discontent. Cohesion and solidarity are important values, both to the organization (for which security is a paramount concern) and to the psychological well-being of members for whom belonging is a dominant incentive. Conspiratorial organizations may therefore be more sensitive to internal disagreement than to defection. The most centralized, secretive, and compartmentalized organizations are likely to be the least tolerant of dissent. For ideological or redemptive organizations, dissent may equal heresy.

The leaders of an organization can avoid the disastrous extremes of exit and voice by soliciting the loyalty of members. In doing so, leaders stress commitment to collective goals and solidarity. If the possibility of exit exists but members choose nevertheless to stay, then group loyalty can be assumed to be strong. Extremist organizations often deliberately build loyalty through ideological indoctrination. However, outlawing both exit and voice heightens the gravity of either offense when it occurs. The consequences of either departure or dissent are then potentially more damaging for the organization. The existence of strong loyalty in itself may create problems if it makes it more difficult for leaders to alter purposive incentives when conditions change. The effort to maintain the organization makes it inflexible.

Another method by which organizations inhibit defection is to establish what Hirschman terms 'severe initiation costs'. If members have invested a lot in joining an organization, they will be reluctant to leave. Terrorist organizations often require the commission of an illegal act for precisely this purpose, to eliminate the individual's option of abandoning the underground. The imposition of this cost, however, does not mean that the member will not be attracted to a close competitor should one exist. Yet the terrorist has developed a certain stake in self-deception. Even if members perceive the organization's failure to achieve collective ends they will 'fight hard to prove they were right after all in paying that high entrance fee' rather than admit error.²⁰

Considering the constraints on exit imposed by high initiation costs, discontent serious enough to surface in a clandestine organization is likely to be explosive. However, extreme discontent may provoke not dissolution of the organization but increased activity directed toward the achievement of group goals. The decline of the organization may produce a psychological dynamic in which complacency is succeeded by frenetic activism which goes beyond criticism of the leadership to desperate attempts to salvage the organization. Initiates into a group that uses terrorism have paid a high price to enter the organization and often face an even harsher penalty of exit. They may react not by denying reality but by trying harder to change it. The response to decline, then, may be the escalation of violence.

Experimental psychological studies have in fact indicated that the person who has experienced a severe initiation will find even a low cost

exit (for example, to a similarly motivated group also pursuing an active strategy) unsatisfactory. If no alternative to exit exists when voice is prohibited or ineffective, then the disenchanted terrorist will try to reduce the strain of exit by persuading others to join the rebellion against the organization's leadership. Once on the outside, these critics will be extremely hostile to the parent organization. The bitterness of the rivalry among Palestinian factions is explicable in these terms.

These findings also tentatively support the 'fight harder' hypothesis. The dissatisfied terrorist may prefer changing the organization's political direction to departing in frustration. This effort may lead to 'creative innovation' under pressure. The combination of high barriers to exit and dissatisfaction may thus encourage more violence. When members of a terrorist group lack the possibility of exit and are intensely loyal, failure to achieve the organization's stated purpose may only make them strive harder.²¹

This analysis suggests that in competitive conditions, where exit is possible, there may be less internal dissent. Yet organizations may have to devote their efforts to distinguishing themselves from other groups, in order to prevent defection to successful rivals. Competition may inspire escalation, as each group tries to outdo the other in violence in order not only to retain existing members but to attract recruits. Where exit is possible but no competitors exist, a proliferation of organizations may be the result of decline and dissatisfaction. The end result, therefore, may be competition by escalating extremism.

Differences between groups with high and low entrance fees may affect the organization's viability. Groups such as the West German Red Army Faction, for example, which requires the total commitment of members who become professional terrorists with no other life, may find it harder to recover from decline than less structured groups like the Revolutionary Cells. Hirschman feels that all terrorist organizations are in this doomed category. No organization can make itself completely immune to the possibilities of exit and voice. Where both outlets for dissatisfaction are blocked the organization will not survive over the long run.²² Innovative responses are the exception.

In sum, the organizational process approach to interpreting terrorist behavior assumes a complexity of motivation that goes beyond communicating a political message. Leaders of terrorist organizations struggle to maintain the viability of the organization as much as to challenge governments. The incentives they offer members may require violent actions against the government regardless of cost, if that cost is short of complete destruction of the organization. Ideological purpose, however, is only one incentive among many. Organizational activity will vary according to internal pressures and external competitiveness.

The task of the government is to encourage disintegration without provoking the escalation of violence. Denying reward is difficult. What the outside world perceives as 'failure' may not appear so to such an adversary. The organization's structure of incentives must be altered in

order to reduce the possibilities of violence. Offering new, non-violent incentives, increasing opportunities for exit to non-violent political methods, or promoting the expression of internal dissent are policy options that fit this theoretical interpretation. The use of military force is not recommended in the terms of this approach, since retaliation may only strengthen loyalty within the group. At the least, the results of the use of force will be highly unpredictable. Counter-intelligence initiatives combined with judicial and political measures are more suitable.

The Italian experience has been instructive in this regard. The apparent 'repentance' of significant numbers of terrorists in response to offers of leniency from the Italian state has enabled the police to act effectively against the Red Brigades. The offer of reduced prison sentences in exchange for information leading to the apprehension of other Red Brigades members seems to have coincided, perhaps fortuitously, with a period of disarray within the terrorist organization, when numerous members were questioning the group's purposes, especially after the murder of Aldo Moro.²³ The attractiveness of the option of 'repentance' was also increased by a growing perception of the failure of a terrorist strategy. The successful timing of such an inducement suggests that offering the possibility of exit, not to a rival organization but to the aboveground world, at a time of intense discontent can draw terrorists from the underground.

Similarly, with regard to creating opportunities for exit, governments would be advised to consider the wisdom of severe legal penalties for membership in certain underground organizations. Increasing the costs of joining a terrorist organization may restrain some prospective entrants, but establishing high entrance fees also inhibits exit. Offers of amnesty can further motivate exit as well as create suspicion and distrust within the organization.

Where incentives for many terrorists are non-purposive, the government may be able to offer substitutes. Financial rewards may be influential, for example, where incentives are material. Monetary rewards for information leading to the apprehension of terrorists are appropriate. Policy models developed for dealing with criminal organizations or youth gangs may be applicable in some circumstances. However, where incentives are purposive (ideological or redemptive), the government may find it difficult to find satisfactory substitutes unless non-violent organizations with identical purpose exist. Furthermore, if a primary incentive is direct action for its own sake, then the slower, less exciting methods of normal politics may not suffice.

Organizational analysis also suggests that there may be counter-intelligence opportunities for creating dissatisfaction and dissent within terrorist organizations. Schlomo Gazit and Michael Handel, for example, recommend attempts to disrupt terrorist organizations by making it hard for them to recruit new members or to keep the loyalty of existing members.²⁴ Exactly how this is to be done, however, is left unexplained. It requires the identification of the pool or constituency from which new

members are drawn, specification of the incentives offered members, and reduction of the attractiveness of these rewards.

It would probably be easier to affect recruitment (remembering that not all organizations are equally dependent on steady supplies of new members) and support functions by influencing the attitudes of sympathizers than by directly undermining the loyalty of indoctrinated activists. The incentive structures for sympathizers are probably weaker than those for active members. Barriers to both entry and exit are lower, yet there is also little occasion to exercise voice. Sympathizers have little direct control over the organization's decisions. If their frustration should increase, the organization's support basis might erode. The problem is to identify the incentives for sympathizers. Since their participation in the group and its actions is limited, their satisfaction must be vicarious.

Gazit and Handel further recommend that governments try to create conflicts within terrorist organizations or between groups and their rivals. However, accomplishing this objective without infiltrating the activist core of the organization is difficult. Penetrating a hard-core terrorist organization requires the commission of acts of violence that are illegal. Such a policy also runs the risk of creating *agents provocateur* who are dangerous to the government in the long run. On the other hand, groups of sympathizers pose less of a problem.

Gazit and Handel also suggest measures such as misinformation, for example, announcing that a captured terrorist has actually gone over to a rival group. Such propaganda campaigns, however, can backfire in terms of domestic politics if they also mislead the public.

Conclusions

Three questions can be posed about these two theoretical approaches and their policy implications:

- (1) What has more theoretical value, in terms of logical coherence and scope?
- (2) Which better explains the problems of the reality of terrorism?
- (3) Which is used most by policy-makers?

Definitive answers must await further research, but some tentative suggestions are presented here.

The assumptions behind each approach are compared in Table 1. The instrumental theory is simpler and more comprehensible. Because the intentions of actors are inferred from their behavior according to logical rules, it is both intellectually satisfying and relatively undemanding in terms of information requirements. Since data on the small groups that employ clandestine violence are hard to obtain, this relaxation of standards of evidence is a practical advantage. This theory is also familiar to students of conflict. Its premises are deduced from a well-developed body of thought. Its range is thus extremely broad, as it applies to all manner of conflict regardless of the identity of the actors.

TABLE 1
THE PROCESS OF TERRORISM

<i>The Instrumental Perspective</i>	<i>The Organizational Perspective</i>
1. The act of terrorism represents a strategic choice.	1. The act of terrorism is the outcome of internal group dynamics.
2. The organization using terrorism acts as a unit, on the basis of collective values.	2. Individual members of an organization disagree over ends and means.
3. The means of terrorism are logically related to ends and resources; surprise compensates for weakness.	3. The resort to terrorism reflects the incentives leaders provide for followers and competition with rivals.
4. The purpose of terrorism is to bring about change in an actor's environment.	4. The motivations for participation in terrorism include personal needs as much as ideological goals.
5. The pattern of terrorism follows an action-reaction process; terrorism responds to what the government does.	5. Terrorist actions often appear inconsistent, erratic, and unpredictable.
6. Increasing the cost of terrorism makes it less likely; decreasing cost or increasing reward makes it more likely.	6. External pressure may strengthen group cohesion; rewards may create incentives to leave the group.
7. Terrorism fails when its practitioners do not obtain their stated political objectives.	7. Terrorism fails when the organization disintegrates; achieving long-term goals may not be desirable.

However, a theory of strategic choice cannot explain how the preferences of actors are determined. Nor does it permit us to distinguish among groups except in terms of their stated ideological objectives. All adversaries are alike in their most important respects. Organizational theory permits us to disaggregate the complexity of the opponent's values and to differentiate among different types of organizations according not only to purpose but to incentive structures and competitiveness. This theory is, however, less coherent and more complex. It may be less satisfying intellectually because the act of terrorism appears to be the random result of unpredictable interactions. This interpretation makes violence less politically meaningful to the observer because its intentions are obscured.

The question of applicability to reality is hard to answer without also considering the views of students of the problem. The two theories should be tested against each other. James DeNardo examined the decision-making of the German Marxists before the Bolshevik Revolution in order to show that their debates over the use of terrorism were founded on explicitly instrumental calculations.²⁵ He argues that faithfulness to the political reasoning that underlies radical thought requires a strategic theory. Alex Schmid and Janny de Graaf also argue that terrorism is a logical choice for dissidents who lack means of communication other than violence and that such radical oppositions fully calculate the opportunities afforded by a free press.²⁶

Leaders of resistance organizations frequently explain themselves in strategic terms. Menachem Begin entitles a chapter of his memoirs 'The Logic of Revolt'. He argues that although emotion gave the Irgun heroism, logic and commonsense provided the strategy that ensured victory.²⁷

Organizational theory also has an empirical foundation. Much Palestinian violence appears to be directed against Arafat's authority over the movement as much as against the United States or Israel. The Achille Lauro affair, for example, is considered to be an action by the Palestinian Liberation Front to discourage Arafat's peace initiatives and discredit his leadership. The wealth accrued by organization such as the PLO, the IRA, and Colombian organizations such as M-19 leads one to suspect a financial motive. Analysts of terrorism, however, rarely use organizational theory explicitly. Nevertheless, most case studies present full details of the internal politics of underground organizations, showing that factionalism and struggles for leadership are common.²⁸

The public statements of policy-makers in the Reagan Administration have leaned toward the strategic interpretation. The popularity of the 'state sponsorship' theory may represent a desire to make terrorism seem rational. Terrorism is conveniently fitted into a familiar spectrum of international conflict and national security threats. Official pronouncements tend to focus on the response rather than the problem.²⁹ When the threat is examined, it is seen in terms of destructive capabilities rather than the motivations which might guide such a potential. The intent of terrorism

is perceived uniquely as a challenge to the United States. The perpetrators of terrorism are thought to design it exclusively to undermine American values, shatter American self-confidence, and blunt the response. The complexities of the issue and diversities in motivation are neglected.

Many policy-makers seem to believe strongly that hardline policies will prevent terrorism because terrorists want to avoid high costs. The prescriptions of the strategic approach are attractive because they are conventional, compatible with existing political doctrine, easy to implement, and produce immediate, visible, and direct results. The policy recommendations of the organizational approach are difficult, slow to mature, and have few results that can be displayed to the public. Its prescriptions place a premium on secrecy and deception, modes of dealing with the world that the American public may find unacceptable.

Can these two approaches be reconciled in the abstract? Perhaps the organizational theory is one way of completing strategic theory by determining what the values of opponents are, how preferences are determined, and how intensely they are held. Another possibility is that these two approaches describe types of organizations, categories into which real groups can be fitted. Some closely approximate the strategic choice model, while the decisions of others are decisively influenced by organizational politics.

Can they be linked in practice? Policy-makers should be sensitive to the idea that different analyses of the reasons behind terrorist actions can yield incompatible recommendations on how to cope with the problem. Both types of policies are followed in practice, but failure to understand the logical relationship between explanations of terrorism and subsequent prescriptions may impose political costs. Confusion results when rhetorical policy is cast in the terms of strategic theory, sometimes elevated to the status of a moral imperative, but actions are conceived with a view to exploiting the internal politics of underground groups or the states who possess influence over them. The policy debate within the Reagan Administration over how best to deal with terrorism, specifically over the use of military force and over securing the release of hostages held in Lebanon, may be attributable to different interpretations of the political processes that lead to terrorism as well as to bureaucratic and personal rivalries within the government. The result is an inconsistent policy that alternates between contradictory extremes. The political liabilities of confused decisions include charges of hypocrisy and betrayal from Congress and from allies subject to criticism of their weakness in confronting terrorism.

NOTES

An earlier version of this article was presented to the Defense Nuclear Agency's 10th Annual Symposium on the Role of the Behavioral Sciences in Physical Security, April 1985.

1. This approach to analyzing the problem of terrorism is similar to the method employed

- by Edward F. Mickolus in 'Negotiating for Hostages: A Policy Dilemma', *Orbis*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (Winter, 1976), 1309-25. He investigates the propositions underlying two policy viewpoints, 'no ransom' and 'flexible-response', each of which is based on 'implicit theories regarding the driving mechanisms of terrorist behavior' (p.1315).
2. Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966), especially 'The Diplomacy of Violence', pp.1-34.
3. See, for example, Richard K. Betts, *Surprise Attack: Lessons for Defense Planning* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 1982), and Klaus Knorr and Patrick Morgan (eds.), *Strategic Military Surprise: Incentives and Opportunities* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1983).
4. Betts reaches this conclusion; see Chs. 4 and 5, 'Why Surprise Succeeds', pp.87-149.
5. See especially Klaus Knorr, 'Strategic Surprise: The Incentive Structure', pp.173-94, in Knorr and Morgan (eds.).
6. Michael I. Handel, *The Diplomacy of Surprise* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Center for International Affairs, 1981).
7. Glenn H. Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense: Toward a Theory of National Security* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961).
8. 'Report of the DOD Commission on Beirut International Airport Terrorist Act, October 23, 1983', Washington, DC, 20 Dec. 1983.
9. Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, p.37. The relevant section in Conrad can be found on p.63 of the 1963 Penguin edition.
10. Alexander L. George, David K. Hall, and William R. Simons, *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1971). The authors note that the relative motivation of the two sides in a conflict exerts critical leverage on outcomes, since the central task of a coercive strategy is 'to create in the opponent the expectation of unacceptable costs of sufficient magnitude to erode his motivation to continue what he is doing' (pp.26-7). In planning strategy against terrorism, it is imperative to consider the nature and strength of the adversary's motivation.
11. This argument is adapted from James Q. Wilson, *Political Organizations* (New York: Basic Books, 1973). A fuller elaboration of the application of organizational theory to terrorism is found in my article, 'An Organizational Approach to the Analysis of Political Terrorism', *Orbis*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Fall, 1985), 465-89.
12. Bonnie Cordes et al., *Trends in International Terrorism, 1982 and 1983* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1984), p.29.
13. Wilson, pp.49-50.
14. Cordes et al., pp.3-4.
15. Wilson, p.50 and Ch. 3 in general, 'Organizational Maintenance and Incentives', pp.30-55.
16. Ibid., pp.296-301.
17. Ibid., p.201.
18. Albert O. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970).
19. Cordes et al., p.50.
20. Hirschman, p.93.
21. Ibid., Appendix, pp.146-55.
22. Ibid., p.121.
23. See Sue Ellen Moran (ed.), *Court Depositions of Three Red Brigadists*, N-2391-RC (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1986).
24. Schlomo Gazit and Michael Handel, 'Insurgency, Terrorism, and Intelligence', pp.125-47, in Roy Godson (ed.), *Intelligence Requirements for the 1980s: Counter-intelligence* (Washington, DC: National Strategy Information Center, 1980; distributed by Transaction Books).
25. *Power in Numbers: The Political Strategy of Protest and Rebellion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985).
26. Alex Schmid and Janny de Graaf, *Violence as Communication: Insurgent Terrorism and the Western News Media* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1982), Ch. 1, 'Terrorist Uses of the News Media', pp.9-56.

27. Menachem Begin, *The Revolt* (Los Angeles, CA: Nash, 1977), pp.47-58.
28. As an example of a case study that exhibits a sensitivity to organizational politics, see J. Bowyer Bell, *The Secret Army: A History of the IRA 1916-1979* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1980). A quantitative study that explicitly uses interest group theory to explain the relationship between group size, coalition formation, and terrorist activity is Kent Layne Oots, *A Political Organization Approach to Transnational Terrorism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986).
29. Among many statements about international terrorism made by officials of the Reagan Administration, see as a representative example Robert C. McFarlane, 'Terrorism and the Future of Free Society', *Terrorism: An International Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (1986), 315-26.

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New York Columbia University Press 1988