Terrorist psycho-logic: 
Terrorist behavior as a product
of psychological forces

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In the preceding chapter, Martha Crenshaw examines the proposition that terrorist reasoning follows logical processes. This chapter on terrorist psychology takes no issue with the proposition that terrorists reason logically. On the contrary, it argues for a special logic that characterizes terrorists' reasoning processes, a logic from which this chapter draws its title — "terrorist psycho-logic." The chapter does take significant issue, however, with the propositions that terrorists resort to violence as a willful choice and that terrorism as a course of action is an intentional choice selected from a range of perceived alternatives. Rather, it argues that political terrorists are driven to commit acts of violence as a consequence of psychological forces, and that their special psycho-logic is constructed to rationalize acts they are psychologically compelled to commit. Thus the principal argument of this essay is that individuals are drawn to the path of terrorism in order to commit acts of violence, and their special logic, which is grounded in their psychology and reflected in their rhetoric, becomes the justification for their violent acts.

Considering the diversity of causes to which terrorists are committed, the uniformity of their rhetoric is striking. Polarizing and absolutist, it is a rhetoric of "us versus them." It is a rhetoric without nuance, without shades of gray. "They," the establishment, are the source of all evil, in vivid contrast to "us," the freedom fighters, consumed by righteous rage. And if "they" are the source of our problems, it follows ineluctably, in the special psycho-logic of the terrorist, that "they" must be destroyed. It is the only just and moral thing to do. Once the basic premises are
accepted, the logical reasoning is flawless. Shall we then conclude, because their reasoning is so logical, that terrorists are psychologically well balanced and that terrorist campaigns are the product of a rationally derived strategic choice?

There is, of course, no necessary relationship between emotional health and logic. Some delightfully happy and psychologically well-balanced persons are utterly unable to track their way through a syllogism. And the tight, logical structure of the well-organized paranoid is a marvel to behold. In a jewel of a treatise, the mathematical psychologist E. von Domarus¹ delineated the logical structure of delusions, a logic he named "paleologic." The fixed delusional conclusion of the paranoid schizophrenic woman that "I am the Virgin Mary" is drawn from a paleological syllogism: "I am a virgin. Mary was a virgin. Therefore I am the Virgin Mary." Hers is a conclusion in search of evidence, driven by her anguished search for meaning, by the lonely torment within. Similarly, the balance of this chapter will attempt to demonstrate that the fixed logical conclusion of the terrorist that the establishment must be destroyed is driven by the terrorist's search for identity, and that, as he strikes out against the establishment, he is attempting to destroy the enemy within.

If we dismiss the notion of a terror network with a central staff providing propaganda guidance, what accounts for the uniformity of the terrorists' polarizing absolutist rhetoric? The author's own comparative research² on the psychology of terrorists does not reveal major psychopathology, and is in substantial agreement with the finding of Crenshaw³ that "the outstanding common characteristic of terrorists is their normality." Her studies of the National Liberation Front (FLN) in Algeria in the 1950s found the members to be basically normal. Nor did Heskin⁴ find members of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) to be emotionally disturbed. In a review of the social psychology of terrorist groups, McCauley and Segal⁵ conclude that "the best documented generalization is negative; terrorists do not show any striking psychopathology."

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Nor does a comparative study reveal a particular psychological type, a particular personality constellation, a uniform terrorist mind. But although diverse personalities are attracted to the path of terrorism, an examination of memoirs, court records, and rare interviews suggests that people with particular personality traits and tendencies are drawn disproportionately to terrorist careers.

What are these traits, these personality characteristics? Several authors6-7 have characterized terrorists as action-oriented, aggressive people who are stimulus-hungry and seek excitement. Particularly striking is the reliance placed on the psychological mechanisms of “externalization” and “splitting,” psychological mechanisms found in individuals with narcissistic and borderline personality disturbances.8 It is not my intent to suggest that all terrorists suffer from borderline or narcissistic personality disorders or that the psychological mechanisms of externalization and splitting are used by every terrorist. It is my distinct impression, however, that these mechanisms are found with extremely high frequency in the population of terrorists, and contribute significantly to the uniformity of terrorists’ rhetorical style and their special psycho-logic.

In this regard, it is particularly important to understand the mechanism of “splitting.” This is believed to be characteristic of people whose personality development is shaped by a particular type of psychological damage during childhood which produces what clinicians have characterized as narcissistic wounds. This leads to the development of what Kohut9 has termed “the injured self.”

Individuals with a damaged self-concept have never fully integrated the good and bad parts of the self. These aspects of the self are “split” into the “me” and the “not me.” An individual with this personality constellation idealizes his grandiose self and splits out and projects onto others all the hated and devalued weakness within. Individuals who place high reliance on the mechanisms of splitting and externalization look outward for the source of difficulties. They need an outside enemy to blame. This is a dominant mechanism of the destructive charismatic,10 such as Hitler, who projects the devalued part of himself onto the interpersonal environment and then attacks and scapegoats the enemy with-

out. Unable to face his own inadequacies, the individual with this personality style needs a target to blame and attack for his own inner weakness and inadequacies. Such people find the polarizing absolutist rhetoric of terrorism extremely attractive. The statement, “It's not us—it's them; they are the cause of our problems,” provides a psychologically satisfying explanation for what has gone wrong in their lives.

And a great deal has gone wrong in the lives of people who are drawn to the path of terrorism. Research in the field of political terrorism—if field it is—continues to suffer from a paucity of data to satisfy even the minimal requirements of social scientists. Perhaps the most rigorous and broad-based investigation of the social background and psychology of terrorists was conducted by a consortium of West German social scientists under the sponsorship of the Ministry of the Interior.11 Published in four volumes, the two volumes of particular value for our attempts to understand the psychological foundations of terrorism are the second,12 which is concerned with a social-psychological examination of the life course of terrorists, and the third,13 which addresses terrorist group processes.

The social scientists examined the life course of 250 West German terrorists, 227 left-wing and 23 right-wing. Their analysis of the data from their study of the left-wing terrorists from the Red Army Faction and the 2 June Movement is particularly interesting. They found a high incidence of fragmented families. Some 25 percent of the leftist terrorists had lost one or both parents by the age of fourteen; loss of the father was found to be especially disruptive. Seventy-nine percent reported severe conflict, especially with the parents (33 percent), and they described the father, when present, in hostile terms. One in three had been convicted in juvenile court. In general, it was the authors’ conclusion that the group of terrorists whose lives they had studied demonstrated a pattern of failure both educationally and vocationally. Viewing the terrorists as “advancement oriented and failure prone,” they characterized the terrorist career as “the terminal point of a series of abortive adaptation attempts.”

Although the study is interdisciplinary and comprehensive, it is subject to criticism because of the lack of a control group, and it is not clear to

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what degree the statistics cited are found in the West German population at large. However, the findings from clinical interviews and memoirs do tend to confirm the sociological impressions just cited. In his psychoanalytically oriented interviews of incarcerated Red Army Faction terrorists, Bollinger14 found developmental histories characterized by narcissistic wounds and a predominant reliance on the psychological mechanisms of splitting and externalization.

To be sure, each terrorist group is unique and must be studied in the context of its own national culture and history. It would be extremely unwise to generalize to other terrorist groups from the observed characteristics of West German left-wing terrorists. Attempting to remedy the control problem just identified, Ferracutti15 has conducted a similar study with Red Brigade terrorists in Italy, using politically active youth as controls. Although his results are not yet fully available, preliminary impressions are that the family backgrounds of terrorists do not differ strikingly from the backgrounds of their politically active counterparts. He, too, found an absence of gross psychopathology, but did observe the personality characteristics described earlier.

Clark's studies16 of the social backgrounds of the Basque separatist terrorists ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna, or the Basque Fatherland and Liberty Movement) are revealing. The Basque region of Spain is extremely homogeneous. Only 8 percent of the families are of mixed Basque-Spanish origin, and the offspring of these families are treated as half-breeds and reviled. But his studies of ETA members reveal that a much higher percentage—more than 40 percent—come from such mixed Basque-Spanish parentage, suggesting they are sociologically marginal. These outcasts may be attempting to "out-Basque the Basques" to demonstrate through their acts of terrorism their authenticity.

The social dynamics of the "anarchic-ideologues," such as the Red Army Faction in West Germany, differ strikingly from the dynamics of the "nationalist-separatists,"17 such as ETA of the Basques or the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA), as is depicted in Figure 2.1. The upper left-hand cell signifies that persons who are loyal

14See L. Bollinger, in Analysen Zum Terrorismus 3: Gruppenprozesse (Darmstadt: Deutscher Verlag, 1982).
15F. Ferracutti, "Psychiatric Aspects of Italian Left Wing and Right Wing Terrorism," paper presented to VIIth World Congress of Psychiatry, Vienna, Austria, July 1983.
to parents who are loyal to the regime do not become terrorists. The upper right-hand cell signifies that “nationalist-separatist” terrorists are loyal to parents who are disloyal to their regime; they are carrying on the mission of their parents, who were wounded by the establishment. In the lower left-hand cell, in contrast, the “anarchic-ideologues” are disloyal to their parents’ generation, which is identified with the establishment. Through acts of terrorism these anarchic-ideologues are striking out at the generation of their parents, seeking to heal their inner wounds by attacking the outside enemy. (The lower right-hand cell does not necessarily represent a subset of terrorists per se. Although it could be argued to represent fundamentalist youth who have turned from the path of modernizing parents, it could also be said to represent the dynamics of children of antiregime liberals who in their own politics have turned to hard-line conservatism.)

Although the social-psychological provenance and dynamics of the
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anarchic-ideologues and nationalist-separatists are quite different, in both cases the act of joining the terrorist group represents an attempt to consolidate a fragmented psychological identity, to resolve a split and be at one with oneself and with society, and, most important, to belong. Comparable data are not available for Shi’ite and Palestinian terrorists, but specialists who have closely followed Middle Eastern terrorist groups share the impression that many of their members come from the margins of society and that belonging to these fundamentalist or nationalist groups powerfully contributes to consolidating psychosocial identity at a time of great societal instability and flux.

In summary, most terrorists do not demonstrate serious psychopathology. Although there is no single personality type, it appears that people who are aggressive and action-oriented, and who place greater-than-normal reliance on the psychological mechanisms of externalization and splitting, are disproportionately represented among terrorists. Data indicate that many terrorists have not been successful in their personal, educational, and vocational lives. The combination of the personal feelings of inadequacy with the reliance on the psychological mechanisms of externalization and splitting leads them to find especially attractive a group of like-minded individuals whose credo is, “It’s not us—it’s them; they are the cause of our problems.”

The power of the group

Although not all the people who find their way into a terrorist group share the characteristics just described, to the degree that many in the group do, the group takes on a particular coloration. For many, belonging to the terrorist group may be the first time they truly belonged, the first time they felt truly significant, the first time they felt that what they did counted. As Bion\textsuperscript{18} has persuasively demonstrated, when individuals function in a group setting, their individual judgment and behavior are strongly influenced by the powerful forces of group dynamics.\textsuperscript{19} This is true of psychologically healthy people, including successful business executives and educators. Bion’s constructs are particularly useful in understanding the group dynamics of terrorist behavior.

In every group, according to Bion, there are two opposing forces—what Bion calls “the work group” and “the basic assumption group.” The work group is that aspect of the group that acts in a goal-directed

\textsuperscript{18} W. Bion, \textit{Experiences in Groups} (London: Tavistock, 1961).

manner to accomplish its stated purposes. But as anyone who has ever worked on a committee or task force will ruefully testify, the occasions when a group proceeds to work in a fully cooperative manner to accomplish its goals in a conflict-free manner are rare indeed. Rather, groups, in their functioning, often sabotage their stated goals. They act, to use Bion's words, as if they are operating under "basic assumptions," in what Bion calls the basic assumption group. He has identified three such psychological symptoms: the "fight-flight" group, the "dependency" group, and the "pairing" group:

1. The fight-flight group defines itself in relation to the outside world, which both threatens and justifies its existence. It acts as if the only way it can preserve itself is by fighting against or fleeing from the perceived enemy.
2. The dependency group turns to an omnipotent leader for direction. Members who fall into this state subordinate their own independent judgment to that of the leader and act as if they do not have minds of their own.
3. The pairing group acts as if the group will bring forth a messiah who will rescue them and create a better world.

If these states characterize the healthiest of groups, it should hardly be surprising that, when the group contains a disproportionate number of members who have fragmented psychosocial identities as well as a strong need to strike out against the cause of their failure, there should be an especially strong tendency to fall into these psychological postures, with extremely powerful group forces emerging. In my judgment, the terrorist group is the apotheosis of the "basic assumption" group, and regularly manifests all three "basic assumption" states.

In any assessment of the dynamics of the terrorist group it is important to differentiate among terroristisms. Both structure and social origin are of consequence. Identification of the locus of power and decision-making authority is particularly important to structural analysis.20 In the autonomous terrorist cell, the leader is within the cell, and all warts are visible. These cells tend to be emotional hothouses, rife with tension. In contrast, in the well differentiated organization, such as the Red Brigades, the action cells are organized within columns, and policy decisions are developed outside the cells, although details of implementation are left to the cells.

The differences between the social origins and psychosocial dynamics of nationalist-separatist terrorists and anarchic-ideologues have already been described. Their group dynamics also differ significantly. The

nationalist-separatist terrorists are often known in their communities and maintain relationships with friends and family outside the group. They can move into and out of the community with relative ease. In contrast, for the anarchic-ideologues the decision to cross the boundary and enter the underground illegal group is an irrevocable one, what the German scholars call “Der Sprung” (the leap). Group pressures are especially magnified for the underground group, so that the group is the only source of information, the only source of confirmation, and, in the face of external danger and pursuit, the only source of security.

The resultant group pressure cooker produces extremely powerful forces. In particular, there are pressures to conform and pressures to commit acts of violence.

**Pressures to Conform.** Given the intensity of the need to belong, the strength of the affiliative needs, and, for many members, the as-yet incomplete sense of individual identity, terrorists have a tendency to submerge their own identities into the group, so that a kind of “group mind” emerges. The group cohesion that emerges is magnified by the external danger, which tends to reduce internal divisiveness in unity against the outside enemy. “The group was born under the pressure of pursuit” according to members of the Red Army Faction, and group solidarity was “compelled exclusively by the illegal situation, fashioned into a common destiny.” Another Red Army Faction member went so far as to consider this pressure “the sole link holding the group together.”

Doubts concerning the legitimacy of the goals and actions of the group are intolerable to such a group. The person who questions a group decision risks the wrath of the group and possible expulsion. Indeed, the fear is even more profound, for, as Baumann has stated, withdrawal was impossible “except by way of the graveyard.” The way to get rid of doubt is to get rid of the doubters. Extreme pressure to conform has been reported by all who have discussed the atmosphere within the group. Bayer-Kaette has described the first meeting of a new recruit to the Heidelberg cell of the Red Army Faction. The group, which previously had targeted only identified representatives of the establishment such as

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21 Post, “‘Hostilité,’ ‘Conformité,’ ‘Fraternité.’”
24 See Baumann, in Bayer-Kaette et al., *Analysen Zum Terrorismus.*
magistrates and policemen, was discussing a plan to firebomb a major department store. Horrified, the new recruit blurted out, “But that will lead to loss of innocent lives!” A chill fell over the room, and the new recruit quickly realized that to question the group consensus was to risk losing his membership in the group. What an interesting paradox, that these groups, whose ideology is intensely against the dominance of authority, should be so authoritarian and should so insist on conformity and unquestioning obedience.

The group ideology plays an important role in supporting this conformity-inducing group environment. When questions are raised, the absolutist ideology becomes the intellectual justification. Indeed, the ideology becomes, in effect, the scripture for the group’s morality. In the incident just described, the leader of the cell patiently explained to the new recruit that anyone who would shop in such an opulent store was no innocent victim, but was indeed a capitalist consumer.

Questions have often been raised as to how people socialized to a particular moral code could commit such violent antisocial acts. Insofar as an individual submerges his own identity into the group, the group’s moral code becomes each individual’s moral code. As Crenshaw26 has observed, “The group, as selector and interpreter of ideology, is central.” What the group, through its interpretation of its ideology, defines as moral becomes moral—and becomes the authority for the compliant members. And if the ideology indicates that “they are responsible for our problems,” to destroy “them” is not only viewed as justified but can be seen to be a moral imperative.

The studies of charismatic religious cults by Galanter et al.27,28,29 contribute usefully to our understanding of the dynamics of the terrorist group. These researchers found that the more isolated and unaffiliated the new members, the more likely they were to hold assiduously—and unquestioningly—to their group membership, because it provided the members’ sole definition of themselves, their sole source of support.

Moreover—and this is particularly important for the question of the capacity of terrorists to commit antisocial acts—these researchers found that the greater the relief the new cult recruits felt on joining, the greater the likelihood they would engage in acts that violated the mores to which they had been socialized. Galanter and associates studied the willingness of 1,410 members of the Unification Church to accept the Reverend Moon's choice of marital partner, assigned in a bizarre mass engagement ceremony in Madison Square Garden. Those who depended entirely on the cult for their sense of emotional well-being accepted the Reverend Moon's selection without question.

Pressures to commit acts of violence. In attempting to clarify whether acts of political violence are chosen as a willful strategy or are products of psychological forces, it is of central importance to evaluate the goal of the act of violence. The rationalist school, as explicated by Crenshaw in the previous chapter, would aver that in an unequal political struggle, acts of political terrorism become an equalizer. These acts of political violence call forceful attention to the group's legitimate grievances and are designed to have an impact on a much wider audience than the immediate target of the violence. Schmid has observed that it is very important to differentiate between the target of the violence and the target of influence; what distinguishes terrorism from other forms of political violence is the differentiation of the target of violence, that is, the innocent victim or noncombatant, from the target of influence, that is, the broader public or elite decision makers. But implicit in this line of reasoning is an assumption that the political violence is instrumental, a tactic to achieve the group's political goals, to help it achieve its cause.

The position argued in this essay—that political violence is driven by psychological forces—follows a different line of reasoning. It does not view political violence as instrumental, but as the end itself. The cause is not the cause. The cause, as codified in the group's ideology, according to this line of reasoning, becomes the rationale for acts the terrorists are driven to commit. Indeed, the central argument of this position is that individuals become terrorists in order to join terrorist groups and commit acts of terrorism.

That is surely an extreme statement, but since we are discussing political extremism, perhaps that excess can be forgiven.

Consider a youth seeking an external target to attack. Before joining the group, he was alone, not particularly successful. Now he is engaged in a life-and-death struggle with the establishment, his picture on the “most wanted” posters. He sees his leaders as internationally prominent media personalities. Within certain circles, he is lionized as a hero. He travels first class, and his family is provided for should his acts of heroism lead to his death as a martyr to the cause. Heady stuff that; surely this is the good life, a role and position not easily relinquished.

Now if authenticity is defined as “revolutionary heroism,” then this definition has important implications for the outcomes of debates and personal rivalries within the group. A leader who advocates prudence and moderation is likely to lose his position quickly to a bolder person committed to the continuation of the struggle. Indeed, on the basis of his observations of underground resistance groups during World War II, Zawodny has concluded that the primary determinant of underground group decision making is not the external reality but the psychological climate within the group. He has described the unbearable tension that builds when a resistance group is compelled to go underground. For these action-oriented people, forced inaction is extremely stressful. What, after all, are freedom fighters if they do not fight? A terrorist group needs to commit acts of terrorism in order to justify its existence. The wise leader, sensing the building tension, will plan an action so that the group’s members can reaffirm their identity and discharge their aggressive energy. Better to have the group attack the outside enemy, no matter how high the risk, than turn on itself—and him.

This suggests a dynamic within the group pressing for the perpetuation of violence and leading toward ever-riskier decisions. Indeed, the terrorist group displays, in extreme degree, the characteristics of “groupthink” as described by Janis. Among the characteristics he ascribes to groups demonstrating “groupthink” are the following:

1. Illusions of invulnerability leading to excessive optimism and excessive risk taking
2. Presumptions of the group’s morality
3. One-dimensional perceptions of the enemy as evil
4. Intolerance of challenges by a group member to shared key beliefs.

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This research on "groupthink" relates to another important body of research bearing on risky decision making by groups. Using U.S. military officers as subjects, Semel and Minix\textsuperscript{33} found that groups regularly opted for riskier choices than those that would have been preferred by individuals.

This momentum toward ever-riskier choices has important implications for mass-casualty terrorism. Analysis conducted for the International Task Force for the Prevention of Nuclear Terrorism\textsuperscript{34} leads me to conclude that the internal constraints against the unthinkable prospect of nuclear terrorism are weakening, that although it is still in the realm of "low probability-high consequences," the prospects are increasing, and a major contribution to that increase are the risk-increasing group dynamics of the terrorist group.

The threat of success

If the cause were indeed the cause, should not its achievement lead to the dissolution of the terrorist groups committing violent acts in its name? Consider the Basque separatists. Many would say that they have achieved a significant proportion of their goals. While they are not a separate nation, to be sure, the degree of autonomy they have achieved is remarkable. Why does ETA not clap its collective hands in satisfaction, declare victory, dissolve the organization, and go back to work in the region's factories? ETA roars on. Its goals are absolutist, and nothing less than total victory will suffice, say its leaders, although many Basque politicians feel their actions are now counterproductive.

On a number of occasions Yasir Arafat, by divesting himself of the radical left wing of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and pursuing a political course, accepting United Nations Resolution No. 242 and acknowledging Israel's right to exist, would have placed major pressure on Israel and might well have achieved the beginnings of a partial territorial solution to the Palestinian problem. But on each of these occasions, when push came to shove, he opted to be leader of the unified Palestinian resistance movement, yielding to the radical left, who were


committed to winning their struggle through violence. The espoused cause—a Palestinian homeland—did not seem to be the PLO’s primary goal. Similarly, on how many occasions in Northern Ireland, on the threshold of a move to conciliation, did the proponents of violence so act as to perpetuate the cycle of violence?

For any group or organization, the highest priority is survival. This is especially true for the terrorist group. To succeed in achieving its espoused cause would threaten the goal of survival. This fact suggests a position of cybernetic balance for the group. It must be successful enough in its terrorist acts and rhetoric of legitimation to attract members and perpetuate itself, but it must not be so successful that it will succeed itself out of business. As can be seen in the case of Basque separatist terrorism, the absolutist quality of the ideology, and its associated rhetoric, guarantees that the terrorist group can always find plausible justifications for continuing its struggle. However great the degree of autonomy granted to the Basques by the Spanish central government, ETA’s absolutist demands will not be fully satisfied until ETA forces the central government to grant the Basque people their total independence as a separate nation, something Madrid is not about to do.

Policy implications

If the foregoing conclusions concerning the individual, group, and organizational psychology of political terrorism are valid, what are the implications for antiterrorist policy?

Terrorists whose only sense of significance comes from being terrorists cannot be forced to give up terrorism, for to do so would be to lose their very reason for being. Indeed, for such persons, violent societal counterreactions reaffirm their core belief that “it’s us against them and they are out to destroy us.”

Because terrorisms differ in their structure and dynamics, policies should be tailored to the specific group, which must be understood in its historical, cultural, and political context. As a general rule, the smaller and more autonomous the group, the more counterproductive is external force. When the autonomous cell comes under external threat, the external danger has the consequence of reducing internal divisiveness and uniting the group against the outside enemy. The survival of the group is paramount because of the sense of identity the group provides. Violent societal counterreactions can transform a tiny band of insignificant persons into a
major opponent of society, making their "fantasy war," to use Ferracuti's apt term, a reality. One can indeed make the case that, left to their own devices, these inherently unstable groups will self-destruct.

Similarly, for the terrorist organization for which violence is defined as the only legitimate tactic for achieving its espoused goals, outside threat and a policy of reactive retaliation cannot intimidate the organizational leaders into giving up their acts of political violence. To do so would be, in effect, to commit organizational suicide.

For complex organizations in which an illegal terrorist wing operates in parallel with a legal political wing as elements of a larger, loosely integrated organization, the dynamics—and the policy implications—are again different. (The Basque separatist movement is a good example.) In such circumstances, if the overall organizational goals are threatened by societal reactions to terrorism, it can be argued that internal organizational pressures can operate to constrain the terrorist wing. However, insofar as the terrorist group is not fully under political control, this is a matter of influence and partial constraint, for, as has been noted earlier, ETA has its own internal dynamics and continues to thrive, despite the significant degree of separatism already achieved.

For state-supported and state-directed terrorist groups, the group is, in effect, a paramilitary unit under government control. Terrorism is being employed as an equalizing tactic in an undeclared war. In this situation, the individual, group, and organizational psychological considerations just discussed are not especially relevant. The target of the antiterrorist policy in this circumstance should not be the group per se but the chief of state and the government of the sponsoring state. Because the survival of the state and of national interests are the primary values for that state, there is a rational case to be made that retaliatory policies can have a deterring effect, at least in the short term. In the long run, however, youthful witnesses to retaliatory violence may themselves later join the terrorists' ranks.

Just as political terrorism is the product of generational forces, so, too, it is here for generations to come. There is no short-range solution to the problem of terrorism. Once an individual is in the pressure cooker of the terrorist group, it is extremely difficult to influence him. In the long run, the most effective antiterrorist policy is one that inhibits potential recruits from joining in the first place.

Political terrorism is not simply a product of psychological forces; its central strategy is psychological, for political terrorism, is, at base, a par-
particularly vicious species of psychological warfare. Until now, the terrorists have had a virtual monopoly on the weapon of the television camera, as they manipulate their target audiences through the media. Terrorists perpetuate their organizations by shaping the perceptions of future generations of terrorists. Manipulating a reactive media, they demonstrate their power and significance and define the legitimacy of their cause. Countering the terrorists' highly effective media-oriented strategy through more effective dissemination of information and public education—de-romanticizing the terrorists and portraying them for what they are—must be key elements of a proactive policy.

As important as it is to inhibit potential terrorists from joining terrorist groups, it is equally important to facilitate their leaving those groups. The powerful hold of the group has been detailed. By creating pathways out of terrorism, we can loosen that grip. Amnesty programs modeled after the highly effective program of the Italian government can contribute to that goal. Reducing support for the group—both in its immediate societal surroundings and in the nation at large—are further long-range programs worth fostering. In the long run, the most effective way of countering terrorism is to reduce external support, to facilitate pathways out of terrorism, and, most important, to reduce the attractiveness of the terrorist path for alienated youth.