



Terrorism and Societies

Stephen Vertigans

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Chapter 1

Terrorism Yesterday and Today: An Introduction

Introduction: Terrorism Today

Since 8.43am on 11 September 2001, when the first plane hit the North Tower of the World Trade Centre in New York, impressions of terrorism across the world have been dominated by 'Islamic' terrorism.¹ The nature of this and subsequent attacks in places like Bali, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Spain and England have contributed to groups associated with al-Qa'ida² dominating how people think about terrorism. A plethora of research into the attacks, and government and public reactions, has been published as part of the continuous expansion of materials within the study of terrorism reported by Rapoport in 1988.³ The concentration on Islamic terrorism is perhaps understandable within the West whose citizens could now be subjected to attack anywhere in the world by transnational militants. That these fears are often grossly inflated does little to dampen anxieties. Focusing on contemporary transnational groups has also been accompanied by a tendency to examine the phenomena in isolation. Ring-fencing al-Qa'ida and associated groups is a process that is common within the study of terrorism. Consequently, with some notable exceptions,⁴ there

1 There is considerable debate over the extent to which the attacks can legitimately be described as Islamic because the views and actions of the perpetrators are considered to be against religious teachings. However, the famous W.I. Thomas (1928) adage is adopted that if people think something is real then it is real in its consequences. From this perspective, if the attackers think they are Muslims, then it is not the responsibility of social scientists to prove otherwise.

2 'Groups associated with al-Qa'ida' is referring to collections of people who are either part of al-Qa'ida or belong to groups that are part of a loose association who share some similar ideological interpretations, aims and tactics.

3 Although as Alexander (2002) remarks with respect to the analysis of al-Qa'ida-related groups, and which could equally apply to the majority of publications over the last 40 years, this expansion of quantity has not been accompanied by an improvement in quality. Levels of knowledge and understanding remain underdeveloped.

4 For example, Hoffman (1998) and Laqueur (2001a) provide an anatomy of historical and contemporary trends in terrorism. Della Porta (1995), MacDonald (1991), Taylor (1998, 2000) and Varon (2004) undertake research into 'red' urban terrorism in Germany and Italy, a range of female terrorists, republican and loyalist terrorism in Northern Ireland and the American Weather Underground and German Red Army Faction respectively. Juergensmeyer (2003a) and Stern (2003) have studied religious groups that have used terror methods. Finally, some studies examine the use of suicide terror by different groups, for example, Reuter (2004) and Bloom (2005).

has been limited comparative analysis undertaken between groups, and important similarities and differences have been underdeveloped and their significance not fully realised. When seeking to understand the societies and social processes that contribute to people joining different terror groups in different contexts, then there is a glaring lack of juxtaposition. This book intends, somewhat tentatively, to begin the process of filling the comparative void. As Rapoport's comments indicate, and the recent expansion of publications emphasises, to produce a definitive comparative study of terrorism would be a massively ambitious project. By comparison, this book is more modest in its aims. Certain prominent terror groups associated with 'Red' (Leninist–Maoist–Marxist interpretations), nationalist, racialist and far right, religious and religio-national groups have been selected as case studies. Histories of radicalism within societies, and broader movements, from which the groups emerged, their discourses, contexts in which ideologies were developed and socialisation processes and experiences that contributed to the radical transformation of individuals are discussed and compared. It is hoped that this will identify commonalities and distinctions between terror groups and in particular the processes and interactions with societies that contributed to people becoming members. By doing so levels of knowledge and understanding should be improved about routes into terrorism and the societies in which they occur.

To help achieve these aims, the subject matter that is to be discussed needs to be established. In other words, what exactly is terrorism?

Defining Terrorism

All studies of terrorism are potentially problematic and this one is no different. It is a subject that is notoriously emotive and value-laden, particularly after September 2001. Even to find agreement on what terrorism actually means, how it differs from other forms of violence, whether non-violent members or people who use the threat of violence should be included, or understanding what attacks are trying to achieve, has proved impossible, to date. Consequently various studies describe different aspects of behaviour and discourse. Schmid's (1984) study of over 100 definitions exemplifies this diversity. He concluded that none of those examined were likely to be broadly acceptable to the multitude of interested parties. And of course this fluidity and amorphousness makes comparative analysis even more difficult, particularly as Oliverio and Lauderdale (2005: 2) point out, 'terrorism is in the process of being negotiated and renegotiated within the changing boundaries of territories, nations and states'. Terrorism, both as a concept and form of political action, is not static. Consequently definitions of terrorism tend to give an indication both of the definers' underlying values and historical location and reflect perceptions and experiences of power and domination. Defining terrorism is therefore based upon subjective judgement about the legitimacy of certain actions and the extent to which they are justified. Influences include the extent that the interpreter is a victim, witness, distanced observer or seeks to prevent attacks. The most contentious debate concerns the extent to which the term is applied to 'violence from below' as part of an asymmetrical conflict, or is extended to incorporate government actions against

targeted populations under the cover of warfare or counter-terrorism. Oliverio (1998) details how governments seek to use their powers to define and impose moral boundaries around the concept. These definitions emphasise non-nation-state actions, thereby excluding government activities which are categorised as the morally superior warfare or counter-terrorism. To help develop greater agreement over definitions, Schmid (1993) suggests terrorism is described according to the methods used, which restricts opportunities to justify, condemn or legitimise through moral judgement or political discourse. Within this book, terrorism is defined as the targeted and intentional use of violence for political purposes. The definition can be interpreted to include the actions of both activists and governments. This book focuses upon non-governmental actions, not as a result of perceiving government actions differently, but as a pragmatic decision based upon the much greater availability of information about non-state acts of terrorism. It is acknowledged that much greater empirical investigation is required into processes through which members of the armed forces are socialised to commit, organise or order similar acts.

Categorising individuals involved in acts of terrorism is equally problematic. Many groups implement processes in order to attain political, economic or social change with a vast array of practices, and maybe are embedded within communities or have established their own centres. For example, Aum Supreme Truth in Japan was engaged at different stages in proselytising, commune-building, business enterprises, spiritual enlightenment, democratic elections, self-help and the release of the chemical nerve agent sarin. Terrorism is therefore only one component of group activities and some individuals are engaged in both violent and peaceful activities.⁵ Similarly many individuals only partake in violence-related activities, whether it is planning, coordinating or embarking on attacks, for a minority of their time, combining their political commitment with other responsibilities. For instance, many members of terror groups are engaged in peaceful roles or periods of inaction with groups, family, employment, friends, and so on. Consequently, to label such people 'terrorist' as the determining characteristic of their identities negates other aspects of their consciousness. Individuals become isolated from militant social groupings and collective ideologies. And such an approach fails to address the personable characteristics frequently applied to even the most notorious of convicted 'terrorists'.⁶ In other words, if people who plan or commit acts of terrorism, and have the ability to inspire others, are to be fully understood, there is a need to move beyond the association of people with despicable characteristics and inherent evil. Instead individuals need to be established within broader social processes and relationships. And as Horgan (2005: 22) explains, it is more useful if definitions of terrorism focus upon the methods, as opposed to thinking that the use of terrorism necessarily reflects

5 In the case of the Aum Supreme Truth cult, the overwhelming majority of members had no knowledge about terror activities and were only engaged in peaceful behaviour.

6 For example, Timothy McVeigh has been described as personable and easy-going both by people who knew him before he blew up the federal building in Oklahoma and after his subsequent arrest (Michel and Herbeck, 2001; Serrano, 1998). The four bombers behind the 7 July 2005 London bombings were similarly described as 'loving', 'very kind', 'nice lad' and 'good man'. As individuals they were considered 'normal' (BBC, 2005a).

something (perhaps something ‘special’) that one ‘is’. Consequently, rather than use the term ‘terrorist’, the book will refer to variations of people ‘becoming engaged and/or involved in doing terrorism’ (ibid: 81) or being members of terror groups.

In this book, a description is adopted that seeks to provide a balanced and detached approach. Of course, complete objectivity is impossible. At the very least the parameters of the definition imply certain values and impressions. It is acknowledged that these interpretations will not be universally accepted, but while readers may disagree with the boundaries being drawn, they will hopefully be able to understand the application of the term and be clear about the behaviour that is being described. During the discussion about the case studies, the application of the concept of terrorism will further help to clarify the constitution of this form of political violence.

Challenging Stereotypes

Analysis of terrorism is often heavily influenced by the acts committed and in particular the outcomes. Horgan (2005: 48) points out that ‘by focussing on ... the outcome of terrorist events, we achieve a distorted view of both the terrorist and the process of terrorism more broadly’. Attacks against citizens, in particular, tend, as Taylor and Quayle (1994) remark, to offend popular senses of fairness and justice that make it difficult to examine the phenomena with objectivity and rationality. Seemingly indiscriminate bombings in particular challenge perceptions of ‘civilised behaviour’ and result in the perpetrators being considered to be fundamentally different in ways that make it easier for broader populations to understand the actions. Consequently, there has been a plethora of studies which emphasise abnormalities and/or seek to compartmentalise individuals committing the attacks within separate categories from the normative mass of people. Academic and political support for single routes into terrorism or typical personalities is still prominent. Many studies remain strongly influenced by popular perceptions associated with poverty, stunted employment prospects and mental instability, but as the following discussion highlights, these are deeply problematic.

Within psychological studies, various attempts⁷ to identify a ‘terrorist’ personality have claimed to find generic characteristics. Numerous other studies have shown that such distinguishing features do not exist because of the diversity both in the routes into terrorism and in the types of people involved (Reich, 1998). Within psychology and psychiatry, explanations are popular that orientate around cognitive, affective and impulse controls and more explicitly pathological disorders and paranoia.⁸ These opinions have permeated mainstream terrorism studies. Laqueur (2001b: 30) exemplifies the perceived importance of mental illness when arguing that

⁷ Researchers examining core personality characteristics include Akhtar (1999), Lanceley (1981), Pearlstein (1991), Post (1998), Russell and Miller (1977), Sullwold (1981) and Volkan (1997).

⁸ Corrado (1981), for example, argues that psychopathy is the most common characteristic associated with terrorists. Both Cooper (1977) and Pearce (1977) have dismissed ‘terrorists’ as psychopaths. Other studies include Harvey (2002), Rosenberger (2003) and Salib (2003).

‘madness, especially paranoia, plays a role in contemporary terrorism ... Madness plays an important role, even if many are reluctant to acknowledge it’. Todd (2003: 3) exemplifies common perceptions when describing the 11 September attackers as ‘mentally disturbed’. However, such statements lack substantive evidence. For example, Silke (2003) points out that researchers like Cooper (1977) and Lasch (1979), who had claimed to have identified psychological abnormalities within the Red Army Faction and Canadian Front de Libération du Québec respectively, had not met the people they were diagnosing. By comparison, Rasch (1979) and Morf (1970) interviewed members within the respective groups and failed to find any personality disorders. These findings are replicated across interviews, discussed in the following chapters, with members of republican, loyalist, militias and racials, ‘reds’, religio-nationalists and religious groups who have been convicted of terror offences, or their former neighbours, friends and family members. Certainly, people who belong to groups are often inclined to think of themselves as standard citizens. Colvard’s (2002: 2) analysis of research draws similar conclusions: ‘People who are willing to use violence in the service of a political idea are usually rather ordinary human beings ... not devils or psychopaths but people who may base their actions on morality, commitment, and group loyalty, which in other circumstances we would consider admirable.’ As one convicted republican told Taylor (2000: 8), ‘an IRA man’s normal just like everyone else’. And in response to Taylor’s follow-up question, that ‘normal’ people did not kill other people, he replied that was because they did not live in Northern Ireland (*ibid*). The behaviour and beliefs of the group members therefore have to be considered within the contexts in which they develop.

Similarly, studies⁹ into suicide/martyrdom attackers who most challenge Western perceptions of violence, life and individualism, have found little evidence of psychological coercion or abnormality. Instead, Hassan (2001) remarked on the normality of the individuals carrying out attacks and reflected Crenshaw’s (2003a) observation, first made 20 years previously, that normality is the most notable common characteristic of individuals within terror groups. At a pragmatic level, individuals with mental illness or discernible abnormalities would not make effective, reliable, organised perpetrators of violence or militant recruiters. During interviews with loyalist paramilitaries in Northern Ireland, one respondent pointed out that psychopaths would ‘stand out like a sore thumb and everyone would know them’ (Taylor and Quayle, 1994: 107). If terror organisations are to be successful, they need members who can operate in highly pressurised environments, can think logically, communicate coherently and operate clandestinely. Consequently they would not want to recruit unreliable, undisciplined people with or without mental illnesses. The lengthy recruitment processes of many groups would result in the non-selection of such individuals. This is not to claim that terrorism is normal. It is not, although the extent to which it is considered abnormal will depend on the regularity of attacks, depth of popular support and perceived risk of injury or death. Nor is it being argued that people within terror groups are not subjected to psychological pressures. Clearly the roles involve considerable responsibilities and dangers, and often require clandestine lifestyles that limit opportunities to lead ‘normal’ lives.

9 For example, Bloom (2005), Hassan (2001), Reuter (2004), Victor (2004).

Certainly membership can have a detrimental impact on psychological well-being, particularly in relation to the violence, that makes it more difficult to understand terrorism and the people who commit the attacks. Horgan (2005: 52) argues that there has been a tendency to ignore ‘the processes whereby members become brutalized and more committed as a *result* of membership and increased psychological commitment to the group’. Involvement is therefore accompanied by potential psychological difficulties and dilemmas, but this is very different from arguing that people who join are in some ways psychologically deviant. Nor are the processes of psychological confrontation and re-adjustment restricted to group membership. For example, in Northern Ireland it is becoming increasingly apparent that many people who leave groups can experience considerable identity problems without the social relations and frames of justificatory reference associated with their previous activities.

Routes into terrorism are often considered to be the outcome of brainwashing. Hudson (1999: 35) reflects a popular perception when he argues that terror groups ‘attempt to brainwash individual members with their particular ideology’. At present, this is noticeable within analysis of Islamic terrorism where the role of religious schools, medressas, has been considered instrumental in processes of radicalisation. For example, Sofsky (2002: 181) has argued that in these institutions brains are ‘washed empty and then refilled with the truisms of the secret order’. Kepel (2004b: 105) argues that, in some instances, al-Qa’ida is directly involved, claiming that the resolve of the September 2001 attackers could be attributed to the effectiveness of the organisation’s brainwashing methods. However, Sageman (2004) has addressed the contemporary usage of the concept. He points out that the term is a value judgement used to describe how individuals join a singularly unappealing organisation. In other words, many people who cannot understand the appeal of such groups assume that members must have been forcibly indoctrinated.

Yet the available research provides little evidence that individuals had been coerced into joining. This type of single explanation ‘obscures the fact that the paths that lead up to them, and the indoctrination of the attackers are quite different in each case’ (Reuter, 2004: 9). This is not to say that some people have not been coerced, but the lack of evidence seems to suggest that they are, at most, a small minority. It is not even feasible to suggest that peoples’ processes of radicalisation are the inevitable outcome of dominant socialising agents. As Connolly and Healy (2003: 50) explain with respect to children’s views in Northern Ireland:

the sectarian attitudes that can be found to be emerging at this age [7 to 8] do not simply reflect the influence of parents and older siblings ... the children are not just uncritically repeating what they have been told by others but are actively involved in constructing an understanding that can help them comprehend what is going on around them.

In other words, the children’s interpretations are heavily influenced by their own experiences of life in their respective communities and exposure to the ‘other’. Similarly, older individuals consciously select messages, symbols, ideologies and ways of behaving which they consider the most appropriate for them from a range

of alternatives. For a minority of people, these values and practices become part of militant consciousness.

Reductionism can also be found within political and sociological explanations. For example, materialist explanations are frequently applied across the multifarious militant groups, with poverty widely considered to be a causal factor. Poverty has been strongly linked with terrorism, most recently within the American government's dual approach to tackling terrorism. Alongside the military campaign, the US Department of State's *American National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* (2003: 22) aims to 'diminish the underlying conditions that terrorists seek to exploit' and has become widely associated with addressing poverty. The central problem of this laudable aim is that there is only limited evidence of involvement within terror activity of people from poverty-stricken backgrounds. Explanations that focus upon poverty are only partially correct and are as flawed as theories that seek to explain wider protest movements and the use of collective violence using the same crude causal analysis (Tarrow, 1989). As Tilly (2004: 12) remarked, in respect to the work of Stern, 'no single set of cause-effect propositions can explain terrorism as a whole'. Consequently, the 'War on Poverty' can only have at best a limited impact on terrorism, because the multiple other reasons why people commit acts of political violence are not being addressed. At a basic level, people living in conditions of abject poverty concentrate their resources on daily survival and have neither the time, contacts nor frequently the required capabilities to join terror groups. Like other organisations operating within complicated environments and complex networks that rely on technical, technological, communicative and organisational skills, logistical planning and strategic thinking, terror groups also prefer to recruit well-educated, resourceful people who can use their initiative and integrate within different settings.

Materialism does feature within terror groups' discourse but generally people living in poverty are not actively engaged. Perhaps surprisingly, it is indigenous terror groups across the West and Japan that are most associated with campaigns to redress economic inequalities and injustice, attacking their wealthy societies. Numerous references can be found to poverty within ideological declarations, most notably from the 'red' organisations, but the rallying calls are frequently raised by well-educated members of the middle classes. Other studies¹⁰ have extended the argument beyond absolute poverty within the 'relative deprivation' and 'frustration-aggression' theses. Within these approaches, individuals are attracted by militant groups because their ambitions are frustrated by limited prospects or their own capabilities. Many react according to the 'frustration-aggression' thesis aggressively. This line of argument continues to be popular and can be found within contemporary analysis of resurgent Islam generally and 'Islamic' terrorism in particular.¹¹ However, as with other generic explanations, this thesis fails to account for variations within the militant groups. Bjørgo (2005: 4) explains that

10 Examples include Davies (1969), Friedland (1992), Gurr (1970), Heitmeyer (2005) and Kampf (1990).

11 Ayubi (1991), Hudson (1999), Mehmet (1990), Post (2005) and Roy (1994) provide examples of this approach.

‘relative deprivation had differing impacts on the well-educated, upper-middle class leaders and on the less well-educated, lower-class foot soldiers’. Support for terror attacks has also been shown not to be inevitably associated with the lower classes. For example, Krueger and Malecková (2003b) found that agreement for the use of terrorism against Israeli targets was highest amongst Palestinian students, farmers and professionals, and lower amongst the unemployed. And as they comment with regard to Hudson’s (1999) claim that members of groups in less developed countries are recruited largely from the poor, this is becoming increasingly questionable, even at the level of ‘foot soldiers’. Although it is possible to argue that relative deprivation has impacted upon some middle class members who have been unable to achieve their career ambitions, many people who have committed acts of terrorism were radicalised before they actively sought employment or became successful lawyers, doctors, managers, teachers, lecturers, entrepreneurs and so on.

Throughout the different case studies, evidence will be provided that challenges the stereotypes. Instead, it shall be argued that people who undertake terror activities rarely show signs of mental illness, have little direct experience of poverty and are often from relatively wealthy and/or educated backgrounds. For Hoffman (1998), many articulate and thoughtful individuals have reluctantly entered terrorism only after lengthy analysis and consideration. The route into violence is usually preceded by the perceived exhaustion of other processes of political protest by the individual, group or their predecessors. In other words, ‘terror is not the outflow of a uniform mentality but a strategy employed by a wide array of actors whose motives, means, and organization vary greatly’ (Tilly, 2005: 24). Consequently this book focuses upon societies and routes into terrorism that are multi-layered processes based around discourse, experiences, activities, relationships, structures, events and communication. These processes result in individuals sharing aspects of collective consciousness within groups but not personality types.

The Terrorism Framework

Three stages within the processes of terror activity can be discerned (Horgan, 2005). The first stage relates to the psychological and social processes through which people join terror groups. This is followed by membership of the group and the activities they undertake. Lastly, most members will at some stage leave the group or the organisation will disband. The main focus of this book is upon the first stage, although aspects of membership are explored. All three stages require greater investigation. By concentrating upon the processes, circumstances and influences behind people becoming part of these organisations, this book is driven to understand how and why this happens. This will require aspects of, and routes into, terror groups to be identified, similarities and differences to be highlighted and their significance explored. Because the selected groups represent a number of types of terrorism (see below), a range of cross-cutting dichotomies is explored: secular

and religious; national and transnational; left and right wing; and pro-state and anti-state.¹² A number of common questions are raised towards this end:

- Which ideologies do terror groups hold? How do these ideologies conflict with mainstream values?
- Why do people want to join terror groups?
- What is it about societies and social contexts that contribute towards peoples' radicalisation?
- How important is history in the formation and longevity of terror groups?
- Are there any particular events or triggers that lead to people joining terror groups?
- Does radicalisation occur instantaneously or is it a gradual process?
- Which socialising agents are contributing to the internalisation processes that are resulting in individuals' consciousness shifting towards terrorism?
- Are the processes through which people become involved in religious terror groups similar to those for secular groups?
- Why do the majority of people, who share a number of experiences with those who commit acts of terrorism, not become part of the same groups?

To answer these questions a multi-dimensional approach to terrorism is adopted. Particular interest is placed upon the ideologies of the relevant groups in order to understand their discourses and in particular what they are trying to change and achieve, and why. Militant ideologies are important because they seek to rationalise behaviour, appeal to potential members and, as Melucci (1990: 6) comments, they are 'one of the main tools which can be used to guarantee integration' within groups. Rival ideologies are also important in the potential challenge to the 'other' discourse or conversely the extent to which more consensual aims and ambitions have been delegitimised through political, economic and cultural changes. Developing upon this aspect, it is also important to gain more information about levels of motivation that lead to people joining groups and committing acts of terrorism, asking why people join, what inspires them at individual and/or social levels to want to bring about change or what attracts them to the ideology or group. There is therefore an interplay between group ideology and individual consciousness which develops through the social interaction between discourse and/or members and potential new recruits; interplays that are embedded within social contexts.

Across historical and contemporary social contexts, it will be argued that groups' discourse and strategies are influenced by developments within wider settings. For example, the potentialities provided by globalisation and decisions to belong to, and depart from, terror organisations are heavily influenced by the local, national or international context that people experience, witness or are notified about, and

12 Because of the criteria for selecting the terror groups, lone bombers like the Unabomber, Theodore John (Ted) Kaczynski, or single issue groups like those associated with the pro-life movement in America are not included. The pro-life groups have been extremely important but are not included because of limitations in the range of their discourse and the current diminution of their violent potential as a consequence of growing political support for their aims.

the discrepancies they perceive between realities and discourse. The local setting is also instrumental in deciding strategies, gauging the extent of public support and assessing the impact of actions upon that support. As Pedahzur (2004) remarks with respect to people who commit suicidal acts of terrorism or acts of martyrdom, but which applies to all those willing to undertake violent political attacks, individual feelings and experiences cannot be examined in isolation from the broader context. Consequently, it is essential to understand what it is about the social environments and in some instances the impact of globalisation that causes an 'incompatibility problem' (Vertigans, 2003) with national and transnational ideologies. Conflict can ensue that crucially impacts upon individuals and provides the reference framework for trigger experiences or events that can result in radicalisation. For example, the civil rights movement in the United States inspired movements in other countries while the American war in Vietnam created considerable anger across the United States and other parts of the world. When these two influences were experienced in certain localised conditions in Germany, Italy and Japan, they contributed towards the emergence of 'red' terrorism.

Finally, if people are to become aware of some contextual problems, internalise ideologies and their consciousness shifts to militancy, then they have to be informed about disputes, controversial events, policies and other possibilities. This happens through socialisation and often occurs gradually, with individuals exposed to values and practices within communities in the case of many nationalist terror groups like the IRA, ETA and Hamas, and through friends in the case of groups like the Japanese Red Army, Red Brigades in Italy, the al-Qa'ida allegiances and some racialisists in America. Particular attention is placed upon the roles of the family, peers, media and education.

Family members include parents, siblings and extended relations like grandparents and cousins. These are relationships that have traditionally been the most influential in the development of individual consciousness, transmitting basic skills, intergenerational loyalties, norms and values from an early age. However, that role has gradually diminished and while it remains prominent within nationalist struggles, other agents are becoming more influential across different contexts.

By comparison, the significance of the media¹³ as a socialising agent is considered to have increased dramatically over recent generations. The media's relationship with terrorism is much debated, with media organisations, governments and terror groups wanting to achieve different, often conflicting, objectives through communications. It can be seen as the focal point for a communicative battleground because, as Ben-Yehuda (2005: 61) remarks, opposing sides 'use the media as a main arena to clash and clarify their moral boundaries'. And as Oliverio (1998) notes, the media is also a medium through which history is construed and produced. Taylor (1988) observes that the nature of terrorism often prevents groups from consensual political participation, although Hamas' electoral success highlights that engagement is possible within broadly supportive communities. Most groups, however, have to find alternative methods of communicating with supporters and potential members.

13 Particular attention is placed upon the roles of television, radio, the Internet, books, journals and ideological publications.

Informal social networks, especially through peer relations (see below) provide this function, as does the media on a much larger scale. Jenkins (1975: 16) has outlined how ‘terrorist attacks are often carefully choreographed to attract the attention of the electronic media and the international press’. A leading figure of the Algerian anti-colonial group, FLN, Ramdane Abane, exemplified this when explaining the reasoning behind urban terrorism: ‘Is it preferable for our cause to kill ten enemies in an oued [dry river bed] of Telergma when no one will talk about it or a single man in Algiers which will be noted the next day by the American press?’¹⁴ By committing high profile attacks, groups within liberal democratic societies with a free press are guaranteed media coverage that informs people about the acts committed and their immediate impact. And across the world, the Internet has greatly enhanced access to information, in even the most authoritarian nation-states.

Reportage is likely to be portrayed negatively by mainstream media outlets. But groups have multi-layered hopes that the images will offset damaging publicity. Attacks are often designed to promote capabilities, raise awareness of the issues they are seeking to address, mobilise people attracted by their potential and extend the fear of attack far beyond those people who directly experienced or are likely to be exposed to acts of terrorism. As Hoffman (1998) notes, directing acts of terrorism towards a wider audience than those directly affected is not unique to this era. For example, early terror groups like the Jewish Zealots and Muslim Assassins committed attacks that were designed to have repercussions beyond the immediate victims. But the transformation in mass communications over the last 200 years has enabled the news to become instantly accessible to a global audience. The impact of events like the 1972 Munich Olympics and 2004 Beslan school hostage crises, the kidnapping of the former Italian Prime Minister Aldo Moro in 1978, bombs in Lebanon during the 1980s and plane hijackings in America in September 2001 have been given added significance by the media and attracted vast audiences. Viewers have suffered bouts of anxiety, and Sun Tzu’s¹⁵ famous proverb, to ‘Kill one, frighten 10,000’, can now be multiplied by millions.

It is also important to acknowledge that the media contributes indirectly to the appeal of militant groups and processes of radicalisation. Through reporting events, problems and crises, the media, aided by processes of globalisation, have increased the availability of information in other parts of the world and contributed to more people having access to methods of communication. The following case studies indicate that for some people these images and narratives can contribute to the delegitimisation of consensual ideologies and the legitimisation of militant discourse. And the development of the Internet, allied to more traditional methods of media publications, has provided contemporary militant groups like those associated with al-Qa’ida and racialism in America with new opportunities to communicate stories and often graphic pictures to audiences through processes that are difficult to censor.

Educational institutions, both state-operated and privately owned, have recently been attributed with considerable importance, particularly within explanations for

14 The quote is reported in Hoffman (1998: 61).

15 Sun Tzu was a Chinese military strategist who lived 2500 years ago.