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Terrorism: the struggle against closure

Edward S. Herman

Introduction

In one important respect confronting the experts on a subject like terrorism is more difficult than on issues like fluoridation or nuclear power. On the latter topics, the public's health and safety are clearly and directly at stake, its interest in rational inquiry is evident, and anti- or non-establishment experts or spokespersons, while at a serious disadvantage in reaching the public, can sometimes be heard widely and exert influence.[1] In the case of terrorism, where mainly distant and hazy foreign enemies are claimed to be posing a threat, the public's interest is more remote, its knowledge is slight, and it is therefore more easily caught up in and manipulated by a web of symbols. For example, political leaders in the United States, with the help of the mass media, have easily mobilised a consensus on the dire threat posed by a demonised foreign enemy like Libyan leader Muammar Kadaffi,[2] that has given them political and popular backing for attacks on Libya and indirect support for larger political agendas.[3]

This consensus has been quickly established, and alternative definitions and ways of looking at terrorism have been extremely difficult to introduce into discussions of the subject. This process of "closure" occurs not only because of the symbolic power of the demonised enemy, but also because the mainstream media confine themselves to an exceptional degree to official sources and establishment experts. Given the rapid consensus, unaccredited experts would hardly be understood, would elicit protests by vocal groups (including the government itself), and their participation in public forums is often vetoed in advance by officials and establish-

ment experts, who don't like open debate any more than Commissars (see below, under "The marginalization process").

It is not at all difficult to deconstruct and reveal terrible flaws and bias in the writings of the establishment terrorism experts; their work is often extremely crude, rhetorical, and bears little resemblance to serious social science scholarship, so that refuting them generally involves merely looking at obvious sources and using the rules of logic, as I describe below. But their work, though technically vulnerable, is immune to critical attack by virtue of the closure process and exclusion of dissenting views. Neither my occasional collaborator, Professor Noam Chomsky, nor I have ever had an opinion column or article in the *New York Times*. I had a single opinion column on terrorism in my home town newspaper, *The Philadelphia Inquirer,* in 1983, after which I was blacklisted for the next decade. In the US, dissident experts on terrorism have been restricted almost entirely to reaching audiences of 50 to 2,000 in public gatherings, and by writing articles in small circulation journals and books that reach thousands, but in the aggregate with direct access to substantially less than five percent of the public.[4]

It is a cliché of the West that under free institutions, truth will eventually conquer falsehood and correct error; but in the terrorism field the question must be asked: what if unconventional views are systematically marginalized by the free institutions throughout the periods when they are socially relevant?

Terrorism and its politicization

The *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary's* definition of terrorism captures both the vagueness

and historical scope of usage of the term: "a mode of governing, or of opposing government, by intimidation." "Mode of governing" by intimidation is "state terrorism," and for a long time the word conjured up images of the mobs and guillotines of the French Revolution's "terror." In the twentieth century, the use of extreme violence by Hitler's Nazi Germany, Mussolini's Italy, and Stalin's Soviet Union reinforced the tie-in of state and terrorism.

An alternative vision of terrorism emerged in the late nineteenth century, which pointed to alienated and radical individuals and small groups who used violence to disrupt the established order. Here the image was the bewhiskered, fanatical looking, foreigner (earlier, Jewish or eastern European, more recently Middle Eastern), although the phrases "state terrorism" and "terrorist state" have remained in use. Thus, in a speech given on July 8, 1985, US president Ronald Reagan denounced state terrorism and listed the cast of villains on the world stage as Iran, Cuba, North Korea, Libya and Nicaragua.

Reagan's list illustrates the enormous politicization in the use of the word terrorism. The named villains were all states with which the US was in conflict. Nicaragua was actually under attack by a US-organised and funded proxy army (the *contras*), and was therefore a literal victim of US-sponsored terrorism,[5] but its designation as one of the world's terrorist states was presented in the mainstream media without comment in news stories and editorials. South Africa, which was supporting its own cross-border insurgents in Angola (Savimbi and UNITA) and Mozambique (RENAMO), and engaged in regular commando raids and invasions across the borders of the front line states, was not designated a terrorist state, nor was Israel, which had invaded Lebanon in 1982, maintained a cross-border proxy army in Southern Lebanon, and carried out frequent air and commando attacks on Lebanon.

As a further reflection of the politicization of usage, the Soviet Union, Syria, and Iraq were excluded from Reagan's 1985 list, although the Soviet Union's alleged centrality in world terrorism was repeatedly cited by the US Secretaries of State and Reagan himself, and was a core element in the western ideology of terrorism elaborated in the 1980s. But the US president was about to meet with the Soviet head of state, so the Soviet Union was momentarily exempted from status as a terrorist state for diplomatic reasons. Syria had just helped the US win the release of hostages in Lebanon, so it too was relieved of terrorist state onus as a reward for services rendered. Saddam Hussein's Iraq was also exempt from terrorist status, despite its ongoing aggression against Iran, employment of chemical weapons in the Iran war and against its own Kurdish people, and more general repression at home. But Iraq's aggression against Iran was approved and aided by the West, and Iraq was, like South Africa and Guatemala, "constructively engaged," not treated as an aggressor or terrorist state. It was only when it attacked the wrong victim (Kuwait) that the US officials spoke of "naked aggression," and Iraq was reclassified as a terrorist state.

It should also be noted that in western semantics, countries were not classed as "terrorist states" if they merely abused their own citizens, but only if they sponsored terrorist groups outside their own borders. Thus states like Argentina, Chile, El Salvador, and Guatemala, which carried out indigenous holocausts in the 1970s and early 1980s, were not terrorists but merely indulging in "human rights" abuses, in the memorable distinction made by Secretary of State Alexander Haig in January 1981. Haig went on to disclose that the US was going to shift its attention from "human rights" to "terrorism," claiming that the latter was a more serious problem and even an extreme version of human rights abuse. But this was a gross misrepresentation of fact. Nobody but Haig has ever claimed that terrorists in the narrow sense in which he used the term have intimidated and killed on the scale of state terrorists. The 13-year total, 1968-1980, for world-wide terrorist killings, given by the CIA in 1981, was 3,680, a figure exceeded by Guatemalan government killings by more than twenty-fold between 1978 and 1983.[6]

The fact is that the Reagan administration was actively supporting state terrorists in Argentina, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, and South Africa (among others) in the early 1980s. The Reaganite redefinition of terrorism so as to exclude the state terrorism of its clients was thus an arbitrary politicization of the word, a manipulation of language to serve an immediate political agenda. The Reaganites did want to capture *some* states in the terrorism web, however, so they retained the notion of state terrorism in the form of possible sponsorship of "international terrorism" across borders. The world's terrorists therefore included the various governments which aided individuals, groups, and insurgencies labelled terrorist, the supporting governments being "sponsors" of terrorism. This convenient lexicon permits the invidious word "terrorist" to be applied to anybody using force against the West, or helping those who do so. The latter were part of *The Terror Network,* as set forth in a 1981 book by Claire Sterling, who tied all the left and insurgent groups of the world to a Soviet support system.

A further problem for the new lexicon was how to exclude numerous groups like the Cuban refugee network in the US, UNITA in Angola, supported by South Africa and the US, the *contras* attacking "soft targets" in Nicaragua from Honduras, under US sponsorship, that fit the mainstream notion of terrorists perfectly. The Reagan administration handled this easily: those apparent terrorists supported by the US and South Africa were "freedom fighters," so that neither the US nor South Africa were terrorist states. In fact, however, the African National Congress's (ANC's) insurgency had a majority-based constituency in South Africa, whereas UNITA and the *contras* were essentially creatures of their foreign organizers and sponsors.[7]

The accommodating experts
What is most interesting is the fact that the US mainstream experts and media accepted without challenge the Reagan administration's definition of terrorism and the classification of terrorists and terrorist states, despite the obvious arbitrariness and political basis of their selections. They also accepted the implicit model of terrorism in which the Soviet Union and its leading proxy, Libya, were encouraging and sustaining terrorism in order to destabilize the western "democracies" (presumably including Guatemala and South Africa). Even the truly laughable politicization of 1985 noted earlier, where Reagan listed the US enemies of the moment, including the victimized Nicaragua, and "temporarily" excluded the Evil Empire, Syria and Iraq for good behaviour, did not evoke any comment. The terrorists were what a very opportunist state apparatus declared to be terrorists, however absurd and vacillating the designations.

Although a clear *prima facie* case can be made that the 1980s insurgents in South Africa, Guatemala and El Salvador were victims of state terrorism and that the word terrorist should have been applied to the governments of those countries, this was not done by accredited experts in the US and its allied countries. Thus, a study I and a colleague carried out of the work of 32 of the most prominent western experts on terrorism showed that 31 focused almost exclusively on insurgent terrorists — minus the Reagan-designated "freedom fighters," of course — along with the Reagan-approved list of state terrorists.[8] As another dramatic illustration of the bias of the establishment experts, we tabulated the index references to rightwing and leftwing terrorists in four major and reasonably representative establishment studies of terrorism,[9] including popular works by Sterling and by Dobson and Payne, and "scholarly" studies by Laqueur and Wilkinson.[10] We included in the listings both small-scale terrorists of the right and left (e.g. the Italian Stefano Delle Chiaie and Salvadoran Roberto D'Aubuisson on the right, Arab Abu Nidal and the US Weathermen on the left) and state terrorists allied with the West and those deemed enemies of the West (South Africa's Botha, Argentina's Videla versus Kadaffi and Castro). The aggregated totals of index references to non-Western and leftwing terrorists versus Western and rightwing

terrorists was 733 to 2! In short, the establishment experts focused unremittingly on those that fit the US and Western political agenda and simply ignored those who did not fit.

It should also be pointed out that the Soviet conspiracy model of terrorism, according to which the world's terrorism was a result of a Soviet destabilization plan and its implementation, was accepted by a solid majority of the 32 experts.[11] The "scholarly" Wilkinson, for example, castigated the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) professionals who opposed the Soviet conspiracy model and he implicitly supported CIA head William Casey's efforts to make the CIA into a completely politicized instrument of state policy in its evaluation and presentation of data. In dealing with South Africa, Wilkinson not only failed to call South Africa a terrorist state, he suggested that the "troubles" were in good part a function of Soviet meddling. He even chided Kadaffi for giving aid to Nicaragua, under US attack, and expressed the view that Britain owed the US support for its past services to the Free World, making the facts in any particular case quite irrelevant.[12]

Accreditation by conflict of interest
One of the most interesting facts about the dominant experts on terrorism is their rampant conflicts of interest. Of the 32 we studied, 22 had worked for a western government, including 7 who had worked for the US CIA. Another (but overlapping) group of 15 were principals or employees of private security firms that served a government and business clientele. Twenty-three were or had been affiliated with non-profit research and policy institutes (so-called think tanks), 13 with the big four (American Enterprise Institute, Georgetown Center for Strategic and International Studies, Heritage Foundation and the Hoover Institution). These thinktanks are closely affiliated with the government, but are largely underwritten by the corporate community. Given these relationships, the experts' identification of "terrorists" as those so regarded by their employers and funders was a foregone conclusion.

One would think that such relationships would rule out most of these experts from use by the media on grounds of conflict of interests. It works just the opposite in the West: *conflict of interest accredits the expert* because it demonstrates contacts, knowledge, and credentials. Bias is irrelevant if it is consistent with dominant mainstream opinion or reflects the opinion of very powerful people. Affiliation with a leftwing party or funding by an interest group that represented a non-establishment viewpoint would be regarded as posing a conflict problem, and if those representatives were allowed to speak at all, their conflict would be mentioned. The US public broadcasting system has barred union funding of programs as posing a conflict of interest problem, but corporate underwriting of rightwing economists and commentators is not seen as conflictual.[13] Thirty-year CIA veteran propaganda expert and former CIA station chief in Turkey, Paul Henze, was one of the leading commentators on the alleged KGB-Bulgarian plot to kill the Pope. Not only was his CIA affiliation not considered by the media to compromise his objectivity, it was not even disclosed to the public.[14]

The US system thus works with great efficiency to get over and continually reaffirm the government-establishment preferred line on terrorism. The government view is explained by officials, who focus with great indignation on their preferred terrorists, sometimes offering outright lies.[15] The experts — accredited by their conflict of interest that assures their adherence to the government view — solemnly restate the government view, and mull over why the terrorists are misbehaving and what our anti-terrorism options are. What makes the system so efficient is its uncoerced character, with the free market, not a censoring government, filtering out unwanted facts and perspectives. And the free market participants usually do their private censoring with a certain innocence, as the biases they require from their experts are seen as the mere accepting of self-evident truths from which any intelligent debate must begin.

My own writings on terrorism

My own writings began during the Vietnam War years 1965-1975. They were driven by outrage at the events in progress and the US establishment and media apologetics, which included some remarkable word usage, double standards, and rewriting of history. The US had entered Vietnamese affairs as a successor to the French colonial regime, whose return to power the US had underwritten after World War II, until the French withdrawal in 1953. In 1954 the US put into office in Vietnam a US-trained and imported puppet, Ngo Dinh Diem. Although devoid of substantial indigenous support, Diem nevertheless got 99% of the vote in a 1955 election, and used increasingly ferocious tactics and weaponry against the peasant population. Despite these considerations, the US media consistently supported the US intrusion as reasonable and democratic in intent. Although the Diem regime and the US relied on force and terror to achieve their ends from 1954-1975, the US media used the word "terrorism" only in reference to the operations of local enemy insurgents. "Sideshows" such as the invasion and intensive bombing of Cambodia and the US-sponsored coup and slaughter in Indonesia were also treated very antiseptically and without indignation, never as state terrorism.

One of my earlier books on terrorism, *Atrocities in Vietnam: Myths and Realities*, was published in 1971 by the church-supported Pilgrim Press. It focused on the different types of atrocity — insurgent shootings and bombings, B-52 and other bombing raids, and the use of napalm and chemical warfare, including crop destruction programs — addressing their levels, casualties inflicted, and legality. There was little difficulty in showing that US direct and indirect atrocities were vastly larger, enormously more costly to the civilian population, and more consistently in violation of the laws of war, than those of the enemy. Even before this book was in print, the editor ran into opposition within the publishing house, and a struggle ensued over whether the book should be published in accord with the contract. It was issued, after a delay, in a very small format and small print edition. But it was not advertised and was not kept available for very long — the residual copies were destroyed, not remaindered (or even offered to the author for purchase).[16] The editor who had defended and pushed the book was fired within six months after it was issued.

An even more extreme case of suppression occurred in connection with a work on terrorism written with Professor Noam Chomsky, with whom I began to collaborate during the Vietnam War era. Our experience with suppression occurred in our dealings with Warner Modular Publications, a small subsidiary of Warner Brothers, that specialized in short dissident studies in various fields that could be used as course modules. Chomsky and I produced a module in 1973 entitled *Counter-Revolutionary Violence: Bloodbaths in Fact and Propaganda*. "Bloodbaths" were a favourite topic of those years, with much establishment concern and speculation over those that might occur under future Communist rule, but with comprehensive neglect of ongoing bloodbaths. Our monograph focused on these. We distinguished between Benign and Constructive Bloodbaths — those of the US and its client states and allies — and Nefarious and Mythical Bloodbaths in Vietnam — which were bad and deserving of indignation and concern.

After 20,000 copies of our book had been printed, it came to the attention of the top brass of the parent corporation. They were outraged, cancelled the already arranged advertising, refused to sell the module, and shortly thereafter fired the officers of Warner Modular Publications and liquidated the organization. The stocks of our book were transferred to another company that never advertised it, so that the volume was effectively suppressed. We considered suing for breach of contract, but ended up obtaining full rights to republish. The story of this suppression was recorded in Ben Bagdikian's book *The Media Monopoly*,[17] and in our own later writings, but it was of no interest to the mainstream media or civil libertarians. In retrospect, one of the notable features of this suppression was the active participation of Mr. Stephen Ross, then

head of Warner, and until his recent death the top officer of Time-Warner, the world's largest media conglomerate.

Six years later Chomsky and I published a greatly enlarged and updated version of the suppressed volume, entitled *The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism* as the first the first of a two-volume set on *The Political Economy of Human Rights*.[18] We included there "A Prefatory Note on the History of the Suppression of the First Edition of This Book," and the book elaborated on the themes of the earlier volume. In particular, it put great emphasis on the political-economic underpinning of US relationships with states like Brazil, Chile, Indonesia, and the Philippines, the centrality of "favorable climate of investment," and the importance of state terror to serve that dominant objective. Along with extensive documentation of terror conditions in "The Pentagon-CIA Archipelago" (title of chapter 2), the book addressed and criticized the way in which usage of "terrorism" in the West had been nicely adjusted to exempt the West and its clients. *The Washington Connection,* published by South End Press, a recently formed non-profit and critical publisher located in Boston, received a fair amount of attention in the dissident press and underground, and its aggregate sale of some 40,000 copies was huge for a dissident publication. The book was not reviewed in the leading mainstream media, however, and was given hostile treatment by *The Nation,* which had it reviewed by a *New York Times* reporter, A. J. Langguth, despite the book's severe criticism of his paper.

I followed this up with another volume published by South End Press in 1982, *The Real Terror Network: Terrorism in Fact and Propaganda*. In title and substance the work was a response to a 1981 bestseller by Claire Sterling, *The Terror Network*. Sterling constructed her terror network with the Soviet Union as center, with Libya, Cuba and the PLO as major proxies, and with insurgent movements like the ANC and other left insurgencies as Soviet agents. It also carefully excluded South Africa, Argentina, and the Cuban refugee network in the US, and in fact

any non-left group or government favored by the West. This fitted precisely the demands of western power brokers, anxious to pin the Evil Empire label on the Soviet Union and to discredit groups challenging western interests (PLO, ANC, insurgencies from below in general) by tying them into a global conspiracy.[19] Sterling nowhere defined what she meant by terrorism, provided no quantitative information, but relied heavily on dramatized recountings of carefully selected terrorist incidents and testimony of western intelligence agencies. Her gullibility was enormous, and eventually CIA personnel disclosed that she had been an unknowing channel for the "blowing back" of CIA disinformation into the US media.[20]

My book *The **Real** Terror Network* provided a formal critique of Sterling's methods and sources. I distinguished between "retail" and "wholesale" terrorism, the former the terror of individuals and small groups, the latter states. The point of this use of adjectives was to stress the fact that retail terrorists have limited capabilities for terrorizing, whereas states can intimidate and kill on a very large (wholesale) scale. The plague of human torture that grew in the post-World War II era and the growth of death squads and disappearances were state-directed phenomena. Sterling's exclusion of wholesale terror was not only a highly political choice, it missed the main subject. But insofar as the function of the political-"expert" focus on "terrorism" is to divert attention from the greater to the lesser terror, Sterling's choices were entirely comprehensible.

The greater part of *The **Real** Terror Network* was devoted to describing an alternative terror network of US client states in Latin America, enumerating their terror practices, tracing the network to US training and support systems, and showing how this worked out in accord with a "development model" that stressed providing a "favorable climate of investment" for transnational corporations. In states with huge inequalities and pressures from below for directly helping the majority (which adversely affect profitability), a favorable investment climate required a strong

dose of terror from leaders like Marcos, Pinochet, and the assorted other Latin American generals who led the fight for "stability."

This book had a great deal of quantitative information, and did not rely on anecdotes and stories from intelligence agencies as Sterling's book did. It was very well received in dissident and Third World circles, but could not be heard by the US public through the mainstream media. The *New York Times*, for example, deeply interested in terrorism, "lost" half a dozen copies of the book and never did get round to even a notice of its existence. Sterling, meanwhile, was not only reviewed, but became a TV expert of choice, treated with virtual reverence, and was never asked challenging questions.

After Pope John Paul II was shot in Rome in May 1981, Claire Sterling soon surfaced again as an authority, claiming that this was a KGB-Bulgarian plot. Funded by the *Reader's Digest*, she published an article "The Plot to Kill the Pope," in the *Digest* issue of September 1982, then a 1984 book on the subject, *The Time of the Terrorists*, and was the top media expert on the subject from 1982 till after the conclusion of the trial against the Bulgarians in March 1986. The number two expert was Paul Henze, a longtime CIA official, who also wrote a book, *The Plot Against the Pope*, and became a very prominent expert in both print media and on TV. Sterling and Henze collaborated with Marvin Kalb, of NBC-TV, in a major TV special, "The Man Who Shot the Pope," shown in September 1982 and again in January 1983. Sterling, Henze and Kalb took Soviet-Bulgarian involvement as a foregone conclusion, based on the confessions of the assassin, a half-crazed Turkish rightist, Mehmet Ai Agca, made after many months in an Italian prison, along with a set of ideological presumptions and imputed motives and plots worthy of a James Bond movie.[21] The mainstream media swallowed the line with gusto and remarkable gullibility.

I followed the case closely and wrote a number of articles on it with a historian friend, Frank Brodhead. We eventually published a book, *The Rise and Fall of the Bulgarian Connection,* through Sheridan Square Press in New York City, timed to coincide with the end of the trial in March 1986. The essence of the book, with further updating, was also presented as chapter 4 in a book written in collaboration with Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, published by Pantheon Books in 1988. In all of these works, an effort was made to stress the remarkable convenience of the case for western political interests, and to show the implausibility of the accepted premises, the dubiousness of reliance on the claims of the accused Agca, given his background, the circumstances of his confession, and the absence of *any* evidence confirming his assertions about Bulgarian involvement. I tried to spell out an alternative explanation of why Agca shot the Pope and why the crime was being pinned on the Bulgarians and KGB. I analyzed the Sterling-Henze-Kalb model, showing the faultiness of its premises and its internal illogic, and pointing out some of the real world facts that it ignored (and which the US media ignored, in lockstep). As in the case of Sterling's *Terror Network* and model, the mainstream media gave her version of the case huge and uncritical publicity and simply ignored my (or any other) counter arguments or claims. Contesting views didn't have to be refuted — they could never be aired, but had to circulate in the dissident media as de facto samizdats, without access to the general public.

The Rome trial which ended in March 1986 resulted in the release of the Bulgarian for lack of evidence, but even at this point the US media allowed Sterling and company a convenient fall-back position: the case was alleged to be too "politically sensitive" for the court to find the Bulgarians guilty, and, furthermore, Italian law distinguishes between a finding of clear innocence and non-guilt for lack of evidence. Of course, an even stronger case can be made that "political sensitivity" (or convenience) and hostility toward the Evil Empire and Communist Party in Italy, which dictated the bringing of the case in the first place, made for juror bias toward finding

communists guilty; and that the failure to find the Bulgarians completely innocent may have been to protect the powerful vested interests in Italy who had supported the case. Furthermore, Sterling and Henze had claimed back in 1984 that the "evidence" was virtually complete, yet a very extensive effort by the Italian state failed to produce a single piece of evidence confirming Agca's claims of Bulgarian involvement.

In a final touch, in the confirmation hearings on Robert Gates as head of the CIA in 1991, former CIA official Melvin Goodman testified to the politicization of the Bulgarian Plot case under CIA head William Casey, and added that the CIA professionals had considered the Sterling claims a farce, one reason being that the CIA had excellent penetration of the Bulgarian secret services. Following this testimony, the *Wall Street Journal*, which had given Sterling uncontested rights to peddle her views up to then, gave her a final word on a "plot." A letter which I wrote in response, pointing out her neglect of the Goodman admission of the CIA penetration of the Bulgarian secret services, was not published, nicely completing and illustrating the working of a closed "free market" system.

A final major work I wrote on terrorism, in collaboration with University of Pennsylvania PhD student Gerry O'Sullivan and published in 1990 by Pantheon Books, was entitled *The "Terrorism" Industry: The Experts and Institutions that Shape Our View of Terror*. Again, the intent was to show the one-sidedness and huge bias in the mainstream perceptions of terrorism. But the focus here was on the institutional roots of the bias. Thus, after background chapters on the western stake in "terrorism" and the model constructed to identify the West's oppositional forces as the "terrorists," the major part of the book describes the institutional apparatus — government, thinktanks, security firms, and experts — that expound and elaborate the chosen model. The phrase "terrorism industry" calls ironic attention to the fact that "terrorism" is modelled and pushed by experts who service a market demand for a certain view of terrorism, much like advertisers who push a certain brand of soap.[22]

As noted earlier, we stressed the close association of the experts of the industry with government and private business firms that have "security" problems, who constitute the "demanders" for the services of the industry. The longest chapter in the book, entitled "The Experts," provides a great deal of information on the linkages and opinions of the experts, including an extended account of the work of a dozen of the majors. We underscore the fact that the terrorism industry is multinational, as the governments, institutes, and experts of the US, Great Britain, and Israel, in particular, but many others as well (including South Africa) have worked closely together and shared the same vision of terrorism. The book also describes how the US mass media take the terrorism industry's experts as "independent" and properly accredited, allowing them to reinforce the official version of terrorism as *the* true one, providing a "natural" and beautiful closed system of discourse allowing Libya and the PLO to be the serious terrorists, with the Nicaraguan contras and the Cuban terror network ignored, and the governments of South Africa and Guatemala fighting against terrorism.

The "Terrorism" Industry was published by Pantheon books, a subsidiary of Random House, which is a subsidiary of Advance Publications, the top company in the Newhouse media empire. Unfortunately, the book was about to go to press just at the point where Pantheon was in the process of being "defanged" by its parent, in the name of profitability considerations. The long-standing management of the noted progressive publisher André Schiffrin was replaced with a more compliant market-oriented one, and Pantheon has ceased to be a haven for quality critical books. Meanwhile, *The "Terrorism" Industry* was not advertised or pushed and the normal reaction of the mainstream media to such a critical work (mainly ignore; alternatively pan) was exacerbated by publisher confusion, disinterest and neglect. The book fell stillborn from the press, receiving only modest attention even in the dissident media,

and it was not permitted to enter in any way the national debate on terrorism. We believe that this was a function of its message and backing, not its quality.

Methodology

I obtained a PhD in economics at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1953, with two minor fields, American history and economic history. As a trained economist and student of history, with a strong bent toward structural analysis and structural explanations of behavior and performance, my basic methodological approach has been, mundanely, the use of traditional scientific methods. I have long been a devotee of the work of the great French historian Marc Bloch, who put great stress on the comparative method,[23] which has seemed to me extremely useful in studying the treatment of terrorism. I have spent a lot of time exploring definitions and concepts, spelling out and analysing models used in the terrorism field, and searching for relevant empirical evidence. This is unusual in the world of terrorism studies, where serious traditional academic investigation is sparse and badly tarnished by conflict of interest and ideological bias. A number of terrorism experts have been journalists, most often with strong ideological commitments. But even the "scholars" of the field, like Laqueur and Wilkinson, work at a huge distance from Thucydides' self-imposed guideline that "the accuracy of a report [be subject]…to the most severe and detailed tests possible."

Because of the high degree of politicization and one-sidedness of establishment terrorism accounts in the press and purported "scholarly" studies of terrorism, the questions deserving my close attention as a critic have been obvious. The manipulation of definitions to serve western interests called for a close analysis of the semantics and selectivity of usage of terrorism. The models of terrorism have been similarly structured to yield a proper political result, with the basic model of "Soviet control" and with specific models adapted for special occasions, as with the KGB-Bulgarian plot against the Pope. It has

been easy to show that the definitions and models used in the mainstream studies are special cases that serve special interests — and often survive only because contesting facts and alternative models are kept under the rug.

Because of the extreme difficulty in getting an alternative view heard, I have often sought out dramatic and powerful illustrations of the state (wholesale) terror that the western terrorism industry refuses to recognize. I have frequently also emphasized the method of dichotomization and juxtaposed comparison to illustrate forcefully the fact and inappropriateness of selective western attention. For example, with the help of the Pentagon itself, during the Vietnam war I was able to show that the US was using ordnance in Vietnam that exceeded that used by the enemy by a ratio of 500 to 1.[24] It was not difficult to show the huge bias in the US press in attention given to victims of terrorism in the Soviet Union and in US client states.[25] It was not hard to demonstrate that on standard definitions of terrorism, South Africa was a far more serious terrorist state than Libya, and that — to understate the case — the "experts" and mainstream media did not recognize this fact.[26]

A great deal of the information needed for a proper study of terrorism is readily available in the reports of human rights groups like Amnesty International and Americas Watch, who cover a wide terrain, and from more specialized groups, frequently victims and expatriates, who put out newsletters and special reports on their home countries. There are also numerous books, journals, government documents, and news reports that provide valuable information. This material is available to mainstream experts; they ignore it because it doesn't fit their hypotheses and models. Because of the extensiveness of and the frequent need to actively seek out information, I have been prone to work with collaborators, to help share the research burden. The ones I have worked with have been excellent researchers, and the benefits of collaboration in all cases have greatly exceeded the costs.

In sum, writing as a critic on terrorism has been easy in that the establishment studies are so grossly biased and intellectually thin that their refutation has been like shooting sitting ducks. Counter-models have been easy to construct. Mobilizing the requisite evidence requires a great deal of digging, assembling data, and checking, but the evidence is there, sitting unused by the mainstream experts. Given the "self-evident" character of the establishment position, the reply has to be extensive, powerful and error-free. Even then, the problem remains of how one can get heard in the mainstream, even at the most minimal level.

The marginalization process
I have myself "modelled" the process whereby my own writing is marginalized. Chapter 1 of *Manufacturing Consent*, entitled "A Propaganda Model," describes in detail a set of interacting forces that filter out unwanted thoughts: the ownership and control structure and profit orientation of the mainstream media; their dependence on advertising revenue; their tie-in with government as primary information source and licencer (for radio and TV) and external protector (for global media); the threat of flak from the powerful; and ideological constraints. These forces press the media toward political conformity and protect establishment positions against attacks by critics who address fundamental rather than tactical errors.

One of the media's routes to safety is to confine "independent" opinion to the experts from within the establishment. This process has been carried to the extreme in the case of the "terrorism" issue, as it is largely a foreign policy matter, with properly demonized villains (Arafat, Kadaffi) and with the victims of western terrorism and double standards having no voice in the West (Guatemalan Indians, Brazilian peasants, South African blacks). Under these conditions, the system quickly closes: the government names the terrorists, the affiliated terrorism experts solemnly agree and discuss proper tactics, and the media asks no hard questions.

The experts with fundamentally dissenting views are simply left out of the discussion. They are not accredited by former government employment or affiliation with the proper thinktank or Council on Foreign Relations; that is, they don't have the requisite conflict of interest! In the usual flurry of propaganda following a terrorist incident, the government, experts, and media quickly accept as obvious the official version of terrorism. Thereafter, dissident experts would hardly be understood, as they consider the issues too selectively chosen and in urgent need of contextualization, whereas the media want commentary and debate only on the basis of accepted fundamentals (e.g., that Kadaffi is the issue, and that the problem is why he does nasty things and how we can stop him).

Only twice was I ever considered for appearance on TV as a terrorism expert. In the first case, I was called by a representative of the Phil Donahue Show, who wanted to see if I qualified for an appearance. She asked me what I would suggest the US do about terrorism. I said that the first thing was for it to stop directly doing it and indirectly sponsoring it. This left her at a loss for words, and when our conversation ended I knew that I was not going on the Donahue Show. (I realized later that I should have played dumb and not revealed my hand so early if I wanted to get on the show.) The second instance was in connection with the Plot against the Pope. I was again "felt out" by TV representatives on ABC, but nothing came of it. Subsequently, however, a reporter contact within ABC informed me that Mrs. Claire Sterling refused to appear on TV with anyone who would seriously oppose her views, and exercised de facto veto power over panel appearances.[27] I don't know whether that explained the particular case on ABC in which the inquiry was never followed up with an appearance. I do know, however, that Sterling refused to debate with me on the Plot against the Pope at the University of Pittsburgh, where the students offered her market rates or better to appear.

Lessons and reflections

Although I have been denied any direct access to the mainstream media over the past dozen years, with minor exceptions, I do not consider my efforts futile. I have been a part of a dissident movement that depends on mutual support, including intellectual support, and I have received hundreds of letters from persons previously unknown to me who have told me that my writings "opened their eyes" or infused them with energy. The dissident movement has been a force helping contain the national establishment, and its energy and strength depends in part on raising questions, presenting inconvenient facts, and formulating alternative models of where we are, why, and where we should be going. Even marginalized intellectuals serve the containment process by strengthening oppositional forces, and their ideas sometimes trickle upward into mainstream discourse. In the Vietnam war era and Central American wars of the 1980s, fear of repercussions at home was an important element in the calculus of aggression. In the absence of criticism and protest, violence would have been greater.

In retrospect, I believe that I and many of my dissident allies have put too much emphasis on scholarly analyses and too little on reaching the general public. This is a result of the fact that many of us are academicians and gravitate easily to traditional academic modes of discourse. However, many of the issues are fairly complex, so that with our views so unfamiliar and jarring, we need more space than ten sentences on TV or a 750-word opinion column to explain our position, which makes some reluctant to try. Furthermore, access to mainstream TV and opinion columns often requires a struggle, and is sometimes foreclosed entirely. Nevertheless, I still think it has been a mistake to opt so disproportionately for the easy route of books and articles in dissident journals and papers with circulations of 2,000-30,000.

Notes

1. See Diesendorf's and Sharma's chapters in this volume. An offsetting consideration is that the establishment experts in the science fields often have substantial technical expertise and qualifications. The experts on terrorism are commonly journalists, popular writers, former officials, and not very distinguished or well-trained political scientists.

2. On the demonisation process, see J. Haiman and A. Meigs, "Khaddafy: Man and Myth," *African Events* (February 1986).

3. The US Reagan administration, which entered office in January 1981, was notorious for using "terrorism" as a propaganda weapon for mobilizing the US public for attacks on Libya, and indirectly as a means of helping justify its renewal of the arms race and as a cover for its regressive economic policies. See Edward S. Herman and Gerry O'Sullivan, *The "Terrorism" Industry: The Experts and Institutions that Shape Our View of Terror,* New York: Pantheon Books (1990): 22-25 and passim.

4. A State Department funded study in the mid-1980s, based on interviews with 2,800 former Soviet citizens living in the US, estimated that 77% of blue collar workers and 96% of the middle elite in the Soviet Union listened to foreign broadcasts, and that underground publications were read by 45% of high level professionals and 14% of blue collar workers. [James R. Miller and Peter Donhowe, "The Class Society Has a Wide Gap Between Rich and Poor," *Washington Post National Weekly* (17 February 1986).] US dissidents have a much smaller outreach than did Soviet dissidents, and, of course, foreign broadcasts are not as important in the US, nor do they present seriously alternative views.

5. These mercenary forces were referred to by the Defence Intelligence Agency in its 16 July 1982 "Weekly Intelligence Summary" as a "terrorist" army, before they were officially designated as "freedom fighters." This point was only disclosed in 1984 by the Council on Hemispheric Affairs, a public interest group specializing in critiques of US policy in Latin America.

6. See Edward S. Herman, *The **Real** Terror Network: Terrorism in Fact and Propaganda,*

Boston: South End Press (1982): 8 and passim.

7. This was more true of the *contras* than UNITA, which did have an indigenous tribal base, although one heavily dependent on and a tool of South Africa.

8. The 32 experts included the 13 most frequently cited by other terrorism experts, as reported in Alex Schmid, *Political Terrorism*, Amsterdam: North Holland (1983), the 16 most frequently cited in a large mass media sample, and eight others based on our own assessment of importance and influence. There were five individuals common to the Schmid and media sample list, giving 24 net, plus the eight ad hoc. See further Herman and O'Sullivan, op. cit.: 143-146, 183-190.

9. Rightwing and leftwing are imprecise political categories, "rightwing" implying conservative or reactionary and supportive of regimes of private property along with oligarchic and authoritarian rule; "leftwing" implies reformist or radical support of more equalitarian ownership and control, to be obtained by democratic or sometimes authoritarian rule and methods. In Third World disputes, the great powers of the West have often supported rightwing movements, only rarely those on the left.

10. I included Claire Sterling, *The Terror Network*, New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston/Reader's Digest (1981); Charles Dobson and Robert Payne, *The Terrorists,* New York: Facts on File (1982); Walter Laqueur, *The Age of Terrorism*, Boston: Little Brown (1987); and Paul Wilkinson, *Terrorism and the Liberal State*, New York: New York University Press (1986). See Herman and O'Sullivan, op. cit., Table 7-4: 189.

11. See ibid., Table 7-2: 184

12. See ibid.: 176-184.

13. Pat Aufderheide, "'This program was not made possible....': If PBS let GM sponsor Milton Friedman, why can't unions sponsor a labor history series?," *In These Times* (5-18 March 1980): 13.

14. This was a result in good part of the fact that Henze fixed his own identification, and never mentioned CIA. Henze also regularly insisted on clearing guests with whom he would appear and questions he would be asked on TV. See Edward S. Herman and Frank Brodhead, *The Rise and Fall of the Bulgarian Connection*, New York: Sheridan Square Publications (1986): 123-124 [footnote 1] and 146-159.

15. For a compendium of official lies by US officials on the Sandinista government of Nicaragua in the 1980s, see Peter Kornbluh, *Nicaragua: The Price of Intervention*, Washington, D.C.: Institute for Policy Studies (1987): chapter 4. For broader compendia of official US lies, see Noam Chomsky, *The Culture of Terrorism*, Boston: South End Press (1988) and *Necessary Illusions: Thought Control in Democratic Societies,* Boston: South End Press (1989).

16. Edward S. Herman, *Atrocities in Vietnam: Myths and Realities*, Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press (1971). The book is now a collector's item, for which I get periodic frantic appeals from firms specializing in finding scarce volumes.

17. Ben Bagdikian, *The Media Monopoly*, Boston: Beacon Press (1983, 1987, 1990 and 1992).

18. The second volume, also published by South End Press in 1979, was entitled *Beyond the Cataclysm: Postwar Indochina and the Reconstruction of Imperial Ideology* .

19. This was especially true of the Reagan administration in the US and the Begin government in Israel, the latter eager to make the PLO into an agent of World Communism, thus justifying its refusal to negotiate with Palestinians. The first conference of the Israel-sponsored Jonathon Institute, held in Jerusalem in July 1979, was clearly designed to mobilize such an ideological offensive. Both George Bush and Claire Sterling attended that conference. See Herman and O'Sullivan, op. cit.: 22-25, 29-36, 104-106.

20. Gregory Treverton, *Covert Action*, New York: Basic Books (1987): 165.

21. For example, the TV program argues that as Bulgaria was a police state, if Agca stopped for a period in Sofia, the secret police must have known he was there and therefore been using him. During the trial in Rome a high official of Agca's rightwing group the Gray Wolves testified that the Gray Wolves like to go through Bulgaria because with the large flow of Turkish immigrants it was easy to hide. This statement, which completely contradicted the extremely silly Kalb view, was never picked up in the US mainstream media.

22. This analogy was made by the head of the Heritage Foundation explaining that rightwing institutions like his own must operate like Proctor and Gamble to get over proper ideas. See Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, New York: Pantheon (1988): 23-24.

23. Especially, Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, Manchester: Manchester University Press (1954) and "A Contribution Toward a Comparative History of European Societies," in *Life and Work in Medieval Europe*, London: Routlege and Kegan Paul (1967).

24. See Herman (1971)*, op. cit., Table II: 57.

25. See Herman (1982), op. cit., Table 4-1, "Press Coverage of Abused Persons in the Soviet Union and in Eight U.S. Client States,": 196.

26. See Herman and O'Sullivan, op. cit.: chapters 2, 7, and 8.

27. The same holds for Paul Henze: see note 14 above.