FOREWORD

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RAND's research on terrorism formally began in 1972. Two bloody terrorist incidents that year—the Japanese Red Army attack on passengers at the Lod Airport in Israel and the seizure of Israeli athletes by Black September terrorists at the Olympics in Munich—signaled dramatically to the world that a new mode of warfare had begun. Reacting to this new threat, then President Nixon created the Cabinet Committee to Combat Terrorism, a high-level group to coordinate all U.S. counterterrorist efforts. The committee in turn commissioned RAND to examine the phenomenon and how it might affect American security interests.

Terrorism was not a new concern for the government, at least in its particular forms—the hijacking of airliners, the kidnapping of diplomats, protest bombings. However, as is so often the case, dramatic events focused interest and mobilized resources. Nor was this entirely new territory for RAND, which previously had studied the use of terrorism in revolutionary and guerrilla warfare, already had identified the new phenomenon of urban guerrilla warfare and its inherent tendency toward the employment of terrorist tactics, and had examined the problem of airline hijackings and assassinations.

Having been present at the initiation of RAND's research on terrorism, and now 27 years later being called upon to review this latest RAND volume, *Countering the New Terrorism*, by Ian Lesser and his colleagues, provides me an opportunity for review and reflection, as well as for pointing out some of the unanticipated consequences of our endeavor.

When we began our research, we thought that terrorism, in its contemporary form, reflected a unique confluence of political events and technological developments that made it likely to increase and become increasingly international, and that it would affect the interests of the United States and its allies in a variety of ways, but we had only a dim notion of terrorism's spectacular future. Indeed, anyone at the beginning of the 1970s who forecast that terrorists would blow up jumbo jets in mid-air with all of their passengers on board, crash a hijacked airliner into a city, kidnap a head of state, run a boat filled with explosives aground on a crowded beach, set off a bomb weighing several tons in the heart of London's financial district or blow up the World Trade Center in New York, release nerve gas in a subway at rush hour, unleash biological weapons, or hold a city hostage with a stolen or improvised nuclear weapon would have been dismissed as a novelist.

Yet of the nine possible events described here, four have occurred and four more have been attempted or at least threatened. Terrorists have blown up airliners; they have set off huge bombs in the heart of London and at the World Trade Center in New York; and they have released nerve gas in a Tokyo subway. Terrorists have plotted to crash a hijacked airliner into a city and attempted to beach an explosives-laden boat in Israel in an effort to kill hundreds of swimmers, and deranged individuals have threatened to use biological and nuclear weapons. Only the abduction of a head of state remains in the realm of fiction, but only because Aldo Moro, five times Italy's prime minister, happened not to be the premier when he was kidnapped and murdered by terrorists in 1978. Today's lurid speculations turn into tomorrow's headlines, making it hard to dismiss even the most far-fetched scenarios. That creates an analytical problem: How do we assess the threat of terrorist events that have not occurred? Why have terrorists not done some of the things we know they are capable of doing? What we do know is that the terrorist threat today differs greatly from that of a quarter century ago. Terrorism evolves, which is one of the major themes of this volume.

One of our first tasks in 1972 was to construct a chronology of terrorist incidents to provide an empirical foundation for the subject of our research. When we talked about terrorism, what exactly were we talking about? The selection of entries for inclusion in the chronol-

ogy required defining terrorism, ideally, in an objective manner. To avoid distracting polemics about who was a terrorist or whether ends justified means, it was necessary to define terrorism according to the quality of the act, not the identity of the perpetrator or the nature of the cause. In separating terrorist tactics from their political context, the intent clearly was to criminalize a certain mode of political expression or warfare.

We concluded that an act of terrorism was first of all a crime in the classic sense such as murder or kidnapping, albeit for political motives. Even if we accepted the assertion by many terrorists that they were waging war and were therefore soldiers—that is, privileged combatants in the strict legal sense—terrorist tactics, in most cases, violated the rules that governed armed conflict—for example, the deliberate targeting of noncombatants or actions against hostages. We recognized that terrorism contained a psychological component—it was aimed at the people watching. The identities of the actual targets or victims of the attack often were secondary or irrelevant to the terrorists' objective of spreading fear and alarm or gaining concessions. This separation between the actual victim of the violence and the target of the intended psychological effect was the hallmark of terrorism. It was by no means a perfect definition and it certainly did not end any debates, but it offered some useful distinctions between terrorism and ordinary crime, other forms of armed conflict, or the acts of psychotic individuals.

Defining terrorism according to the act would closely resemble the approach followed by the international community. Unable to agree upon a universal definition of terrorism, states were nonetheless able to reach a measure of consensus in outlawing specific acts such as airline hijacking and aircraft sabotage, attacks on diplomats, or the taking of hostages. In making these specific actions international crimes, the word "terrorism" was seldom used; collectively, however, the acts constituted terrorism, which then was universally condemned.

The creation of the RAND chronology, although a prerequisite to empirical research, lent greater coherence to a spattering of disparate acts of violence than what was offered by the terrorists themselves, few of whom at the time thought of assassinations, bombings, kidnappings, and airline hijackings as elements of a

unified tactical repertoire, let alone the basis of a strategy. Ironically, in our effort to understand a phenomenon, we ran the risk of attributing to terrorists a level of strategic thinking they may not have possessed.

Our definitional approach also may have had another unanticipated consequence. Terrorists were defined as those who carried out certain acts defined as terrorism.

While perfectly logical, this definition risked becoming an analytically constraining tautology. When those already identified as terrorists did something different, it would correctly be seen as a tactical innovation. (As a matter of fact, terrorists turned out not to be very innovative; instead, they tended to stick with a limited tactical repertoire.) But what if tactical developments came from another entirely different dimension? For example, those to first use nerve gas on a civilian population were not "terrorists," but members of a bizarre religious cult. Looking ahead to possible assaults on information networks—so-called "cyberwar," which is discussed by John Arquilla, David Ronfeldt, and Michele Zanini in this volume—if we focus exclusively on whether existing terrorists will switch from bombing to hacking, we may find few examples. However, other kinds of adversaries may move in the direction of mass disruption through the penetration and sabotage of information networks. Terrorists might not become hackers, but increasingly malevolent hackers could become a new kind of white-collar terrorist.

We defined *international terrorism* as encompassing those acts in which the terrorists crossed national frontiers to carry out attacks, or attacked foreign targets at home such as embassies or international lines of commerce as in airline hijackings. This focus reflected initial fascination with the novelty of contemporary terrorism's international character. How did it come about in the Lod Airport massacre, people asked, that Japanese terrorists came to Israel on behalf of Palestinians to kill passengers on an inbound U.S. flight, most of whom happened to be Puerto Rican pilgrims visiting the Holy Land?

Defining "international terrorism" was a necessary prerequisite for mobilizing international support against terrorism and could be viewed as a noble effort to extend the international rule of law—international efforts against piracy provided an historical

precedent—and the conventions governing war. It also served U.S. national interests in that the principal terrorist threat to the United States came not from terrorist attacks inside the United States but rather from terrorist attacks on American citizens and facilities abroad. The chronology of international terrorism reinforced this concern by showing that U.S. citizens and facilities were the number one target in international incidents of terrorism. The United States had no mandate to intervene in the internal conflicts of other nations, but when that violence spilled over into the international community, it became a legitimate international concern.

These definitional constructions enabled us to initiate a long-term analysis of terrorism that RAND has continued to the present day. The annual chronologies have illustrated trends in terrorist tactics, changes in the patterns of targeting, motives, lethality, and other developments which, in turn, provided useful information about the effectiveness of various countermeasures. Over the long run, they showed that physical security measures worked—the frequency of terrorist attacks declined where targets were hardened, but terrorists merely shifted their sights to other, softer targets. Terrorists gradually, but never entirely, abandoned tactics that proved increasingly unproductive and dangerous, such as embassy takeovers. The lethality of terrorist attacks gradually increased over time as terrorists motivated by ethnic hatreds or religious fanaticism revealed themselves to be demonstrably less constrained, more inclined to carry out large-scale indiscriminate attacks. All these conclusions, now commonplace in our knowledge, came out of the simple quantitative analysis made possible by the data assembled. Bruce Hoffman, in his chapter, demonstrates the utility of this type of analysis.

However, quantitative analysis could easily be pushed too far. The effort to be objective and precise created necessarily artificial categories. One has to remember that international terrorist incidents constitute only a narrowly defined component of all terrorist incidents, which in some cases comprised all of the political violence taking place in a country—so called “pure terrorism,” but in other cases comprised only a small component of a much larger conflict. In civil war situations, like that in Lebanon, separating incidents of terrorism from the background of violence and bloodshed was both futile and meaningless. Measuring the volume of international ter-

rorism—the thickness of a thin crust atop a very deep pie—would tell us little about the root causes of terrorism or the nature of societies that produced terrorists.

There is anyway a dangerous tendency to attribute the actions of a few to the political defects or cultural flaws of the society as a whole. True, terrorists are not extraterrestrials. They arise from the peculiarities of local situations, although they may become isolated in their own tiny universe of beliefs and discourse that is completely alien to their surrounding society. We also must recognize that there are those for whom the banner of a cause offers an excuse for individual aggression—terrorists for whom terrorism is an end in itself. In a world in which terrorism has so thoroughly permeated the popular culture, providing inspiration and instruction for acting out in certain prescribed ways, terrorists who are mere thugs with political pretensions, psychopaths seeking notoriety, or ordinary crackpots are becoming a more prevalent threat.

RAND's research remained pragmatic. It delved into the mind-set of terrorists but avoided the depths of psychodynamics. RAND's political analysts provided expertise on the various countries and regions where terrorist groups were active, but spent little time looking for a lodestone of political or economic conditions that produced terrorism. Instead, RAND focused on what terrorists did, how they did it, and how best to protect society against those actions that could lead to death, widespread disruption, and alarm.

Of immediate concern to the U.S. government when RAND first began its research was the problem of kidnappings. American diplomats already had been kidnapped in Latin America and the Middle East, and the tactic of political kidnapping seemed to be spreading. The U.S. Department of State asked RAND to explore the mechanisms of bargaining for hostage. We began by conducting detailed case studies of the major hostage incidents that had already occurred. From these we were able to distill lessons in how to manage communications with hostage-takers, relations with local governments often thrown into crisis by the event, and other complex aspects of a hostage situation.

As part of the same effort, RAND examined the experiences of those held hostage. This research led to new training for officials assigned

to high-risk posts and to greater understanding of the post-release difficulties experienced by hostages. More concretely, it helped bring about a number of specific changes in how returning hostages were treated. Years later, this research was carried into the area of Air Force survival training and the applicability of the military Code of Conduct in cases where personnel were held hostage by terrorists as opposed to conventional prisoner-of-war situations.

The security of American embassies abroad was a major concern. RAND examined the history of embassy takeovers, a terrorist tactic that declined as embassies became better protected and governments became more resistant to terrorists' demands, more skillful in negotiating with terrorists holding hostages, and willing to use force when negotiations failed. RAND also developed a more sophisticated mathematical basis for assessing the risk posed by car bombs, which was used in developing new design and construction criteria for U.S. embassies.

If terrorists could blow up airliners and assault embassies, might they not also attempt to steal nuclear weapons to hold cities hostage or seize nuclear facilities and threaten catastrophic damage? In the mid-1970s, amid growing concerns about the possibility of nuclear terrorism, the U.S. Department of Energy and Sandia Laboratories asked RAND to analyze the motives and capabilities of potential malevolent adversaries of U.S. nuclear programs—a deliberately broad label that could include terrorists, economically motivated criminals, deranged individuals, and other foes. The approach in this research differed from the analysis of terrorist kidnappings or embassy takeovers in that, fortunately for society, we did not have a rich history of serious events of nuclear terrorism to examine. Instead, RAND looked at the combinations of motives and capabilities displayed in analogous events: the most ambitious terrorist attacks, wartime commando raids, high-value heists, incidents of industrial sabotage, and the careers of mad bombers. These analog case studies provided useful insights and suggested a security strategy: Nuclear security systems would strive to compel attackers to possess combinations of dedication, know-how, and resources not previously seen outside of national wartime efforts. The Department of Energy later credited RAND with having designed the threat upon which its security programs were based.

One offshoot of this inquiry was the development of an arsenal of techniques to assess the credibility of threats made by persons or groups claiming to have nuclear material or homemade nuclear bombs. While most such threats, of which there were a growing number in the late 1970s, could easily be dismissed as the obvious products of pranksters or lunatics, their quality was improving as the theoretical knowledge of nuclear weapons design spread and novels about nuclear terrorism—some well-informed—proliferated. Nuclear terrorism became part of popular culture. Remote behavioral analysis techniques were explored, refined, and tested against actual threats, in many cases providing direct assistance to law enforcement. The same analytical techniques were later utilized to examine the mind-set of terrorists and others threatening violence or engaged in murderous campaigns. In the years since, these profiling techniques have become a routine facet of criminal investigations.

Will tomorrow's terrorist simply be a more bloodthirsty version of today's terrorist bent upon big bangs and body count, perhaps even more indiscriminate, but sticking with conventional explosives? Will tomorrow's terrorist turn instead to chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons to cause mass destruction? Or will tomorrow's terrorist be a sophisticated electronic warrior penetrating and sabotaging the information and communications systems upon which modern society increasingly depends? *Countering the New Terrorism* explores these dimensions, and one in particular, the possibility of netwar.

While no one can predict the future course of terrorism with confidence, the history of terrorism counsels us to think broadly but at the same time to exercise caution. The analysis of "dream threats" is filled with pitfalls. It is easy to begin by identifying vulnerabilities—they are infinite, positing theoretical adversaries—they are legion, then reifying the threat—a subtle shift of verbs from *could* to *may* happen. "Could" means theoretically possible while "may" suggests more. So long as the reader and the policymakers understand the utility of what necessarily must be speculative, there is no problem. The danger arises when speculation becomes the basis for launching costly efforts to prevent "what ifs," or worse, when policymakers believe that highly publicized preventive or mitigation efforts will deter such adversaries. This is not to say the threat is not real. I believe that major assaults on information systems are a real possibility. Terrorist use of chemical or biological

weapons is a legitimate concern, although the evidence here is sketchier. My intention is rather to point to the risks of fact-free analysis.

While the bulk of RAND's research focused on understanding the terrorist adversary, RAND also addressed many aspects of response. Identifying negotiating tactics used successfully in hostage situations is one obvious example. RAND also carried out several studies in the area of intelligence collection, analysis, and dissemination. One project developed a framework for collecting and analyzing information about terrorist groups. Another study tackled the sensitive issue of the impact of new constraints, which had been imposed on domestic intelligence-gathering beginning in the late 1970s, on the ability of authorities to prevent acts of terrorism and apprehend terrorists. By studying the intelligence-collection techniques that had been used successfully under the old rules, then applying the new constraints, RAND's research did show that there had been a significant impact. Many of the old successes could not have been repeated under the new rules. However, despite the increased limitations on intelligence-gathering, the volume of domestic terrorism in the United States had declined for broader social and political reasons. Hence, the tradeoff between the threat terrorists posed to society and the civil liberties that the increased constraints were intended to protect seemed tolerable. Clearly, however, investigations of "terrorist" activity moved from preventive to reactive.

This issue arises again as we contemplate the possibilities of terrorist use of weapons of mass destruction. The record of terrorist apprehension in the United States is a very good one, but faced with a credible threat of mass destruction, a frightened population will demand prevention, which in a panic situation could imperil civil liberties. The likelihood of overreaction increases if the authorities have absolutely no sources of intelligence. The challenge is to strike the balance between prudence and paranoia. How? Research can make people smart, but not wise.

It is reassuring to see occasional arrests of individuals plotting to carry out terrorist actions, albeit on lesser charges of weapons possession or conspiracy. Although inherently difficult to prosecute,

such cases demonstrate that intelligence capabilities are not entirely moribund.

Should the United States deal with terrorism as crime or as a mode of warfare? The two concepts have entirely different operational implications. If terrorism is considered a criminal matter, we are concerned with gathering evidence, correctly determining the culpability of the individuals responsible for a particular act, and apprehending and bringing the perpetrators to trial.

Dealing with terrorism as a criminal matter, however, presents a number of problems. Evidence is extremely difficult to gather in an international investigation where all countries might not cooperate with the investigators. Apprehending terrorists abroad is also difficult. Moreover, the criminal approach does not provide an entirely satisfactory response to a continuing campaign of terrorism waged by a distant group, and it may not work against a state sponsor of terrorism.

If, on the other hand, we view terrorism as war, we are less concerned with individual culpability. Proximate responsibility—for example, correct identification of the terrorist group—will do. We may be less fastidious about evidence: It need not be of courtroom quality; intelligence reporting will suffice. The focus is not on the accused individual but on the correct identification of the *enemy*.

A military response demonstrates resolves, reassures wavering allies, galvanizes other governments to action, and can temporarily disrupt terrorist operations. Whether military force is an effective deterrent is problematical. Military force also has its drawbacks. It can result in friendly casualties and the death of innocent bystanders; it can create terrorist martyrs and provoke retaliation; it can alienate world public opinion and reduce international cooperation; and declaring war on terrorist leaders puts the United States into open-ended asymmetrical contests.

The utility of military force as a response to terrorism has been debated in government since the early 1980s, and has been discussed in several RAND publications. Ian Lesser tackles the subject again in the present volume, focusing on the role of the Air Force, which is appropriate, given the U.S. government's preference for air power and cruise missiles as the weapon of choice. Lesser's key contribu-

tion is the development of a strategic framework for assessing counterterrorism efforts—something not previously done.

One can be critical. Over a quarter century of research, yet terrorism persists. It is because terrorism is not a problem that awaits a solution but rather, as *Countering the New Terrorism* emphasizes, it is a changing threat. There is still much to be done.

Terrorism has become an increasingly dangerous threat to U.S. security. U.S. officials now describe it as a "war." We need to further examine the requirements of force protection and the utility of military force as a response to terrorism or to preempt the possible development and use of weapons of mass destruction by terrorists or state actors, an issue underlined by the recent U.S. bombings in Afghanistan and Sudan.

Despite successes in foiling some terrorist attacks and in apprehending individual terrorists, the United States still needs to formulate a clear, realistic, and realizable national strategy that must evolve with a changing terrorist threat, something more than the policy *desiderata* that still pass for policy.

We need to monitor terrorist trends and focus resources on the most likely developments while avoiding costly efforts dictated by peripheral alarms.

Our current arsenal seems inadequate. We need to develop new and more-effective diplomatic tools, and conventional and unconventional ways to combat terrorism. And we need to better integrate counterterrorism with other aspects of U.S. strategy.

Terrorism research is fragmented. Responding effectively to the threat of terrorism requires coordination among numerous government agencies. The machinery and procedures have been created to coordinate the government's response to terrorist incidents, but apart from a committee to review government-sponsored research on terrorism, there is no coordinated research effort.

We need to better understand the underlying conflicts that give rise to terrorism and to systematically exploit the experiences gained by the United States in managing and resolving conflicts that have led to terrorism in the Middle East, Northern Ireland, Bosnia, and Kosovo.

The United States has variously employed sophisticated diplomacy, the manipulation of political and economic payoffs, the threat of force, the application of military power, and monitoring assistance to end terrorist struggles and to prevent new "Palestines." There is much to be learned here. *Countering the New Terrorism*, in my view, makes a significant contribution to our understanding of these issues, but in the enduring task of combating terrorism, it is not likely to be the last installment.