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## CHAPTER ONE

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# Introduction and Overview

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## INTRODUCTION

The spectacular attack on the United States on September 11, 2001 brought with it an explosion of books and articles on terrorism in both the academic and popular print media. These writings have focused on political and religious aspects of terrorism; the vulnerability of domestic targets; intangibles like the ethics of preemptive wars to remove governments that support terrorism and ethical aspects of conducting the War on Terror and defending the homeland; and sensational tangibles: dominant figures like Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein; bombings of buildings, trains, buses, places of worship, and public markets; assassinations, videotaped beheadings, and other carnage. These vivid images and narratives on terrorism occupied center stage in the presidential election campaigns of 2004 and 2008 and have dominated discussions at the United Nations and other international forums, as well as in major news media venues.

Vivid images and sensational narratives capture the public's attention, but they stifle the objective, comprehensive discussion essential to the process of informed democratic choice and the preservation of legitimacy of governmental action. The accumulated writings and discussions on terrorism have been strikingly deficient in one important respect: Although often acknowledging that acts of terror are acts of crime in most places where they occur, most writings overlook the substantial body of pertinent knowledge that has been produced over the past several decades by criminologists and criminal justice scholars on the nature and sources of crime and aggression, and what

works to prevent crime and intervene effectively against it. This book aims to help address that deficit.

Terrorism – the use of force against innocent people, usually with a political or religious motive, and typically aimed at producing widespread fear – is fundamentally an extreme form of aggression. Criminologists may not speak with the same authority as political scientists on political aspects of terrorism, but terrorism manifests in every civil society as *crime*. We would do well to attempt to understand how assessments of policies aimed at preventing terrorism and responding to it can benefit from the substantial body of knowledge that has accumulated on the causes of aggression and crime – and how terrorism differs from other expressions of aggression and types of crime. In doing so, we can be aware of the limits of knowledge about aggression generally and establish programs for building a coherent and comprehensive base of knowledge about terrorism. The more fundamental aspects of terrorism related to aggression may in fact be more powerful and useful in helping us understand terrorism and terrorists than the political and religious explanations that have dominated the discussion to date.

## OVERVIEW

The book is organized in three sections. The first addresses the nature of terrorism and what it has in common with – and how it differs from – aggression generally and crime in particular. The second section addresses strategies and policies for intervening against terrorism, with a focus on means of preventing it by protecting targets and intervening against aspiring terrorists. The third section takes a forward-looking perspective, asking: What sorts of data and thinking are needed to advance what we currently know about the problem of terrorism?

Any discussion of terrorism cannot escape the vexing definitional question: Precisely what is terrorism? The simple fact is that there is no single universally agreed-upon definition of “terrorism” or “terrorist”. We have provided a fairly general definition – again, the use of force against innocent people with a political or religious motive, typically aimed at producing widespread fear – but we must emphasize that

this does not settle the matter. Indeed, several of the chapters that follow consider alternative definitions of terrorism, and each arrives at a slightly different place. This might be unsatisfactory for an agency with a particular responsibility for terrorism, but the consideration of alternative definitions is a question of central interest to any thoughtful inquiry into terrorism, same as with crime in general. Thorough understanding of terrorism and the effects of responses to it must include an inquiry into how agents responsible for protecting against terrorism choose among alternative definitions of terrorism, how those choices affect agency behavior, and how alternative intervention strategies affect terrorism in different ways. Several of the chapters address these questions, and it is both interesting and useful to see what results from the various approaches.

In the next chapter, David Klingler and Charles “Sid” Heal set a foundation for the volume by noting fundamental commonalities and distinctions among various forms of aggression: crime, terrorism, and warfare. They observe that indiscriminate use of the term “terrorism” obfuscates meaningful discussion and jeopardizes the prospects for effective policy. Klingler and Heal then draw on a range of examples – from interpersonal conflict to conflicts between nation states – to examine how different manifestations of aggression pose different challenges for scholars who seek to better understand the nature of aggression and for policy makers who aim to find ways of preventing the various forms of aggression and minimizing its social harm when it does occur. They recognize that terrorism has morphed into a form of aggression that defies conventional frameworks for dealing with it, and suggest that a serviceable old international framework for dealing with violence be revitalized.

In Chapter 3, Wayman Mullins and Quint Thurman address the meaning and causes of the pathology of terrorism and how to identify it, which, they argue, are the first steps in assessing, predicting, and ultimately intervening effectively against terrorists – much as the successful physician treats medical pathologies by first identifying them and understanding their sources. The problems in thinking about terrorism begin with disagreement on definition; with variation as to whether threats without actual violence should be included; whether the emphasis should be on motives or behaviors, the selection of targets

or the nature of offenders; whether an act in question is a crime or an international political matter; and many other factors. Most definitions agree that terrorism involves violence against noncombatants, committed by nongovernmental actors, operating in groups or individually, usually with an intention to intimidate whole communities or societies with the threat of more violence to follow, to serve a political agenda. The authors argue that the choice of definition can drive the implications for how to intervene, and different agencies with different roles and strengths will settle on different definitions to serve their own agendas. This creates conceptual confusion, but it also creates institutional flexibility that may bring more than compensating benefits. Some distinctions are without a substantive difference, but not all. The key is to ensure that important decisions, ones that alter policy or commit resources, are mindful of the distinctions among terrorism definitions, especially when those are substantive.

In Chapter 4, Bryan Vila and Joanne Savage use an ecological perspective to help understand terrorism. Noting that terrorism is often portrayed as fundamentally different from other crimes, they observe that such a distinction is unwarranted from the perspective of the evolutionary ecological school of criminology, which treats all crime as the use of behavioral strategies involving force, fraud, or stealth to obtain valued resources. They hold that characterizing terrorism as beyond crime is even dangerous: It may foster the mistaken belief that only the most drastic measures can counter terrorism. The evolutionary ecological perspective deals systematically with biological, social, and cognitive factors that influence human development over the life course at both micro and macro levels. It also explains why effective long-term crime control strategies must strike a balance between opportunity reduction, deterrence, and developmental interventions.

Vila and Savage use this framework as a basis for developing an array of theory-driven counterterrorism policies. Using a game-theoretic model, they argue that terrorism can be effectively controlled using the same balanced approach that works for countering other types of crime. The approach considers the sources of the terrorist's motivation, how the costs and consequences of employing terrorist strategies are assessed, and the dynamics that create opportunities for committing terrorist acts. The authors argue that overdramatizing terrorist

threats and overemphasizing punitive and protective counterstrategies without addressing the root causes of terrorism is counterproductive; that wars on terror, like wars on crime and drugs, are likely to fail because the metaphor is inconsistent with human behavior and with human nature.

Chapter 5, written by gangs authority David Curry, considers the similarities and differences between gangs and terrorist cells. Noting the long academic tradition of research on gangs, Curry observes that gang crime is situated somewhere between terrorism and crime more generally defined, and that social control theories on the formation of terrorist groups and gangs reveal an etiological kinship. Both types of groups spring from social settings where personal ties dominate instrumental ties. Distinctions are no less significant. Terrorist organizations and street gangs are not equivalent in their respective capacities for collective action. Gang organizational resources do not make them desirable allies for terrorist groups. An “alliance” model envisages a formal or functional link between terrorist groups and street gangs as groups. An alternative model for links between terrorist organizations and gangs is a “recruitment” model, in which street gang members constitute a pool of potential recruits for terrorist organizations or networks. The typical law enforcement response to gangs has been founded on an overestimate of the organizational capacity of gangs. Curry recommends an alternative to the related tendency to overreact to benign groups: create institutional structures that induce more positive, less punitive intervention strategies.

Chapter 6, by Rita Simon and Adrienne Tranel, addresses the role of women in terrorism in light of the dramatic changes that have occurred globally in the status of women in legitimate affairs and in the technology and politics of terrorism. Considering contemporary research, aggregate data, and individual stories and accounts of female terrorists, Simon and Tranel find women active in terrorist groups and with more reasons than in earlier times to join these organizations. They examine the roles that women play in terrorist groups today and their common demographic characteristics. They find a myriad of reasons for this participation, including societal marginalization, individual choice, the need to avenge the deaths of loved ones, and active recruitment by terrorist organizations, among other

factors. Although research on the role of women in terrorism is scant, Simon and Tranel provide case study insight into how women adopt roles in terrorism. Their analysis points to the need for research and policy specialization on women in terrorism.

Part II of the anthology, discussing intervention strategies against terrorism, opens with Chapter 7, on the applicability of crime-prevention strategies to terrorism, by Cynthia Lum and Christopher Koper. They consider the similarities and differences between crime and terrorism, and between crime prevention techniques and terrorism intervention, as well as the legal and constitutional concerns about applying preventive techniques to counterterrorism and the costs and benefits of such endeavors. They identify a major barrier to the application of conventional crime prevention strategies to terrorism: the extreme rarity of terrorist events and enormous social consequences of successful attacks, which distort the cost-benefit calculus and render many of those strategies inappropriate for the development and deployment of counterterrorism efforts.

In spite of these limitations, Lum and Koper see a sufficiently large overlap between terrorism and crime – terrorism, after all, involves serious crimes – to regard many crime prevention approaches to be applicable to the problem of terrorism. They go about this search for relevance by organizing the primary aspects of crime prevention in a matrix, categorizing the wide array of programs that qualify as crime prevention, and then exploring whether, where, and when counterterrorism efforts might correspond and what sort of guidelines should be used to determine the appropriateness of the fit.

Chapter 8, by James P. Lynch, describes opportunity theory – an important model for crime and crime prevention programs – and its relevance to the problem of terrorism. He begins by noting that opportunity theory is a framework for thinking about crime that is more applicable to crime prevention than prior criminological theories, which focused more narrowly on the motives and behaviors of offenders. Opportunity theory expands the analysis of crime by addressing targets of opportunity over time and place. Lynch sees opportunity theory as limited in preventing ordinary crime, and to have even more limited applicability for preventing terrorism, largely because of greater difficulties in predicting individual acts of terrorism.

Noting the centrality of fear to terrorism while being an unintended consequence of most street crime, Lynch sees prospects for using opportunity theory to make terrorist targets less attractive by making greater use of fear-reduction strategies, to study more carefully the relationship between opportunity reduction and the fear of terrorism. These prospects are enriched by discontinuities between fear and risk of victimization, namely the fact that fear is often high where risk of victimization is low. Unlike acts of terrorism, the relative rarity of which limits research opportunities, there is an abundance of fear, more than enough to study using opportunity theory and other frameworks of analysis.

Chapter 9, by Tomas Mijares and Jay Jamieson, focuses on fundamental distinctions and similarities between domestic police and military forces in terms of both their intelligence and enforcement operations. They observe that domestic policing has been designed constitutionally to be distinct from the military and subject to different systems of accountability, but that historically, external pressures – legal, cultural, technological, political, and other – have induced adjustments to make each institution more responsive to new and emerging threats. Vietnam brought changes in security institutions and policies in the 1960s and 1970s, and terrorism is doing the same today. Mijares and Jamieson describe the dominant influences that are inducing changes in policing and the military, and how each is responding. They observe that increasing mutual dependencies necessitated by terrorism can be fruitfully managed without damaging the firewall that separates domestic responsibilities for security from military ones.

In Chapter 10, Jack Greene discusses developments in policing initiated in the 1980s and 1990s, especially community-oriented policing (COP) and problem-oriented policing (POP), and how these developments intersect with the era of terrorism that burst forth on September 11, 2001. Noting that, like politics, all terrorism is ultimately local, he observes that COP and POP may help relieve some of the new burdens that have fallen on municipal police departments as they have added to already unreasonable expectations – imposed by notions of zero tolerance, wars on drugs and crime, and so on – new responsibilities for protecting the homeland against terrorists.

In the process, police now must attempt to reconcile the dilemmas of the means and ends of community- and problem-oriented policing with the new challenges posed by terrorism: local versus federal core interests, security versus liberty, crime versus extra-criminal aspects of terrorism, and intelligence gathering and analysis, among others.

Greene observes that the greatest threat of terrorism to policing in America may be to police legitimacy. He concludes that the opportunities for COP and POP to relieve this constellation of burdens and elusive goals are limited, but that prospects for productive applications of enlightened, democratic policing are nonetheless viable and more than worthwhile pursuing. Especially pertinent is the need to clearly specify federal versus state and local roles in policing for terrorism. Whereas federal agencies have the mandate for and general acceptance of an intelligence role, local police do not, and exercising such a role has implications for local police civic legitimacy. Alternatively, local police have important roles to play in responding to federal intelligence and in mitigating terrorism events once they happen.

In Chapter 11, Jean-Paul Brodeur lays bare the problems, both conceptual and institutional, of “connecting the dots” of security intelligence data. He observes that in the domain of terrorism prevention, the dot-connection metaphor is both apt and misleading. Security intelligence – much like the information gathered by criminal investigators – is derived from bits of disparate data, not homogeneous dots, often collected from a myriad of sources. It is then analyzed so that the signals of relevant information can be separated from the noise of the erroneous and irrelevant, and so that sense can then be made of the remaining signals about particular threats. The challenge is to establish *which* dots are pertinent, *how* they relate to one another, and the *implications* of these associations. The intelligence process involves the collection of the data and establishment of its reliability, the analysis needed to make connections between related items of information and assess the threats, and then the sharing of these assessments with the people on the ground who need to and can act on the information.

Brodeur recognizes the 20–20 hindsight fallacy: Even under an ideal intelligence system, using perfect logic and the best information available, retrospective analysis of intelligence failures tends to



overlook the impossibility of protecting all targets, that with a virtually infinite array of vulnerable targets, a sufficiently large number of carefully planned attempts to attack them will guarantee that a few will succeed under “perfect storm” conditions. He goes on to argue that some major intelligence failures of recent years are different, including 9/11. Intelligence lapses that have allowed for calamitous terrorist attacks derive first from failures in basic problem formulation and logic skills, as well as differences in the cultures and respective roles of policing and national security intelligence. The former is a public process that prizes transparency, and the latter is a secret process that prizes security. The result is unwillingness of federal intelligence authorities to share essential intelligence information with other agencies, including guardians on the ground who need the information. The problem is exacerbated by failures to make effective use of the information that is shared.

Chapter 12, by Brian Forst, addresses the “demand” side of terrorism: fear. He observes that most of the public attention and policies on terrorism are directed at terrorists and extremists – how dangerous and evil they are and how vulnerable we are to attack. Little attention is paid to the prospect that we may attract terrorist attacks, first by fearing terrorism well beyond the extent to which we fear other, more dangerous hazards, and then by behaving in ways that provoke previously benign groups to be inclined to support or participate in terrorism against the United States. Criminologists have learned that fear of crime may impose costs on society that exceed those of crime itself, and that this fear is manageable. Fear is a goal of terrorism and may, when provoked, stimulate incentives for extremists to commit further acts of terrorism. This aspect of terrorism makes the management of fear more critical than in the case of other crimes. Hence it is essential that we understand the anatomy of fear and develop tools for managing the public’s fear of terrorism.

Forst reviews the literature on our understanding of the nature and sources of fear. Noting that fear may be excessive or insufficient, he considers its relationship to objective and subjective risks, how subjective assessments of risk can become greatly misaligned with objective assessments, and the social costs of the misalignments. He then considers the role of media and politics in creating and perpetuating

the misalignments and explores the prospect of a public policy focus on fear that might satisfy both liberals (by reducing overemphasis on hard power, which may create more terrorists than it destroys) and conservatives (by reducing misallocations of scarce resources induced by fear). He concludes by speculating as to how public and private institutions may be induced to better manage public fear through revamped systems of accountability and data, and what research is needed to support such systems.

In Chapter 13, A. Daktari Alexander raises critical questions about ethnic profiling associated with the war on terror: What are the bases for racial and ethnic profiling? Are they legitimate? How does profiling work? What can be said about its effectiveness? Its fairness? How does it affect the persons profiled? He identifies a set of important hypotheses that are testable and very much in need of scrutiny. He concludes by noting the disturbing lack of transparency associated with racial and ethnic profiling, and the need to learn more about the full effects of racial and ethnic profiling on the well-being of minorities and on our collective security.

In Chapter 14, Edward Maguire and William King address the daunting challenges of coordinating some 700,000 local police officers with 12,000 FBI agents and several thousand more federal law enforcement agents within the Department of Homeland Security umbrella. Noting the considerable differences in culture, role, training, skills, and experience between federal and local law enforcement agents, the authors address the practical administrative and logistical realities that interfere with the goals of effective communication and cooperation among counterterrorism networks.

Maguire and King observe that the job of homeland security gets done through a complex mix of networks – horizontal and vertical; local, national, and international; public and private. They offer frameworks of organization theory and social network theory to help sort out and overcome the barriers to effective interagency coordination. They conjecture that the explosion of interagency and intergovernmental task forces in law enforcement since 9/11 could represent a fundamental shift in the structure of American law enforcement, especially as local police are siphoned off to participate in joint counterterrorism task forces and indoctrinated away from local community needs.