Understanding Global Security

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Military threats to security from non-state actors

> Due to the imbalance of power between our armed forces and the enemy forces, a suitable means of fighting must be adopted, i.e. using fast-moving, light forces that work under complete secrecy. In other words, to initiate a guerrilla war, where the sons of the nation, and not the military forces, take part in it.
>
> Osama bin Laden 1996 (O'Neill 2001)

One man's terrorist . . .

'Terrorism' is, perhaps, the most contentious term in political science. Literally hundreds of definitions have been coined by scholars and practitioners of politics without any clear consensus on how best to articulate what is undoubtedly a significant phenomenon. Schmid in 1983 listed 109 distinct definitions (Schmid 1983). From 1983 the following definition has been used by the US State Department: 'premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents usually intended to influence an audience' (USA 1983).[1] Curiously, this definition would not classify attacks by sub-national groups against active but not in-battle US servicemen, such as in the Lebanon in 1982, as terrorist strikes. The definition does, however, capture the essence of the phenomenon we have witnessed as a major issue of global security since the late 1960s; that of political violence waged by non-state actors. The 1968 hijacking of an aeroplane by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine initiated an era of regular conflict between states and non-state actors in Israel–Palestine and on many other fronts throughout the world. Non-state groups had taken on states before 1968 and left their mark on history. Assasinations of state leaders have a long history and the First World War was sparked by the shooting by a Serb nationalist group of the prince of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It was from the late 1960s, however, that unorthodox military violence became more routine and increasingly targeted a wider audience than prominent individuals.

The term terrorism is, though, an unhelpful one to use in describing this phenomenon since it is so value-laden. Terrorism, clearly, is a pejorative word. It is a word bandied about in conflict situations in order to contrast one side's legitimate killing to another side's illegitimate killing. Most frequently this will be by state forces against non-state forces since, in international law, state violence can be legal whereas non-state violence never can. Clearly, however, 'terror' is something that can be inflicted on people by governments as well as by non-state actors. Nazi genocide, Stalin's purges and the 'killing fields' of the Khmer Rouge are among the numerous examples of this. At the same time, violent non-state struggles often come to be seen by states as legitimate, such as the African National Congress (ANC)'s democratic revolution in South Africa. Hence the oft-quoted maxim, 'one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter'.

Consider the US government's terrorism definition minus the clause 'sub-national groups or clandestine agents'. The definition now describes perfectly the defence policy of most powerful states, and certainly the USA, in the 'total war' era of the twentieth century. The blanket bombing of civilians in the Second World War and the very essence of nuclear weapons strategy were/are based on 'premeditated,

politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets' and were 'intended to influence an audience'. Even if we accept that state violence deliberately directed at civilians can be legitimate (such as the argument that the atomic strikes on Japan in 1945 ultimately saved lives by ending the Second World War) no one can suggest that the fear of nuclear annihilation is not terrifying. Even in this post-Cold War era, when non-combatant immunity is coming back into fashion, nuclear deterrence as a concept still rests on the fear factor emanating from the extraordinarily destructive power of such weapons.

If we leave aside the nuclear threat, it is clear also that states will often deliberately kill civilians if they consider it necessary for their security interests. 'State terrorism' against foreign citizens can be direct, as in the random scud assaults on Israel by Iraq during the Gulf War in 1991, or indirect through the sponsorship of terrorist cells such as the in anti-western attacks believed to have been organized by Libya in the 1980s. State terrorism of this form is not solely the preserve of such brutal dictators as Saddam Hussein and Gaddafi, however. The 1985 French destruction of the ship *Rainbow Warrior*, used by the pressure group Greenpeace to protest against nuclear testing in the South Pacific, was evidence that democracies are not averse to killing civilians outside a conventional war situation.

Hence the term 'terrorism' is problematic since it seems to conflate two ideas: the deliberate terrorizing of civilians, and force used by non-state actors. In the following analysis I will concentrate on the second of those two ideas and accept that terror can be inflicted on people by their own government, by other governments and by other entities, non-state actors (state terror is considered in Chapter 5). Criminal groups also can, of course, terrify and kill people and this form of non-state actor is considered in a later chapter. This chapter will focus on the nature of and security challenge to states and citizens posed by politically motivated violent non-state actors. 'Terrorism' by non-state actors is just one, relatively minor, aspect of this. Of far greater prominence is the more conventional violence waged in civil wars, which now dominates the military security agenda.

Types of political non-state military groups

Nationalist

Secessionist

The most prevalent and successful form of political non-governmental violence has come from movements claiming to represent a nation, using force to achieve independence for their people. Nations are socially constructed communities defined subjectively according to common characteristics that a given group feel distinguish them from other nations. Such characteristics may or may not include language, religion, ethnicity, common historical struggle and cultural ties. National self-determination, the belief that nations are entitled to sovereign statehood, has been a powerful force within international politics since the latter part of the nineteenth century. There has never been a precise match up between nations and states in the

world, but the struggle to do so has continued on many fronts over the last 150 years as the world has retreated from an age of multi-national empire.

The belief that nations had a right to become nation states and that it was in the interests of world peace that they achieve this, reached its high point at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference which broke up the Austro-Hungarian Hapsburg and Turkish Ottoman Empires. National self-determination is still a strongly held conviction of most people and statesmen today. As such it is the secessionist 'terrorists' who are most likely to be considered 'freedom fighters' or 'national liberation movements'. A number of contemporary states were founded by successful campaigns of non-governmental violence. Kenya and Algeria were ceded by the UK and France respectively after bloody struggles and even the USA was born in such circumstances. Many present-day nationalist struggles against states have received large levels of international legitimization. The Palestinians, the Kosovans and, to a lesser extent, the Kurds are cases in point. Violent secessionists represent a major security threat for the states from which they aim to secede but they rarely threaten other states, other than through fear of a copy-cat uprising in their own territory. Such groups do not challenge the Westphalian order since many states consider them simply to be following in their own footsteps and even enhancing international security by moving the world closer to the ideal of the nineteenth century *risorgimento* nationalists, such as Mazzini, who felt that if all nations became states there would be nothing left to fight about.

Counter-secessionist

Nationalism can inspire some people to take up arms to secede but also inspire others to fight to prevent that secession. National self-determination is a messy business in the contemporary world where migration, inter-marriage and integration have made any neat political division on national grounds far more complicated than in the nineteenth or early twentieth century. A secessionist's proposed nation state will often include enclaves, or even geographically indistinct groupings, of other nationalities who favour the status quo and fear being severed from their present state. Hence Serb nationalists in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina took up arms when those two states seceded from Serb-dominated Yugoslavia in 1991 and pro-British 'loyalist' violence in Northern Ireland emerged in the 1970s to counter Irish nationalist aspirations to unify the province with the Republic of Ireland.

Religious

The growth of religious fundamentalism over the last 25 years has seen a number of armed groups emerge which are inspired essentially by religious doctrine. Generally seen as a new wave of non-state violence, following the dominance of this form of conflict by Nationalist and Marxist groups in the late 1960s and 1970s, armed religious fanatics, in fact, predate the age of terrorism and can be traced back as far as biblical times.

Judaism

Probably the world's first organized campaign of violence by a non-state group against a government was waged by the Zealots of Israel against Roman rule. As such the Zealots and other similar Jewish insurgency groups could be understood as national liberationists, but a crucial motivation to their campaign was the religious conviction that the arrival of the Messiah would follow a period of mayhem. Hence Jewish doubters, as well as occupying Romans, were often victims of spontaneous acts of Zealot violence. Many centuries on in Israel, groups such as Kach and Kahane Chai have carried out acts of violence since the 1990s against Palestinians in the West Bank in a campaign of biblically inspired zionism.

Islam

Non-state violence in the name of Islam dates back to the Assassins of the seventh century whose murderous campaign is now immortalized in the English language. The Assassins were Shi'a Moslems who stabbed to death prominent political and religious individuals who were felt to be resisting the advancement of their cause of the preservation of traditional Islamic values. Over a millennium later political violence in the name of Islam returned to become a major feature of international politics. The 1979 Iranian Revolution, which overthrew a western-oriented royal dynasty and put in its place a fundamentalist Shi'a regime, served as the catalyst for armed Islamist struggles, both Shi'a and Sunni (the two main sects), elsewhere in the Middle East and Africa. This modern wave of political Islam can actually be dated back as far as the 1920s and the anti-colonialist movement in Egypt, which founded the Muslim Brotherhood but was inspired and radicalized by the Iranian Revolution and the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan that occurred in the same year.

Post-revolutionary Iran gave active support to Shi'a groups such as Hizbullah seeking an Iranian style revolution in the Lebanon as well as resisting Israeli incursions into that country. Sunni revolutionaries, such as the Armed Islamic Group in Algeria and al-Gama'at al-Islmiyya in Egypt, were also inspired to seek the overthrow of governments they saw as immoral. Some Islamist groups took the fight beyond domestic revolution, rallying to the cause of Palestinian nationalist resistance to Israel and further to the USA and European countries seen as upholding Israel and meddling in the affairs of Islamic states. In this way Islamic violence has come to be seen as so much more of a security threat to western democracies than other forms of non-state force. It tends to be more transnational in character and directly challenges notions of secularity and sovereignty which underpin the Westphalian order. In the aftermath of the September 11th 2001 strikes on the USA, Suleiman Abu Gaith, a spokesman of al-Qa'ida mastermind Osama bin Laden stated:

> Every Muslim has to play his real and true role to uphold his religion and his action in fighting and jihad is a duty . . . those youths who did what they did and destroyed America with their airplanes did a good deed. They have moved the battle into the heart of America. America must know that the battle will not

leave its land. Go willing, until America leaves our land, until it stops supporting Israel, until it stops the blockade against Iraq.

(Halliday 2002: 235[2])

(See Box 3.1.)

Box 3.1 Osama bin Laden

Born in Saudi Arabia in 1957, to a Syrian mother and Yemeni father, surely no individual in modern history has exerted such military influence internationally without the back-up of a state structure. Bin Laden was stripped of Saudi citizenship in 1991 and has lived a secretive yet extremely high-profile life ever since as a transnational freelance terrorist, drawing support from Islamic radicals across the world in a campaign principally targeting the USA for its foreign policy stance in the Arab world. That one man with a loose, shadowy organization beneath him could confront the world's premier military power and apparently evade its wrath epitomizes the logic of 'asymmetric warfare' and exposes the limitations of the concept of the balance of power. Believed responsible for the original World Trade Center bombing in 1993, bin Laden officially became US enemy number one after a 1996 attack on US servicemen in Saudi Arabia, and the 1998 African Embassy bombings led to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) declaring him their 'most wanted' fugitive. Military strikes on what were believed to be his bases in Sudan and Afghanistan in 1998 failed to topple him and he masterminded from afar the massive 2001 New York and Washington attacks. Full-scale war against Afghanistan dislodged the government offering him sanctuary but proved not to have extinguished bin Laden when al-Qa'ida associates opened their war on a new front against US allies Australia with the 2002 Bali nightclub bombing.

Bin Laden was a very wealthy man until UN sanctions in 2001 froze many of his financial assets. He grew rich through inheriting his father's construction business and earning lucrative contracts with the ruling al-Saud dynasty in Riyadh. He left Saudi Arabia in the 1980s to embark on his pan-Islamic military career, initially fundraising for and then fighting with the 'Arab Afghans' against another superpower, the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. A successful campaign there, aided by US funding and training against their enemy number one of that age, saw bin Laden return to the country of his birth along with many fellow countrymen at the end of the 1980s where his exploits in Afghanistan made him a charismatic cult figure. He fell out with the Saudi government in 1990 over their decision to allow US troops to be stationed in the country in response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Bin Laden offered the services of his Afghan war veterans to both the Saudi and Yemeni governments but their decline saw him fall out with those governments and turn his al-Qa'ida operatives against a new superpower enemy which was, in his eyes, encroaching on Islam's most holy territory.

Hindu

The Thugs, like the Assassins, attracted such fearsome notoriety that their name lives on centuries later as a noun in English and other languages. The Thugs were a Hindu caste who killed, mainly by strangulation, an estimated one million people (mainly fellow Hindus) until they were eliminated by the British colonial rulers of India in the nineteenth century (Sleeman 1930). Hinduism is noted as a religion of tolerance and systematic religiously inspired attacks on people of other faiths historically have been rare. Recent years have seen a rise in Hindu fundamentalism, however, and increased attacks on Moslems in India, encouraged by radical political parties such as Shiv Sena.

Christianity

Christian fundamentalism has long been blended with crude racism in US white supremacist groups such as Aryan Nations and the Ku Klux Klan. In recent years the most prolific overtly Christian violent non-state actor has been the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) operating in northern Uganda. The LRA, who are largely based in southern Sudan, have been conducting a civil insurgency against the government of Uganda since the late 1980s, aimed at the establishment of a theocratic state governed by the Bible's Ten Commandments. In doing so the LRA have, however, violated most of the Ten Commandments themselves in a horrific campaign which has featured random murders, tortures, rapes and the enslavement of Ugandan citizens and, in particular, children.

Buddhism

Although a religion noted for its commitment to peaceful relations, Buddhism has also spawned radical, violent offshoots, of which the most notorious is the Japanese based cult Aum Supreme Truth established in 1987 by Shoko Asahara. In 1995 Aum members released the poisonous gas sarin in underground trains in Tokyo, killing 12 people and injuring over 5000.

Marxist

Prior to the rise of fundamentalist violence from 1979, the biggest non-governmental security threat for most states was seen in the guise of armed Marxist revolutionaries. As with religious violence, Marxist revolutionaries sometimes represented a threat beyond their country of origin in line with the internationalist doctrine they were fighting for. Many democratic states faced such threats in the late 1960s and 1970s. The Red Army Faction in West Germany, Red Brigade in Italy and Red Army in Japan were among the most prominent, becoming a primary security concern in their own countries and a source of international concern because of anti-capitalist actions taken throughout the world.

Marxist revolutionaries of this form are of less significance in Europe and Japan today but have not gone away altogether. The Japanese Red Army is now a tiny cell believed to reside in the Lebanon, and groups in Turkey and Greece have continued low-level campaigns. Leftist revolutionaries continue to have a high profile in some Latin America states, most notably in Colombia where the National Liberation Army (FARC) represents a direct challenge to the government, able even to claim large tracts of 'sovereign' territory, and with the Maoist Shining Path in Peru. Prominent groups also exist in the Philippines, Nepal and as elements in the Palestinian nationalist movement.

Fascist

Although an equally radical and aggressive ideology, Fascism has spawned fewer violent non-governmental groups than Marxism. This is because Fascism is generally associated with the tightening of state authority and tends to be from above rather than below. In addition, of course, fascists tend not to like foreigners so where their actions have occurred they have not become internationalized. Far-right groups have achieved prominence from time to time, however. Some emerged in the late 1960s and 1970s as counter-responses to Marxist revolutionaries. Ordine Nuovo (New Order) and a spin-off group the Armed Revolutionary Nuclei (ARN) carried out a number of attacks on civilians in Italy between 1969 and 1980. Additionally, racist violence by neo-nazi groups has risen over the last ten years. The Boermag in South Africa have targeted black civilians in bombing campaigns, Russian National Unity have carried out a number of anti-semitic attacks and less organized 'skinhead' violence has been a persistent threat to immigrant communities throughout Western Europe.

Armed pressure groups

A further, and as yet minority, category of political non-state violence comes from radicalized single-issue groups. Doctors have been murdered in the USA for carrying out abortions, by armed groups professing to be, with grim irony, 'pro-life'. Animal liberationists have bombed laboratories known to carry out vivesections and some militant ecologists have resorted to violent tactics against lumberjacks. (See Figure 3.1.)

The rise and rise of political non-state violence

The rise of this form of conflict can largely be explained by the coming together of two factors. First, it allows the weak to take on the strong. This is not new and not only true of non-state actors. Guerilla warfare dates back to the Peninsular War early in the nineteenth century when irregular Spanish and Portuguese forces were able to achieve military successes against a far stronger French invading army. Such a feat was repeated in the late twentieth century, in a far more uneven contest, when
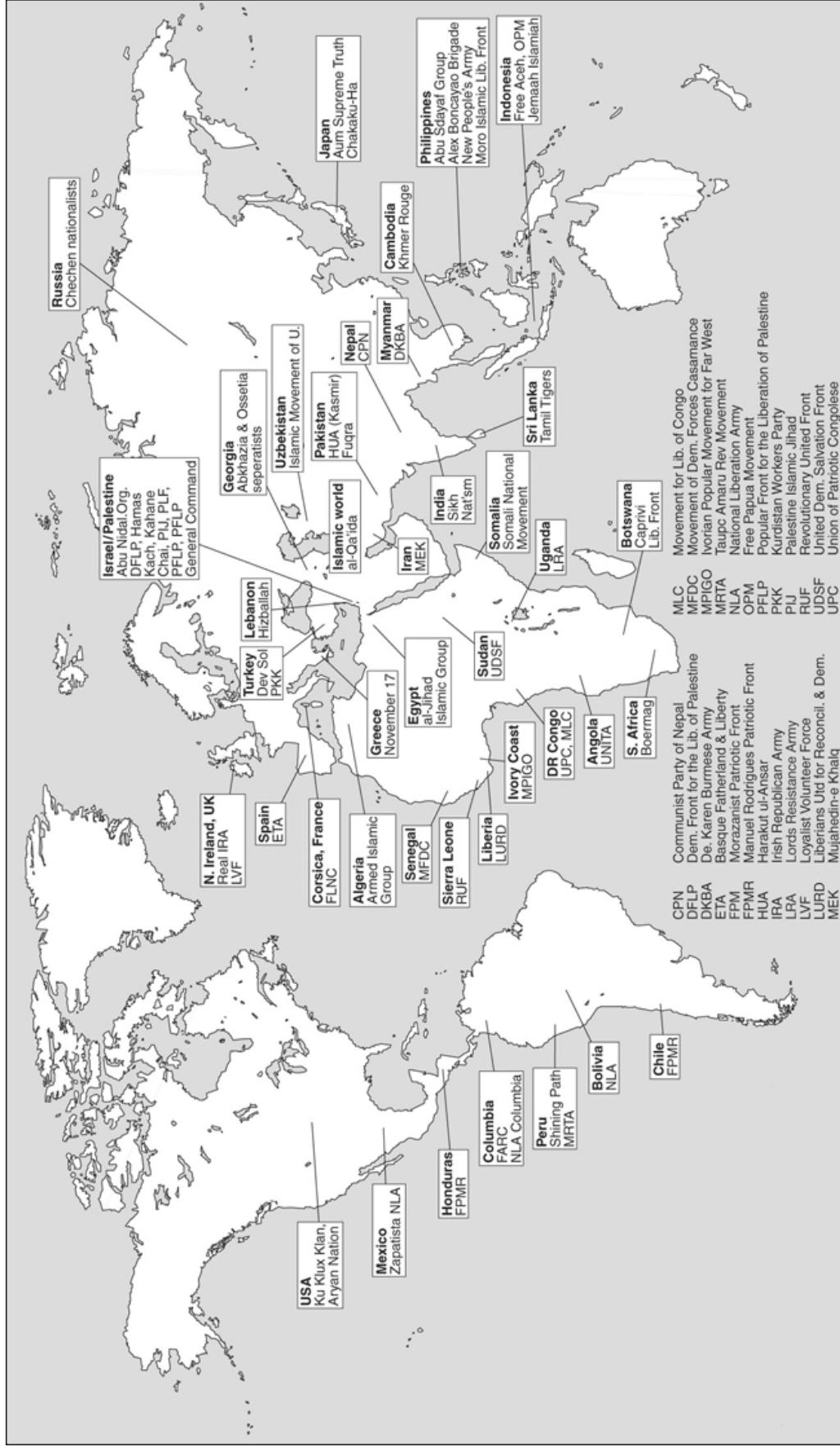
Figure 3.1 Prominent contemporary violent political non-state organizations

Russia – Chechen nationalists

Japan – Aum Supreme Truth, Chakaku-Ha

Philippines – Abu Sdayaf Group, Alex Boncayao Brigade, New People's Army, Moro Islamic Lib. Front

Indonesia – Free Aceh, OPM, Jemaah Islamiah

Cambodia – Khmer Rouge

Myanmar – DKBA

Nepal – CPN

Uzbekistan – Islamic Movement of U.

Georgia – Abkhazia & Ossetia seperatists

Pakistan – HUA (Kasmir), Fuqra

Sri Lanka – Tamil Tigers

Israel/Palestine – Abu Nidal.Org., DFLP, Hamas, Kach, Kahane Chai, PIJ, PLF, PFLP, PFLP General Command

Islamic world – al-Qa'ida

India – Sikh Nat'sm

Somalia – Somali National Movement

Botswana – Caprivi Lib. Front

Iran – MEK

Uganda – LRA

Lebanon – Hizballah

Turkey – Dev Sol, PKK

Sudan – UDSF

Egypt – al-Jihad, Islamic Group

Greece – November 17

Ivory Coast – MPIGO

DR Congo – UPC, MLC

Angola – UNITA

S. Africa – Boermag

N. Ireland, UK – Real IRA, LVF

Spain – ETA

Corsica, France – FLNC

Algeria – Armed Islamic Group

Senegal – MFDC

Sierra Leone – RUF

Liberia – LURD

USA – Ku Klux Klan, Aryan Nation

Mexico – Zapatista NLA

Honduras – FPMR

Columbia – FARC, NLA Columbia

Peru – Shining Path, MRTA

Bolivia – NLA

Chile – FPMR

Abbrev.	Organization	Abbrev.	Organization
CPN	Communist Party of Nepal	MLC	Movement for Lib. of Congo
DFLP	Dem. Front for the Lib. of Palestine	MFDC	Movement of Dem. Forces Casamance
DKBA	De. Karen Burmese Army	MPIGO	Ivorian Popular Movement for Far West
ETA	Basque Fatherland & Liberty	MRTA	Taupc Amaru Rev Movement
FPM	Morazanist Patriotic Front	NLA	National Liberation Army
FPMR	Manuel Rodrigues Patriotic Front	OPM	Free Papua Movement
HUA	Harakut ul-Ansar	PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
IRA	Irish Republican Army	PKK	Kurdistan Workers Party
LRA	Lords Resistance Army	PIJ	Palestine Islamic Jihad
LVF	Loyalist Volunteer Force	RUF	Revolutionary United Front
LURD	Liberians Utd for Reconcil. & Dem.	UDSF	United Dem. Salvation Front
MEK	Mujahedin-e Khalq	UPC	Union of Patriotic Congolese

Vietnamese and Afghani 'Davids' were able to defeat the American and Soviet 'Goliaths'. Soldiers indistinguishable from civilians make an elusive enemy and this is exacerbated when there is no clear link between them and their country.

The second factor behind the rise of 'the age of terrorism' is the advance of communications technology in the latter part of the twentieth century. For political non-state violence to be effective it needs an audience to communicate its message to and to terrify into submission. The globalization of the media provides the 'oxygen of publicity' for putting into practice acts of violence aided by the globalization of travel. Globalization has also assisted non-state groups in raising funds for their campaigns. This has particularly aided nationalist groups since 'ex-pat' communities in other countries are often keen to be remote revolutionaries with a romanticized notion of their brethren's struggle. Irish republicanism greatly benefited from fundraising among US citizens of Irish descent, while Sikh nationalism in the 1980s was as much orchestrated by migrants in Canada as those residing in the territory seeking secession from India.

Globalization allied to increased state arms surpluses since the end of the Cold War has also contributed to disaffected non-state groups finding it easier to avail themselves of weapons with the proceeds of their fundraising activities. Non-state forces fighting proxy wars during the Cold War, such as the leftist UNITA in Angola or the anti-leftist Contras in Nicaragua, have suffered from losing state sponsorship, but other groups have been able to step up their campaigns. The flourishing global trade in arms can help sustain conflicts longer even than the political disagreements which triggered them. 'Conflicts in a number of places (Colombia, Liberia, Tajikistan, etc.) have lost any of the ideological motivation they once possessed and instead have degenerated into conflicts among petty groups fighting to grab local resources' (Singer 2001: 196–197). (See Figure 3.1.)

The internationalization of political non-state violence has gradually become more and more a feature of the phenomenon. Armed Marxist and Marxist-leaning groups coordinated their actions in the 1970s as exemplified by the 1975 kidnapping at an OPEC meeting in Vienna in which the unlikely trinity of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Irish Republican Army and Red Army Faction were involved. 'Carlos the Jackal' played the role of the freelance transnational terrorist, linking together such leftist groups in this era, in much the same way as Osama Bin Laden has done for Islamic radicals since the early 1990s. The limitations of a balance of power approach to understanding global security politics are starkly exposed by the influence of such individuals and their networks. US diplomat Richard Holbrooke summed this up in saying of bin Laden; 'how is it that a man living in a cave can out-communicate the most skilful communications nation in the world?' (Cornwell 2002: 11).

The terror tactics of political non-state military groups are myriad and have evolved over time. The highjacking of aeroplanes ('skyjacking') was the tactic of choice in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the seizing of embassies was popular in the late 1970s and early 1980s and the blowing up of mid-flight aeroplanes took centre stage in the late 1980s. Perennial favourite tactics include hostage taking, the assassination of prominent individuals and detonating bombs in government or public buildings. The September 11th 2001 strikes breathtakingly combined skyjacking and the destruction of public buildings with the added ingredient of suicide bombing in

Table 3.1 Top ten bloodiest single acts of non-state terrorist violence

	Place	Date	No. killed	Action	Perpetrators
1	New York/ Washington, DC/ Philadelphia	Sept. 2001	2998	Hijack of aeroplanes and suicide attacks on government and public buildings	al-Qa'ida
2	Abadan, Iran	Aug. 1978	430	Arson of theatre	Islamic revolutionaries
3	North Atlantic	June 1985	331	Bombing of Indian passenger plane	Sikh nationalists
4	Bombay	Mar. 1993	317	Series of bombings	Local Islamic gangsters allegedly working for Pakistani government
5	Beirut	Oct. 1983	299	Suicide bombing of US and French troops	Hizbullah
6	Lockerbie, UK	Dec. 1988	259	US passenger plane bombed	Libyan-backed anti-western group
7	Nairobi/ Dar Es Salam	Aug. 1998	257	Bombing of US embassies	al-Qa'ida
8	Bali	Oct. 2002	202	Tourist (chiefly Australian) nightclub bombing	Jammu Islam
9	Madrid	Mar. 2004	191	Bombing of trains and train stations	al-Qa'ida
10	Niger	Sep. 1989	171	French passenger plane bombed	Libyan-backed anti-western group
11	Oklahoma, US	Apr. 1995	168	Bombing of government building	Timothy McVeigh, US anti-federalist

Note: List excludes casualty figures from full-scale civil wars.

a single, unprecedented enterprise. Most non-state political violence is, of course, far more amateurish than the painstakingly planned and precision-timed New York and Washington strikes. Pride of place in the annals of unsuccessful terrorism must go to an Iraqi letter bomber who succeeded only in blowing himself up. Khay Rahnajet failed to put the correct postage on his parcel and detonated his own device when it was returned to his house with a 'return to sender' stamp (Simmons 1996: 84). Overshadowed by al-Qa'ida's actions, the distribution of anthrax spores in the US mail in 2001 offered a small but horrifying glimpse into a future nightmare scenario of weapons of mass destruction getting into the hands of non-state actors. Again, however, it is worth emphasizing that most non-state violence is far more 'mainstream' than such tactics and takes the form of sporadic guerrilla insurgency campaigns against state military forces. Table 3.2 lists the most bloody of such wars, excluding related civilian massacres, which are addressed in Chapter 5, see also the map in Figure 3.1.

Table 3.2 Ten bloodiest civil wars in history

	War	Date	Battle deaths
1	Taiping Revolution (China)	1850–64	20 million
2	Chinese Civil War	1945–49	2.5 million
3	Russian Civil War	1918–1921	800 000
4	American Civil War	1861–65	620 000
5	Chinese Nationalist War	1927–37	400 000
6	Spanish Civil War	1936–39	200 000
7	Mexican Revolution	1910–20	200 000
8	Afghan Civil War	1980–2001	150 000
9	1st Sudan Civil War	1956–72	100 000
10	Biafran War (Nigeria)	1967–70	100 000

Source: White (2001).

State responses to political non-state violence

Appeasement

One option open to governments in facing up to the challenge of non-state violence is to come to some sort of accommodation with the group threatening to initiate or continue a campaign of violence. This may take the form of giving in to the demands made by terrorists in relation to a specific action, such as in agreeing to free 'political prisoners' in exchange for the safe release of hostages. Governments have followed this course of action more frequently than is often appreciated as a simple means of avoiding bloodshed. Concessions are, of course, often kept quiet by governments since they do not want their citizens or other potential terrorists to see them as a 'soft touch'. The Japanese government, for example, made a number of significant specific concessions to the Japanese Red Army in the 1970s. All governments, despite claims to the contrary, have 'given in to terrorism' from time to time to avert bloodshed.

In response to a longer term campaign of non-state violence, a government may come to see that the only way to achieve peace is through some sort of negotiated settlement with the organization in much the same way as inter-state conflicts are often resolved. In fact, concession is more probable in a state war with a non-state actor than in a war with another state since outright military defeat of the enemy is less likely. The Irish Republican Army probably never consisted of more than 1000 active servicemen but it could not be defeated by the armed forces of the UK since its members were not clearly distinguishable from ordinary citizens. Even the blanket bombing of Ireland, should such an extreme measure have been considered, could not have achieved victory for the UK since many IRA cells operated in London and elsewhere in England. Hence the UK government secretly initiated dialogue with the IRA in the early 1990s, leading eventually to a compromised settlement which saw a former IRA activist take up a position within a power-sharing executive for Northern Ireland.

The Irish peace process represents a two-way compromise but non-state violence may succeed in winning a long-term campaign and force a capitulation of the government. The African National Congress (ANC) ultimately forced the white minority government of South Africa to stand down and accept a democratic revolution.

Zero tolerance

Whereas appeasement may save lives in the short term, the possible downside of this approach, of course, is that it could give encouragement to other disavowed groups that violence pays dividends. The approach of the US and Israeli governments, two of the main targets of much non-state violence over recent years, has been most characterized by the phrase 'no deals with terrorists'. The basis of such a tough strategy is the belief that only by being seen not to back down can terrorism be deterred in the long term. The short-term result may be a loss of lives but the well-known military maxim that you may have to lose a battle in order to win the war holds sway.

Concessions by the Indian government to Islamic militants who skyjacked a passenger plane in 1999 produced some hostile responses in the domestic press, particularly in the wake of the 2001 attacks on the USA and that government's full-scale military response.

> If any state deals with terrorists, it not only encourages stepped-up terrorism against it own interests but also creates problems for other nations. A classic case is India's ignominious surrender to the hijackers of flight IC-814. One freed terrorist hand-delivered by the foreign minister is the suspected financier of Mohammed Atta, the alleged ringleader in the September 11th terrorist strikes. Another released terrorist founded a group in Pakistan that has claimed responsibility for major Kashmir strikes.
>
> (Chellaney 2001)

Evidence as to whether appeasement or zero tolerance is the most successful strategy for dealing with non-state violence is unclear. Walter Laqueur makes the case for zero tolerance in observing that 'the more severe the repression, the less terrorism tends to occur' (Laqueur 1990: 207). Laqueur bases this assertion on observing the relative lack of non-state violence in authoritarian political systems compared to democratic ones, noting that 'terrorism in Spain gathered strength only after General Franco died' (ibid). There is a certain truth in this argument but, at the same time, there is little likelihood of citizens of most democratic states accepting the idea of living in a police state in order to deter terrorist threats. In addition, the zero tolerance stance of the governments of Israel and the USA has been accompanied by an increased level of non-state violence being perpetrated on their citizens over the last decade.

A clear illustration of how governments can differ in their approach to non-state terrorism came in 1996 when the Peruvian Marxist revolutionary group MRTA entered the Japanese embassy in Lima and held the ambassador and hundreds of staff

hostage (Peruvian President Fujimori was ethnically Japanese). The Japanese government, mindful of successful compromises made to Japanese Marxists in similar circumstances in the 1970s, urged restraint on behalf of the Peruvians who favoured a tough strategy. The Peruvians ignored Japanese caution and sent in commandos, who succeeded in getting the hostages out while killing their captors (some allegedly by summary execution after they had been arrested). Ultimately, Fujimori's overall stance against the twin threat posed by MRTA and the Maoist Shining Path gives weight to Laqueur's views on countering terrorism. He used the campaign against them to justify 'emergency rule' of Peru during his Presidency, in which democracy was effectively suspended and special powers given to specialist military forces and intelligence servives. This policy drew some criticism from within Peru, and particularly from other states, but succeeded in imprisoning over 1000 members of Shining Path and diminishing their murderous campaign which had claimed 35,000 lives since 1980.

It appears, then, there is no simple answer to the question of whether or not governments should talk to terrorists or at least modify their behaviour in line with their demands. The world's worst ever non-state terrorist attack, on the USA in 2001, prompted a major military response which successfully overturned the government seen as hosting the perpetrators and captured many members of the group deemed responsible for the atrocity, but the September 11th strike also stimulated much debate in the USA as to *why* they had been attacked. Although negotiation with those responsible was not a serious option for the USA some reassessment of Middle East policy, the underlying cause of anti-Americanism in groups such as al-Qa'ida, did take place. Hence in 2001, while preparing for war in Afghanistan, we witnessed a president of the USA, recognizing the unpopularity of his country's traditionally pro-Israeli stance in the Muslim world by stating his support for a 'viable Palestinian state'. In 2003 US troops began the process of withdrawing from their bases in Saudi Arabia and so satisfied a core demand of al-Qa'ida shortly after going to war to defeat them.

Containment

The most immediate and predictable response of the government of the USA to the 2001 strikes was to take practical steps to reduce the possibility of such an event reoccurring. All governments faced by a substantial threat of non-state violence look to secure themselves and their citizens by containing such threats through the hardening of potential terrorist targets. Security measures at most international airports were stepped up in the 1970s in response to the popularity of 'skyjackings' and this particular terror tactic became less frequent as a result. The 2001 New York and Washington suicide pilots, of course, avoided encountering extensive security checks on international flights into the USA by hijacking passenger planes on internal flights, notable for much laxer security measures. Even in the wake of the 1995 Oklahoma bombing by one of its own citizens, American notions of security remained externalized and moves to tighten checks on internal flights in the late 1990s had been resisted. By contrast, since the 1970s, airport security on internal flights in Israel has been as tight as it is for international flights. From 2001 US security for the first time

began to be framed in a manner closer to that of Israel and other parts of the world in which threats of organized non-state violence are part of the political landscape.

Before 2001 the irritation and economic cost of slowing up the USA's dense network of internal flights was enough to outweigh the potential security cost in the minds of most Americans. Such costs and irritations are easily borne by people who perceive that they serve to enhance their personal security. The people of the UK in the 1980s adapted to life without rubbish bins at train stations and in which they were liable to be searched by police on driving into the City of London since they had witnessed the carnage caused by IRA bombs on their TV screens. Most Peruvians were happy to tolerate much more serious restrictions on their everyday lives in Fujimori's campaign against Shining Path. There is, however, a limit to what citizens of western democracies will tolerate in the name of containing terrorism. Liberal opinion in the UK was hostile to suggestions by the government in the wake of the 2001 attacks on the USA that ID cards be introduced for British citizens, so that state officials could keep a better track of the activities of foreign citizens. Indeed, the knee-jerk nature of such responses after acts of terror is evident in the fact that the UK government appeared to overlook the fact that the presence of such a scheme in the USA did not prevent the September 11th tragedy. Balancing the security and freedom of its citizens is perhaps the essence of democratic government in the twenty-first century.

Legal measures

A freedom versus security balancing act also faces governments when dealing with the suspected perpetrators of non-state violence (whether their own citizens or not, though most acutely when dealing with their own citizens). Many governments have responded to non-state security threats by issuing 'emergency legislation', introducing measures which essentially suspend normal rights of citizenship for suspects from their own country or withdraw the rights normally enjoyed by non-citizens residing within their country. Among the sorts of legal measures enacted by governments in this respect are the following.

Proscribing the membership of certain organizations

The act of being a member of an organization associated with acts of violence against the state, without neccessarily being actively involved in such violence, is frequently criminalized by governments. The UK government made membership of the IRA and other organizations an imprisonable criminal offence as part of their campaign against Irish nationalist violence in the 1970s, as have the Turkish government in their struggle with Kurd separatists. This strategy can lead to violent non-state organizations forming 'legitimate' political wings so that their spokespeople can continue to advance their cause without technically being associated with the violent organization. Examples of this include Sinn Fein, set up as the political arm of the IRA, and Herri Battasuna the sister organization of violent Basque separatists ETA. This strategy proved a successful means of maintaining a twin-track approach to

forwarding their cause for these two groups in the open democratic systems of the UK and Spain. Governments may, of course, choose to tilt the balance against democratic norms and declare such organizations illegal even if they are not armed groups. In Turkey the government took the decision not only to criminalize membership of the PKK but also membership of political parties associated with the PKK.

Internment

Emergency legislation enacted in the face of a terrorist campaign may also see the state grant itself the power to arrest suspects without having to resort to normal legal processes.

Trial without jury

Concerns that jurors could be intimidated against finding members of major violent organizations guilty have prompted many governments to suspend the democratic norm of trial by jury for such trials. The UK introduced so-called *Diplock courts* (named after Lord Diplock whose report recommended them) for Northern Ireland in 1972 for this reason.

Sentencing

Governments also frequently act against political non-state violence by legislating for the perpetrators of such crimes to be subject to heavier sentencing by the courts than other violent criminals, in the hope of deterring such acts.

Restrictions on free expression

Governments have been known to suspend another civil right of democratic citizens when dealing with advocates of political non-state violence, that of free speech and expression. The UK government's frustration with the electoral success of Sinn Fein in the 1980s led them to seek action short of banning a technically peaceful political party that would deprive them of the 'oxygen of publicity'. The results of this action showed the difficulties inherent in balancing democratic norms and action against non-state violence and the pitfalls associated with legislating in haste. The measure introduced denied Sinn Fein members the right to speak directly on television or radio without actually prohibiting their right to express their views. The results of this were farcical as the law was upheld by the use of actors employed to speak the words of Sinn Fein leaders as they appeared on television. Sinn Fein continued to enjoy the oxygen of publicity, denied only the right to have the public hear their actual voices, while the government were left to look foolish.

Restrictions on employment

West Germany introduced a policy of *berufsverboot* (job ban) which prevented any individual considered to be linked to the Red Army Faction or other leftist militia taking up employment in the state sector. Many states, naturally enough, bar revolutionaries committed to the overthrow of the state from Civil Service positions but the German policy was controversial since it applied to any public service position and was believed to have discriminated against people with anti-governmental, but peacefully expressed, views (Wadlaw 1982: 121–126).

Diplomatic measures

Increased concern with 'state sponsored terrorism' from the 1980s onwards led to the increased use of conventional foreign policy tools aimed at pressuring governments believed to be sponsoring or giving refuge to violent non-state organizations. The withdrawal of the diplomatic recognition of such governments sends a powerful political message since, although more common a response than it used to be, this is still a rare act in international relations.

One downside of the modern diplomatic trend of politicizing recognition (as opposed to the traditional *Lauterpacht doctrine* of giving recognition to a regime that is in control whether you like it or not), is that the resulting pariah states are left free from diplomatic leverage. The fact that the Taliban regime in Afghanistan had never been recognized by the USA or any other western state made it difficult to exercise political pressure on them to give up members of al-Qa'ida based in their territory in the wake of the 2001 attacks on the USA. Where diplomatic and economic links exist, governments supportive of violent orgnaizations can be leant on or given incentives to desist from offering such support. The withdrawal of recognition can induce states 'sponsoring terrorism' to change their ways in order to resume economic links with the countries from which they have become estranged. The Gaddafi regime in Libya, for example, in the 1990s appeared to cease backing anti-western terror groups in response to the diplomatic stick of isolation and carrot of lucrative trading links.

Inter-governmental cooperation

One of the first actions of the USA government following the September 11th 2001 strikes was to attempt to build a 'coalition against terror', recognizing that they would need the support not only of their traditional allies but of as many states as possible, in order to pursue a prolonged campaign against those responsible for this and other acts of anti-American terrorism. The diplomatic isolation of Afghanistan made the support of its neighbour Pakistan essential, particularly since it was one of only three states recognizing its government. Pakistan could provide diplomatic leverage on a government it had helped bring to power, as well as intelligence information on a country not well understood even by a superpower. Classic diplomatic bargaining was very much to the fore here with Pakistan rewarded by the USA for

turning its back on its ally, and risking the wrath of sections of its own population in doing so. Sanctions imposed in the wake of its testing of nuclear weapons in 1998 and the military coup which had brought its leader Musharaf to power were lifted and 'rewards' promised. The key regional powers, China and Russia, were also courted by the USA as were countries such as Syria, previously cited by the Americans as sponsors of terrorism, in an exercise of *realpolitik* designed to reduce the options open to an elusive transnational enemy.

That the world's only military superpower should need to coalition-build and horse trade like this was testimony to the fact that the nature of security politics in a unipolar world is not necessarily distinct from previous eras of international relations, even if the sources of insecurity are far different from that encountered by the statesmen of yesteryear. In 1999 Turkey secured the capture of the PKK leader Occalan with the assistance of Israeli secret services and the cooperation of their traditional foes, Greece. The state system itself is challenged by the rise of political actors who defy traditional norms of sovereignty, diplomacy and the resort to arms and its members are increasingly rallying to its defence.

'Fight fire with fire' (1): covert operations

Much non-state violence has taken the form of 'terrorism' because such strategies are not easily countered by states geared up to resist more conventional military operations. Hence, states faced with persistent non-state security threats have adapted their armed forces in accordance by creating special counter-terrorist units or by adapting existing special forces. The Israeli government established a special unit *Mivtzan Elohim* (Wrath of God) as a direct response to the 1972 Munich Olympics massacre of Israeli athletes by the Palestinian nationalist group Black September. Mivtzan Elohim were given the task of wiping out Black September and empowered to do so by what ever means necessary, even where this meant acting outside international law by entering other states uninvited to carry out assassinations. This controversial strategy was vindicated in that Black September were eliminated by September 1973 but the mistaken killing of an innocent waiter in Norway, unfortunate enough to look like a particular member of the target group, showed the limitations of such an approach.

British counter-terrorism has been led by the Special Air Service (SAS), set up during the Second World War as a crack unit to operate behind enemy lines. The SAS came to the fore in their new role in 1980 when a siege at the Iranian embassy in London was ended with the killing of five and arrest of another of the hostage takers. The SAS were also at the forefront of the British campaign against Irish nationalist violence in the 1980s and early 1990s and their success in killing a number IRA personnel was a crucial factor in bringing the IRA and Sinn Fein to the negotiating table. Essentially a stalemate had been reached in the conflict, with each side accepting the outright defeat of the other was impossible. In the wake of the September 2001 strikes on the USA many states reviewed their defence arrangements and such units are becoming less 'special' and more of a standard security force.

'Fight fire with fire' (2): war

The 2001–2 Afghan War was the only 'full-scale' war to have been waged against an armed non-state actor, but conventional military responses at a lesser level have been used from time to time. The US bombed Libya in 1986 in retaliation for its leadership's links with a number of incidents around the world which had targeted US servicemen. Similarly, in 1998 US air strikes targeted sites in Afghanistan and Sudan linked to al-Qa'ida in a response to the bombing of their embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. These incidents came to be referred to colloquially as 'The War of Clinton's penis' since they occurred while the President was embroiled in a sex scandal.[3]

Israel too has used military might to take on an elusive enemy. Controversial invasions of the Lebanon in 1982 and 1996 sought to flush out the PLO and other Arab nationalist bases and secure their northern border. In a similar vein, Turkish actions against Kurdish separatists have included incursions into Iraq where the PKK have strongholds. These limited military engagements have tended to be largely unsuccessful and, possibly, even counter-productive. The US strikes of 1998 hit an innocent target in Sudan and the Israeli incursion of 1982 is best remembered for a massacre in a Palestinian refugee camp. Additionally, the greatest Libyan-backed anti-American atrocity occurred two years after the 1986 Tripoli bombings and the PLO and al-Qa'ida were far from deterred by the state actions targeting them.

Global responses to political non-state violence

It has taken a surprisingly long time for the Westphalian system as a collectivity to seek to rid itself of the systemic threat posed by non-state violence. The tendency for many states to empathize with nationalist struggles or see advantage in a rival state being weakened by civil strife stifled the development of international law and other collaborative arrangements for many years. UN Conventions outlawing sky-jacking and hostage-taking were ratified in the 1960s and 1970s but not until 1985 did Security Council and General Assembly Resolutions (579, 40/61) unite nearly all the world in condemning all forms of non-state terrorism.[4] Additionally, states have been slower to develop extradition treaties and permit Interpol investigations against politically rather than criminally motivated aggressors.

The end of the Cold War improved solidarity and paved the way for a more systematic approach to tackling political non-state violence. The G7 cartel of the world's most economically powerful states became an unlikely focus for state co-operation against the menace of transnational military forces in the 1990s. The G7 together with Russia in 1996 held a 'terrorism summit' in Lyon, which sought to harmonize state approaches to the problem in order to avoid such groups exploiting policy differences. Issues addressed included collectively recognizing non-state violence as illegitimate by criminalizing fundraising for such groups, the need to avoid the appeasement of hostage-takers and tough sentencing for this sort of crime. In 1993 the Security Council, under Resolution 864, imposed sanctions on a non-state actor for the first time and succeeded in bringing UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) to the negotiating table through an arms embargo, travel ban and financial restrictions on the group's membership. The success of these

measures prompted similar Resolutions against al-Qa'ida members in the aftermath of the 2001 attacks on the USA. Resolution 1373 (2001) actually goes far beyond just targeting bin Laden and his associates and calls on all states to criminalize the hosting and/or financing of all non-state military forces.

The depressing truth is that there is no easy answer for dealing with non-state political violence. Traditional military responses by the state can achieve some success, but only where the foe is closely linked with a government and a clear target can be aimed at, as was the case with the US war against Afghanistan in 2002. This campaign assisted the US 'war on terrorism' by removing a key support base for its principal enemy, al-Qa'ida, and killing a number of that organization's operatives but, of course, it could never be as complete a victory as it would have been had the Afghani government itself been the direct enemy. Wars between states usually reach a definitive conclusion but wars against non-state actors rarely do. Non-state actors are unlikely to surrender since they can usually run away rather than face the music of a post-war settlement. Hence al-Qa'ida continued their campaign against the USA after 2002 depleted but not defeated and still carrying the same grievances. Indeed it is debatable whether they were even depleted since their battle losses could be offset by willing recruits from a transnational pool beyond that of most vanquished states. It is this limitation in the application of state power which prompted Paul Wilkinson famously to liken wars against non-state forces to 'fighting the hydra', the mythical beast that could respond to having its head cut off by growing another one (Wilkinson 1990). Non-state foes can be subdued for periods of time but, if the same grievances persist, others are likely to take up arms again for the cause. Indeed, the longer grievances fester, the more they become socialized and second and third generation 'freedom fighters' are no more likely to abandon their fathers' and grandfathers' cause than state citizens are to submit meekly to foreign invasion. Peace deals after long-term civil insurgencies tend to be particularly difficult since sections of the non-state force frequently become more absolutist in their stance. Hence in Northern Ireland, Israel/Palestine and the Basque country attempted settlements have split the nationalist movements and created hardline splinter groups.

The unpalatable fact is that while grievances remain in the world violence will always resurface. Acts of international terrorism by non-state actors are an unfortunate side-effect of a more open and closely connected world. Short of closing all state borders and rolling back the democratization of the world and licensing the even greater threat of unrestrained state terrorism, non-state violence can never be comprehensively defeated. 'Anyone who claims to have a total solution to terrorism in a democracy is either a fool or a knave' (Wilkinson 1990: 253). To admit this is not to say that nothing can be done about political non-state violence or that it is the fault of democracy and globalization. Grievances that prompt violence can be addressed, either through direct bargaining with the aggrieved or by the general evolution of a more just world. The same point made in the previous chapter with reference to inter-state war holds for its sub-state variant. Since war is political, politics can resolve war (Halliday 2002: 58). Democracy and globalization can facilitate this. 'Terrorists' can become democrats and negotiate their position around a table rather than through force. Violent Irish nationalism was largely transformed into democratic Irish nationalism by giving the movement some legislative power in exchange for

them abandoning the use of military power. Extensive empirical research, led by Gurr, comparing conflict resolution during and after the Cold War gives some scope for optimism in this regard. 'Conflicts over self-determination are being settled with ever-greater frequency, usually when ethnic groups gain greater autonomy and power-sharing within states' (Gurr *et al.* 2001: 'highlights'). At the global level equitable facilities to address grievances, such as a responsible UN Security Council with clear provision for dealing with civil conflict and the International Criminal Court, can perform a similar service if permitted to do so. Set against a functioning and just global polity, unjust non-state grievances, or grievances which persist in using unjust means, will be more easily identified as such and be able to be singled out for concerted global action, political or military, of the sort traditionally reserved for unlawfully aggressive states.

The perpetuation of sovereignty as a sacred political concept beyond its practical existence serves to obscure the simple fact that war is war whatever communities the combatants purport to represent. International cooperation has done much to lessen the recourse to military action by states and, given the opportunity, it can have the same effect for non-state actors. International law can directly target globally operating groups and individuals through implementing effective travel bans and freezing their bank accounts in a way that state legislation or war cannot. The same increased inter-connectedness of the modern world that has breathed life into political non-state violence can also help to suffocate it.

Key points

- The term 'terrorism' is typically applied to non-state political violence but this is analytically unhelpful since states frequently terrorize their own and other states' citizens.
- Political non-state violence has been dominated by three types; nationalist, Marxist and religious.
- A range of tactics have been used by governments to combat threats of this kind, with no clear consensus on the most effective.
- Political non-state violence is now far more common and persistent than state-to-state conflict, suggesting that greater recourse to negotiated solutions is required, however unpalatable this may be for governments.

Notes

1 'Non-combatants' is taken to include off-duty or unarmed troops.
2 As published in the *Financial Times* October 10 2001.
3 This episode was pre-emptively satired in the Hollywood film *Wag the Dog*.
4 Cuba were the only state to vote against the General Assembly Resolution.

Recommended reading

Gurr, T., Marshall, M. and Khosla, D. (2001) *Peace and Conflict 2000. A Global Survey of Armed Conflicts, Self-determination Movements and Democracy*, Maryland: Center for International Development and Conflict Management (CIDCM).

Halliday, F. (2002) *Two Hours That Shook the World. September 11, 2001: Causes and Consequences*, London: Saqi.

Kegley, C. (ed.) (1990) *International Terrorism. Characteristics, Causes, Controls*, New York: St Martins Press.

Wilkinson, P. (2001) *Terrorism versus Democracy. The Liberal State Response*, London: Frank Cass.

Useful web links

US State Department Counterterrorism Office: http://www.state.gov/s/ct/

Terrorism Research Centre: http://www.terrorism.com/

University of St Andrews Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence: http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/academic/intrel/research/cstpv/