

Democracy and Counterterrorism:  
Lessons from the Past



# Democracy and Counterterrorism: Lessons from the Past

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We have dedicated this book to  
Robyn Art and David Art  
and to the memory of  
Keith Matthew Richardson (1974–1997).



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## FOREWORD

*Democracy and Counterterrorism: Lessons from the Past* delivers what its succinct title promises: an analysis of how democratic states have fought groups employing political violence and terrorism, and lessons learned from these experiences that can be applied toward present and future counterterrorism campaigns. Given the current threats and challenges faced by the United States and its allies, the significance of such a volume is self-evident. After all, if we are to successfully wage the “global war on terror,” we need to consider the policies, strategies, and instruments that have been employed by other democratic states in their fights against terrorist groups. While this seems like an obvious observation, more than five years after 9/11 this volume is the first to examine the subject in any kind of systematic, methodical fashion. If for no other reason, then, this assessment is of singular importance for addressing a glaring deficiency in current counterterrorism literature. Editors Robert J. Art and Louise Richardson are due credit for recognizing and filling this lacuna.

Art and Richardson enlisted a team of world-class scholars and practitioners to examine fourteen cases for the volume, focusing on thirteen states and sixteen major terrorist groups. Each case chapter includes a brief overview of the situation presented, a detailed analysis of the policies and techniques employed by the government under discussion, and an assessment of the measures that proved most effective in combating terrorism. While these individual cases in themselves are quite instructive, perhaps the volume’s most valuable contribution rests with its final chapter, in which Art and Richardson synthesize the case findings, examine patterns, and tease out clear and precise lessons for the United States in its fight against al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations.

If the lessons Art and Richardson offer are not novel, they are nonetheless significant. This work has done something past studies have not: it has unequivocally demonstrated the fundamental importance of high-quality intelligence gathering, seamless international coordination, and the judicious use of political instruments in combating terrorism. While political gamesmanship and partisan bickering too often divide and distract critical actors from the task at hand, this work serves as a reminder that our wisest strategy in the war on terror is to focus on the basics. The message is clear: if such strategies have worked for democracies in the past, they can work again.

While the lessons themselves offer sound guidance for combating the transnational jihadist network and for ultimately diminishing the physical threat of terrorism, it also suggests that the United States consider ways to dampen the fuel that stokes the fire of terrorism: fear. If one considers terrorism a form of psychological warfare targeting a society's morale and seeking to win political concessions through public pressure, then perhaps the greatest danger lies not in isolated acts of indiscriminate violence, but in the damage it causes to the collective psyche. In short, the "good guys" are not the only ones trying to influence hearts and minds. Just as the United States needs to positively affect feelings and thoughts in the Muslim world, so too does it need to combat terrorists' efforts to adversely change attitudes within the United States and among our allies. If the war on terror is a generation-long war, as Art and Richardson and many others argue, it is critical to educate and engage the public to distinguish between rational and irrational fear. While we cannot control the actions of terrorists, we can ultimately control our own, sometimes illogical, psychological responses to terrorism and the threat it poses.

While Art and Richardson remind us that many democratic states have defeated terrorist groups—a heartening message in these turbulent times—the volume also makes clear a sobering fact: many other states have not succeeded in thwarting terrorist groups that threaten their societies. Put simply, terrorism often works. It is important to acknowledge this truth so that success and failure can be properly defined. Whether one believes we are facing a short-term tactical

threat or one that is long-term and existential, this volume helps us understand the stakes and sets forth strategic policies for success.

That said, much more scholarship is needed. Using this study's findings as a point of departure, future studies should continue to examine the question of tactics. If *Democracy and Counterterrorism* makes plain what the focus in a fight against terrorism needs to be, future studies must define how to improve intelligence, secure international cooperation, and make better use of political instruments.

Great strength is gained in understanding not only the nature of the enemy, but also the effects, both negative and positive, of our policies toward that enemy. *Democracy and Counterterrorism* is only the latest in a long line of Institute publications to enlist, marshal, and deploy the highest level of scholarship in the service of national security concerns. Past Institute volumes have similarly contributed to our understanding of the hazards we face and the best means to combat terrorism, including *Terror on the Internet: The New Arena, the New Challenges*, by Gabriel Weimann, which examines terrorism and counterterrorism in the digital age; and *The United States and Coercive Diplomacy*, edited by Robert J. Art and Patrick M. Cronin, which offers a broad policy analysis of the emerging marriage between diplomacy and military might.

Willingness and freedom to think about the root causes of terrorism and to discuss appropriate solutions to it may explain one of the more curious observations made by Art and Richardson: over time, the counterterrorist policies of democracies get better and more effective, no matter the country implementing them or the terrorist group being fought. Art and Richardson chose not to examine how authoritarian or totalitarian states fight terror for the simple reason that democratic states are constrained in the strategies they can employ—by the need to observe human rights and the rule of law, among others. But it is clear from their conclusions that non-democratic states are at a significant disadvantage compared to democracies in confronting terrorism. While democracies might be constrained in their methods, they are also strengthened by the legitimacy granted by fighting terrorism, by the inclusive vision and respect it offers, and by the freedom democratic societies provide for innovative thinking,

constructive debate, and policy adaptation. At the core of this volume thus rests a deeper truth about the present global war on terror and the need to protect and maintain democratic principles and values.

In short, *Democracy and Counterterrorism's* most important lesson may ultimately be as simple as its title: our greatest weapon against terrorism lies in democracy itself.

RICHARD H. SOLOMON, PRESIDENT  
UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE

## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**T**he idea for this book originated in several conversations among Robert Art of Brandeis University, Louise Richardson of the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University, and Paul Stares of the United States Institute of Peace in spring 2003. In the course of those conversations, it became clear to the three of us that there was a real need for a study that systematically analyzed and compared how democracies had dealt with terrorist groups in the years since decolonization. It was also clear to us that such a study had to be a multiauthored volume because no individual possessed sufficiently detailed knowledge of a large enough number of cases to bring the project to fruition in a timely fashion. Consequently, Art and Richardson put together a research team of country experts who were also well versed in the terrorism literature, and Stares agreed to fund it. The result is this volume.

Since this book was conceived, the landscape of terrorism has been significantly altered. The tactic of suicide terrorism has expanded in scale, intensity, and geographic scope. Europe has produced the first of its own home-grown suicide bombers. British-born jihadists have attacked the London Underground system. Moroccan immigrants have murdered commuters in Spain, and eager young Muslims, radicalized by the American occupation of Iraq, have flocked to join the insurgency in Iraq. The political landscape has been altered, too. Relatively moderate parties have been replaced by more extreme parties on both sides of the sectarian divide in Northern Ireland, and in the Palestinian Authority the PLO has been replaced by Hamas as the largest political party. On a more positive note, the IRA, one of the oldest extant terrorist groups, has declared an end to its operations and it now looks as though ETA is following suit. In spite of these changes, the two fundamental challenges faced by democratic governments

remain: how to respond effectively to terrorism without compromising democratic liberties, and how to deal effectively with the current generation of terrorists without creating more in the process. We conceived this book in the conviction that there is much the United States can learn from the experiences of other governments. We still think so.

Art and Richardson thank Paul Stares for having faith in this project, for funding it, and for contributing significantly to it intellectually. We also thank all our authors for their commitment to this project. They convened twice in Washington, in fall 2003 and spring 2004, to think through the implications of their work and to comment on one another's papers. They have put up with numerous requests for clarification and revisions, and many worked through four drafts of their chapters. Whatever merit the conclusions of this book have is due in large part to their extensive and generous efforts to meet our demands. We also thank Richard Solomon, president of the Institute, for his support of this project. Many other individuals contributed to the project along the way. Steve Stimon, Daniel Benjamin, Dan Byman, and Bruce Hoffman gave us the benefit of their thoughts at the project definition stage. Elise Murphy and Kelly Campbell efficiently and cheerfully took care of all the administrative and logistical tasks that such a project requires. Micah Zenko provided research assistance. Rachel Chaplin and Or-Corinne Chapman provided research and logistical support. Nigel Quinney shepherded the book through the editorial phase, and Amy Benavides saw it through to production. We are deeply grateful to each of them.

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American Strategy in the Age of Terrorism," *Survival* 44, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 119–39.

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# GLOSSARY OF TERRORIST GROUPS

ACRONYM	FULL NAME	COUNTRY
AIS	Armée Islamique du Salut (Islamic Salvation Army)	Algeria
	al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades	Palestine
	al Qaeda	Global
ASG	Abu Sayyaf Group	Philippines
	Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia)	Colombia
	Aum Shinrikyo	Japan
BK	Babbar Khalsa	India
BR	Brigate Rosse (Red Brigades)	Italy
BTF	Bhindranwale Tiger Force	India
	Chechen rebels	Russia
DFLP	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine	Palestine
ELN	Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army)	Colombia
EPL	Ejército Popular de Liberación (Popular Liberation Army)	Colombia

ACRONYM	FULL NAME	COUNTRY
EPRLF	Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front	Sri Lanka
EROS	Eelam Revolutionary Organization of Students	Sri Lanka
ETA	Euskadi ta Askatasuna (Basque Homeland and Freedom)	Spain
FALN	Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional (Armed National Liberation Forces)	Venezuela
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia)	Colombia
FATAH	Harakat al-Tahrir al-Watani al-Filastini (Palestine National Liberation Movement)	Palestine
FCF	Fighting Communist Formations	Italy
GAL	Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación (Liberation Antiterrorist Groups)	France, Spain
GIA	Groupe Islamique Armé (Armed Islamic Group)	Algeria
GSPC	Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat (Salafist Group for Call and Combat)	Northern Africa
HAMAS	Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah (Islamic Resistance Group)	Palestine
	Hizballah (Party of God)	Lebanon
HM	Hizbul Mujahideen	Kashmir
HUA	Harkat-ul-Ansar	Kashmir
IMU	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan	Uzbekistan
INLA	Irish National Liberation Army	Northern Ireland
ISYF	International Sikh Youth Federation	India

ACRONYM	FULL NAME	COUNTRY
IRA	Irish Republican Army	Northern Ireland
IRSP	Irish Republican Socialist Party	Northern Ireland
JEM	Jaish-i-Muhammad	Kashmir
Jl	Jemaah Islamiya	Southeast Asia
JKLF	Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front	Kashmir
JVP	Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (People's Liberation Front)	Sri Lanka
KCF	Khalistan Commando Force	India
KLF	Khalistan Liberation Force	India
LeT	Lashkar e-Tayyiba	Pakistan
LJ	Lashkar I Hhangvi	Pakistan
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (Tamil Tigers)	Sri Lanka
M-19	Movimiento 19 April (April 19 Movement)	Colombia
MIR	Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (Movement of the Revolutionary Left)	Venezuela
MRTA	Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru (Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement)	Peru
NAP	Nuclei Armata Proletari (Nuclei of Armed Proletarians)	Italy
PCP-SL	Partido Comunista del Perú–Sendero Luminoso (Communist Party of Peru–Shining Path)	Peru

ACRONYM	FULL NAME	COUNTRY
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine	Palestine
PFLP/GC	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine/General Command	Palestine
PIJ	Palestinian Islamic Jihad	Palestine
PIRA	Provisional Irish Republican Army	Northern Ireland
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party	Turkey
PL	Prima Linea (Front Line)	Italy
PLA	Palestine Liberation Army	Palestine
PLF	Palestine Liberation Front	Palestine
PLF/GC	Palestine Liberation Front/General Command	Palestine
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization	Palestine
PLOT	People's Liberation Organization of Thamileelam	Sri Lanka
PWG	People's War Group	India
RAF	Red Army Faction	Germany
RIRA	Real Irish Republican Army	Northern Ireland
TELO	Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization	Sri Lanka