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Terrorism as predictable backfire

On the face of it, terrorism seems to be an incredibly counterproductive method of action.[1] When violent attacks are made against innocent civilians, the usual response is revulsion and increased popular support for government action against the terrorists and those associated with them. In short, terrorism is almost guaranteed to backfire. This suggests the motivation for terrorism may often be something other than effectiveness.

The terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 were a challenge to U.S. corporate and military power but, rather than weakening the United States, instead had the effect of generating enormous sympathy around the world for the U.S. people and mobilizing U.S. public opinion in favour of attacks on anyone held responsible. The 9/11 attacks legitimized the unleashing of U.S. military power in ways previously only contemplated — including attacks on groups not responsible for 9/11.

The same pattern can be observed time and again in other terrorist incidents. Every Palestinian suicide bombing gives greater legitimacy to harsh policies by the Israeli government. The spectacular attacks by Chechen rebels against the Russian people have led to greater support for brutal methods used by the Russian government in Chechnya.

This pattern has prevailed for a long time. Uruguay used to be a model liberal democracy, known as the Switzerland of South America. In the 1960s, as the economy stagnated and corruption worsened, the government was challenged by the Tupamaros, a left-wing revolutionary movement. The Tupama-ros gradually escalated their tactics, eventually engaging in urban terrorism including kidnappings, bombings, and assassinations. The government used the Tupamaro attacks as a pretext for heavy-handed repression, including police searches, arrests, and torture. The actions of the Tupamaros, rather than leading to revolution, resulted in 1973 in the destruction of democracy and descent into repressive military rule.[2]

In some cases, terrorism seems to be successful in achieving gains for oppressed groups, as in Sri Lanka and Northern Ireland.[3] But in such struggles, there was widespread community support for the cause. The question is whether terrorism as a tactic helped or hindered the cause. As discussed later, nonviolent tactics may be more effective in achieving goals with fewer casualties along the way.

Terrorism is widely seen as an injustice, because it is a blatant violation of human rights. What is both strange and striking about terrorism is that it flouts all the techniques usually used to dampen outrage over injustice — in other words, it seems designed to backfire. Terrorism is widely perceived as unjust and it is often intended to generate attention, thus satisfying the two fundamental conditions

1. Caleb Carr, *The Lessons of Terror* (New York: Random House, 2002), argues that all forms of violence against civilians have been counterproductive throughout history.

2. See, for example, Arturo C. Porzecanski, *Uruguay's Tupamaros: The Urban Guerrilla* (New York: Praeger, 1973). After restoration of representative government in 1985, the Tupamaros became a political party. I owe this example to Andrew Mack.

3. Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Random House, 2005), argues that most suicide terrorism is part of campaigns with instrumental aims. However, he does not compare terrorism, as a tactic, with alternatives.

for backfire. Indeed, terrorism has been called "communication activated and amplified by violence."[4]

Terrorism illustrates a very different backfire dynamic than the cases described in previous chapters. In massacres, beatings, dismissals, wars, and torture, perpetrators normally do everything possible to reduce outrage from their actions. But with terrorism, all the usual rules are ignored. The whole point is to generate shock and horror.

Look in turn at each of the five methods of inhibiting outrage. First is covering up the event. Terrorists commonly carry out their actions publicly or announce responsibility for them or both. Sometimes they even claim responsibility for actions they didn't carry out. They expose their actions rather than covering them up.

Second is devaluing the target. Usually terrorists have lower status than their targets, especially when prominent citizens are kidnapped or assassinated. The potential for devaluing the targets of terrorism is not great. If al Qaeda has used derogatory labels for the victims of 9/11, these labels have no popular acceptance.

Third is reinterpreting the event. Terrorists seldom say there wasn't really a bombing or the number of dead was small or the attack was a mistake. Indeed, they are more likely to celebrate and exaggerate their attacks.

Fourth is using official processes to give the appearance of justice. Terrorists usually have no access to courts, commissions of inquiry, panels of prestigious experts, or other official processes for justifying their actions.[5] Quite the contrary: these processes are regularly used against them, for example when alleged terrorists are brought to trial.

Fifth is intimidation and bribery. The power of terrorists to intimidate opponents and critics — politicians, military forces, intelligence agencies, journalists, ordinary citizens — is seldom very great, as evidenced by the number of citizens willing to publicly denunciate terrorists and their attacks. After the March 2004 Madrid train bombings, large numbers of Spaniards joined public protests against the bombings. On the other hand, terrorists are usually more able to intimidate those who criticize them from within their own milieu. Finally, their ability to bribe targets and witnesses is limited.

In summary, terrorists have limited capacity to inhibit repugnance resulting from their actions. Indeed, they often go out of their way to magnify the sense of revulsion, for example by seeking media coverage. Therefore it is predictable that most terrorist actions backfire against the terrorists.

In the next section, I explore some possible reasons for the persistence of non-state terrorism despite its poor record of instrumental success. Then I use the same framework to examine terrorism by states, which have a much greater capacity to reduce disgust from their actions. Finally, I look at the implications for nonviolent responses to terrorism.

Why Terrorism by the Weak?

The question thus arises of why terrorists behave in a way almost guaranteed to be counterproductive. It is possible to identify several explanations.

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4. Alex P. Schmid and Janny de Graaf, *Violence as Communication: Insurgent Terrorism and the Western News Media* (London: Sage, 1982), 54. See also Brigitte L. Nacos, *Mass-Mediated Terrorism: The Central Role of the Media in Terrorism and Counterterrorism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002); Joseph S. Tuman, *Communicating Terror: The Rhetorical Dimensions of Terrorism* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003).

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5. Al Qaeda leaders have sought opinions from Islamic scholars to justify their killing of civilians, but the purpose of this seems mainly for ideological support within the network. (Note that the search for theological justification for killing is peculiar neither to terrorists nor to Islam.)

First, terrorism can be an expressive act, rather than an instrumental one.[6] It can be an expression of resistance against humiliation or degradation experienced, consciously or unconsciously, or an expression of revenge against previous acts by the opponent. Expressive acts can serve emotional purposes even when they are not effective in practical terms.[7]

Second, terrorism is a characteristically masculine act.[8] Nearly all terrorists are male. The few female terrorists — such as some Palestinian suicide bombers — are unusual and often generate disproportionate attention. Even when women are involved, men are almost always the commanders, for example the organizers of suicide bombings.

Males are far more likely than females to be involved in all types of violence, not just terrorism. Violence is seen by some — such as Frantz Fanon, theorist of decolonization — as a psychologically liberating act.[9] This psychology is, in my view, largely masculine.

Third, some terrorists and observers believe violence is an effective way of achieving their goals. The belief in the potency of violence is pervasive in many cultures, for example underlying news reports that concentrate on violence and ignore low-profile nonviolent action, in Hollywood movies where good guys use violence more effectively than bad guys, and in history books that concentrate on wars and governments. So, despite the dismal record of terrorists in promoting their causes, many of them assume violence on behalf of their cause must be effective.

Fourth, terrorism can be used instrumentally to provoke counter-violence from the state. If this counter-violence is seen as excessive — as it sometimes is — then this can create more support for the cause espoused by the terrorists. In other words, although terrorism backfires, it can lead to state repression that itself backfires by generating greater support for the cause. This sort of process, spelled out in some writing on guerrilla warfare, can be seen in many encounters, for example in British military actions against IRA terrorists and in Israeli military actions against Palestinian terrorists. The military actions are sometimes so excessive that many civilians are humiliated, injured, or killed, leading to greater support for the anti-government cause.[10] After all, state terror is sometimes motivated by revenge rather than a calculated assessment of benefits and costs.

Thus, sometimes, non-state terrorism, by provoking an even greater state terror, has the result that more people oppose the government. But a full assessment of terrorism in this scenario should look at its costs — lives, property damage, loss of civil liberties — as well as its benefits, and should also look at alternative routes to the same ends, as discussed later.

Fifth, terrorism can be part of a cycle of violence that cements the role of leaders at the expense of the success of the struggle. A viable struggle using conventional, legal, and/or nonviolent means can be derailed by a terrorist campaign that gives greater power to

6. Jessica Stern, *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill* (New York: Ecco, 2004), 7, 282.

7. Thomas J. Scheff, *Bloody Revenge: Emotions, Nationalism, and War* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1994), highlights the role of unacknowledged shame in protracted conflict, especially war.

8. Robin Morgan, *The Demon Lover: On the Sexuality of Terrorism* (New York: Norton, 1989).

9. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 94: "At the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect."

10. According to Alan Cullison, "Inside Al-Qaeda's Hard Drive," *Atlantic Monthly* 294 (September 2004), 55–70, internal communications of al Qaeda revealed that, "its aim was to tempt the powers to strike back in a way that would create sympathy for the terrorists" (58).

the terrorist leaders, most commonly when violence provokes counter-violence. For example, in Kosovo, there was a decade-long nonviolent struggle for independence. But after the Kosovo Liberation Army adopted terrorist tactics, leading to counter-violence by the Serbian rulers and then NATO intervention, the KLA gained leadership of the independence struggle.[11]

The other side of this dynamic is the value to some government leaders when opponents resort to violence. Every Palestinian suicide bombing cements the position and policies of Israeli leaders who take a punitive stance towards Palestinian aspirations. In this context, nonviolent struggle is a threat, which many people believe is why the Israeli government deported Palestinian nonviolence advocate Mubarak Awad.

Some governments — operating either in a calculating or an instinctive fashion — may provoke or fail to prevent terrorism by their opponents to both discredit the opponents and cement the government's own position. This is a version of the process of using agents provocateurs to instigate or provoke violence in protest movements in order to discredit them and justify the use of state force against them. More generally, conventional government anti-terrorism policies, by killing, subjugating, and humiliating members of oppressed groups, seem ideally designed to foster the terrorism they ostensibly seek to oppose. Violence on both sides serves to polarize the population, giving more power to leaders, whereas peaceful measures have a greater capacity to build bridges between erstwhile opponents.

There are thus many possible reasons for adopting terrorism, most of which have nothing to do with being effective in bringing about social change.

State Terrorism

This analysis so far applies only to non-state terrorists, the ones receiving the bulk of attention by governments and the media. States that exercise terror, in contrast, have a much greater capacity to inhibit outrage: they routinely cover up their actions, for example by hiding the use of torture and by using death squads and proxy armies[12]; they smear their targets as criminals or terrorists; they say they are protecting borders, dealing with crime, or countering subversion, and claim that abuses are aberrations; they often establish legal processes for their actions to give the appearance of justice; and they can intimidate or bribe those who might challenge or expose their actions. So it is not surprising that state terror, though it leads to vastly more deaths and suffering than non-state terror, seldom generates much public concern.

Consider for example the killings carried out by the military in Indonesia in 1965-1966.[13] The trigger for the launching of terror was an alleged Communist Party coup attempt against the left-wing Sukarno government, though this explanation has been disputed. In any case, the military action was justified as necessary to defend the country against a communist takeover. Western governments largely supported this interpretation, and raised little protest against the scale of killing. Those targeted were labeled communists — some, certainly, were members of the very large Communist Party, but many were not — and maligned as such. The killings thus constituted what Chomsky and Herman call "constructive terror," namely for a "good cause" and against a suitably stigmatized enemy.[14]

11. Howard Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo* (London: Pluto, 2000).

12. Bruce B. Campbell and Arthur D. Brenner, eds., *Death Squads in Global Perspective: Murder with Deniability* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

13. Robert Cribb, ed., *The Indonesian Killings 1965–1966* (Melbourne: Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1990).

14. Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman, *The Political Economy of Human Rights, Volume 1: The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism* (Montréal: Black Rose Books, 1979), 205–17.

Although the slaughter was not secret, there was no systematic documentation of what happened. Considering the vast scale of killing — many hundreds of thousands of people died — the events received relatively little international attention. This was a sort of de facto cover-up. Legal processes were not deployed against perpetrators of the slaughter, but instead used to impose lengthy prison sentences on thousands of targets whose lives were spared. It is hard to obtain evidence of intimidation and bribery used to prevent opposition, but it is reasonable to presume Indonesians who protested against the killing would have themselves become targets, whereas those who cooperated might be rewarded. Of course killing is likely to intimidate those who observe or hear about it.

Another example of state terror is Stalinism, in which many millions died in purges and prison camps and as a result of forced relocation and starvation. The scale of the terror was hidden by pervasive censorship and by disinformation, for example guiding visitors through carefully staged tours that gave the impression of a successful socialist state.[15] The victims of Stalinism were vilified as reactionaries, members of the bourgeoisie, traitors, criminals, mentally ill, and enemies of the revolution. The whole process was portrayed as one of building a socialist society. Legal processes were established to give the appearance of justice; show trials, in which dissidents were induced to confess to anti-Soviet crimes, were the visible face of false justice.[16] Internal opponents of the terror could themselves become targets, whereas support-

ers stood to gain. Fellow travelers from other countries, who whitewashed the terror, could expect to be received favorably by the Stalinist regime. Thus, the Stalinist state was able to use, with good effect, every one of the five methods for reducing outrage from injustice. On the other hand, these methods had little effect on the most vocal opponents of Stalinism, anticommunists in the West, who were unconvinced or unaffected by vilification of victims, by Stalinist justifications, by show trials, and by the potential for intimidation or bribery.

The success of states in minimizing public disgust and fury from their terrorist activities is revealed in the great discrepancy between the massive media coverage of non-state terrorism and the scant attention to state terrorism. Usually governments only condemn state terrorism when perpetrated by certain enemy states, as when the U.S. government applies the label "rogue state." The research literature on terrorism follows the agenda set by governments and the mass media, concentrating on non-state terrorism, with relatively few treatments of state terrorism.[17]

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15. Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims: Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba 1928–1978* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

16. Show trials were public and thus went against the tendency to cover up terror. A possible interpretation is that, for the state, the benefit of formal legitimacy outweighed the benefits of secrecy. Of course, in the show trials the political motivation of the charges was covered up.

17. This observation is documented in Edna O. F. Reid, "Evolution of a Body of Knowledge: An Analysis of Terrorism Research," *Information Processing and Management,* 33 (1997): 91–106. I thank Steve Wright for informing me of this reference. Treatments of state terrorism include Chomsky and Herman, *Political Economy of Human Rights*; Frederick H. Gareau, *State Terrorism and the United States: From Counterinsurgency to the War on Terrorism* (Atlanta, GA: Clarity Press, 2004); Alexander George, ed., *Western State Terrorism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991); Jeffrey Ian Ross, ed., *Controlling State Crime,* 2d ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2000); Jeffrey Ian Ross, ed., *Varieties of State Crime and Its Control* (Monsey, NY: Criminal Justice Press, 2000); Michael Stohl and George A. Lopez, eds., *The State as Terrorist: The Dynamics of Governmental Violence and Repression* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1984); Michael Stohl and George A. Lopez, eds., *Terrible Beyond Endurance? The Foreign*

Even the conventional definition of terrorism, as violence exercised by non-government groups against civilians for political ends, reflects the interests of states.[18] A less one-sided definition of terrorism, as violence against civilians used for political ends, would immediately identify states as the world's leading terrorists, through torture, warfare, and the usual range of repressive tactics.[19] The very words "terror," "terrorism," and "terrorist" thus are political labels, typically directed at opponents rather than used in a precise and consistent fashion.[20]

Nonviolent Action as an Alternative to Terrorism

Nonviolent action — including methods such as rallies, vigils, strikes, boycotts, and sit-ins — is usually far more effective than violence in generating support and bringing about desirable change. Consider for example a peaceful protest against government policies. If police beat or kill protesters, this can backfire against the government, as at Sharpeville, Dili, and Dharasana. Consider each of the five methods for inhibiting backfire.

• Many nonviolent actions are carried out in public, so covering up attacks is not easy.

• When protesters dress conventionally and behave moderately and respectfully — rather than dressing unconventionally and behaving aggressively — then it is difficult for the government to devalue them.

• When protesters explicitly commit themselves to nonviolence and are open about their goals and methods, it is more difficult for governments to be convincing with alternative interpretations.

• If, when activists come under attack, they appeal directly to the public — including allies, opponents, and third parties — they are more likely to obtain support than by relying on official channels such as making complaints about police misconduct.

• Nonviolent action is itself a stand in the face of potential intimidation.

Contrasting each of these with the corresponding method when violence is used, it is apparent that nonviolent action is far more likely to build support.

One of the keys to backfire is that people perceive violent attacks on peaceful protesters, or against uninvolved civilians, as unjust. This is the reason nonviolence proponents continually stress the importance of maintaining nonviolent discipline.[21] A breakdown in discipline — even a brief scuffle or some verbal abuse — changes the nature of the interaction and alters the perception of injustice when police use violence. In contrast, bombings and assassinations completely undercut this dynamic.

Nonviolent action has a good track record in liberation struggles.[22] The Palestinian

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Policy of State Terrorism (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1988).

18. This point is made emphatically by Edward S. Herman, *The Real Terror Network: Terrorism in Fact and Propaganda* (Boston: South End Press, 1982).

19. Eric Markusen and David Kopf, *The Holocaust and Strategic Bombing: Genocide and Total War in the Twentieth Century* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1995), point to similarities between genocide and strategic bombing. Similar parallels exist between terrorism and warfare.

20. Conor Geerty, *The Future of Terrorism* (London: Phoenix, 1997), gives a cogent critique of the content of the term "terrorism" as evolving from its origins as state terror to an incoherent expression of condemnation.

21. Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1973), 573–655, includes "solidarity and discipline to fight repression" as one of the stages in his "dynamics of nonviolent action," just before political jiu-jitsu.

22. Adrian Karatnycky and Peter Ackerman, *How Freedom is Won: From Civic Struggle to*

Liberation Organization used terrorism for years but with limited success. The spontaneous development of the first intifada in 1987 — an unarmed struggle rather than a purely nonviolent struggle — was far more effective in mobilizing support among Palestinians, winning international sympathy, and splitting Israeli public opinion. Arguably, a completely nonviolent struggle would have been even more effective.[23] Instead, in the second intifada, from 2000, suicide bombings have weakened support for the Palestinian cause.

In apartheid South Africa, armed resistance was fairly easily crushed by the state. Liberation occurred only after nonviolent action became the main mode of struggle.[24] Similarly, the East Timorese struggle for independence achieved success after the armed struggle was subordinated to peaceful protest.[25]

The failures of armed struggle are legion. Not only do many armed struggles completely fail, but in many of those that led to independence — such as in Vietnam and Algeria — the death toll was horrific.[26] Furthermore, successful armed struggle is more likely to lead to a centralization of power in the subsequent government. Armed struggle is especially ineffective against systems of representative government: there is not a single successful

case of a revolutionary overthrow. This can be understood in terms of backfire. Armed struggle has far greater legitimacy when used against repressive and corrupt regimes. Against a system based on the rule of law and majority rule, violent opposition has far less legitimacy. Indeed, it can be argued that a potent way to reduce non-state terrorism is to ensure realistic opportunities exist to work through the system (including using nonviolent action) for progressive social change.[27]

Despite nonviolent action's success record, terrorism is still attractive to many for various reasons, including those outlined earlier.

Nonviolence against Terrorism

I have argued that nonviolent methods are usually far more effective than violent methods in promoting beneficial social change, because violence commonly leads to reduced support and lower legitimacy. Therefore, one of the ways to reduce terrorism is to convince those who are considering violence as an option that nonviolent alternatives are superior. This line of argument is most relevant to reducing non-state terrorism, in other words terrorism of the weak.

Opposing state terrorism is another matter, because states have a vastly greater capacity to reduce abhorrence from their own injustices. The challenge is to make state terrorism backfire by countering each of the five standard methods of inhibiting outrage. Countering cover-up involves exposing state violence and cruelty, for example through whistleblowing, investigative reporting, courage of editors, and alternative media. Countering devaluation can

Durable Democracy (New York: Freedom House, 2005).

23. Souad R. Dajani, *Eyes Without Country: Searching for a Palestinian Strategy of Liberation* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994); Andrew Rigby, *Living the Intifada* (London: Zed Books, 1991).

24. Stephen Zunes, "The Role of Non-violent Action in the Downfall of Apartheid," *Journal of Modern African Studies,* 37 (1999): 137–69.

25. Chisako M. Fukuda, "Peace through Nonviolent Action: The East Timorese Resistance Movement's Strategy for Engagement," *Pacifica Review* 12 (February 2000): 17–31.

26. Two or three million Vietnamese died in the wars for independence and up to a million Algerians.

27. Richard E. Rubenstein, *Alchemists of Revolution: Terrorism in the Modern World* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), in a well-informed assessment of the driving forces behind terrorism — especially terrorism associated with social revolution and national liberation — supports an anti-terrorism policy that permits "young intellectuals to be reunited through collective action with their people" (236).

be done through humanizing of targets, for example through personal contact, speaking tours, and human-interest stories. Countering government interpretations — sometimes sincere, sometimes spin and lies — requires ongoing efforts to communicate understandings from the point of view of victims and critics. Countering the pacifying effect of official channels — such as investigations that whitewash what is happening — requires trusting official procedures less and exposing and discrediting processes that give a false appearance of justice. Countering intimidation and bribery involves refusing to be cowed or co-opted and exposing attempts to intimidate and bribe.

In the 1980s, the U.S. government was involved in state terrorism in Central America by assisting governments and paramilitary groups that imprisoned, assaulted, tortured, and killed opponents. The U.S. government disguised its role by use of proxy armies — notably the Contras in Nicaragua — and client governments. It stigmatized opponents as communists and terrorists and claimed all its actions were in the interests of democracy. Opponents in the United States came under surveillance and were subject to disruptive interventions by government agencies.

In opposition to this U.S. state terrorism in Central America, many U.S. citizens joined peace groups, which together became a powerful movement.[28] One of the movement's most potent challenges to the government was support for refugees from Central America, often undertaken through church networks. The stories told by these refugees to groups of church people avoided government censorship and media spin. When church people met refugees face to face, the refugees became flesh-and-blood humans rather than anonymous victims, thereby countering attempts at devaluation. The refugees' stories were a direct challenge to the government's interpretations of its policy. Seeing the way the law

was used against refugees helped to discredit formal channels for justice in the eyes of movement participants. Finally, the church and associated personal networks provided support for resisting government intimidation. The Central America solidarity movement thus was effective in countering each of the five methods for inhibiting outrage from injustice.

Conclusion

Terrorism, as a tool for bringing about a better world, has remarkably poor prospects, even when the cause being supported is a worthy one. Examining the dynamics of outrage from injustice leads to the conclusion that nonviolent action is usually far more effective than violence in challenging repression and oppression. In spite of this, violence has a continuing appeal to some challengers, for various reasons including cultural assumptions, the way violence serves to polarize populations and cement the role of group leaders, and the way violence by non-state groups serves to justify state violence.

State terrorism also has a continuing appeal to state elites, because it often achieves its immediate ends, though seldom are these supportive of values such as peace and freedom. Because terrorism so often serves the interests of powerholders in state and non-state groups — almost always male dominated, hierarchical, and secretive — it is unlikely violence will be renounced any time soon.

Nonviolent action is a continuing challenge to violent options, both as an exemplary alternative to non-state violence and as a method of opposing state violence. Examining the five main methods for inhibiting outrage over injustice can offer guidance for nonviolent campaigns, as shown by the example of the Central America peace movement. It is also possible to use this same approach to suggest ways of highlighting how nonviolence is superior to violence. This leads to the following five suggestions.

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28. Christian Smith, *Resisting Reagan: The U.S. Central America Peace Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

• Reveal the value of nonviolence by further studies of historical and contemporary use of nonviolent action.

• Counter devaluation of nonviolence practitioners by emphasizing their courage and suffering and their unwillingness to harm others.

• Counter interpretations of nonviolence as passive and ineffective by documenting its successes and documenting the failures of violence.

• Avoid relying on government support for promotion of nonviolent alternatives, and avoid assuming that government initiatives — sanctions, peacekeeping, peace plans, disarmament negotiations, treaties, laws — are going to solve problems or, indeed, are intrinsically nonviolent.

• Refuse to be intimidated by critics of nonviolence and refuse to be bought off by opportunities within the mainstream.

The backfire framework offers a way of analyzing tactics against injustice. In doing so, it reveals the shortcomings of terrorism and the strengths of nonviolent action. Nonviolent action is both an alternative to non-state terrorism, a method of challenging the social conditions that can breed non-state terrorism, and a method of challenging state terrorism. It is thus a potent but neglected anti-terrorist tool.[29]

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29. See, generally, Tom H. Hastings, *Nonviolent Response to Terrorism* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2004). There are other ways that nonviolent approaches can be mobilized against terrorism. One is to replace large, potentially dangerous technological systems, such as large power plants, dams, and refineries, with small-scale decentralized systems, such as energy efficiency and renewable energy systems, thereby reducing the vulnerability of societies to terrorists. See Brian Martin, *Technology for Nonviolent Struggle* (London: War Resisters' International, 2001). Another is to replace the present intelligence services, based on secrecy and centralized control, with agencies that openly publish their findings, thereby becoming more accountable as well as more reliable. See Brian Martin, "Nonviolence Versus Terrorism," *Social Alternatives* 21 (Autumn 2002): 6–9.