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This publication has been edited with Open-source software OpenOffice and Gimp. We have used Garamond for our main-body text and titles and LHF New Trajan for the logo.

Cover page: Cavalry Battle (1600s) by Jan Martszen de Jonge, privately held.
Foreword

As will become apparent, there have been some adjustments made to the Strife Journal since Issue Two. We hope the most discreet will prove to be the change in editorship: our thanks are due to Pablo de Orellana, who has stepped down after two issues’ toil at the helm, and we hope we can continue his excellent work.

Other modifications are more cosmetic, and hence perhaps more obvious. The font and formatting is slightly different, and we also have a new logo, aligning us with the blog (at www.strifeblog.org) and illustrating more clearly than ever how unified the Strife project is across blog and journal. As in the last issue, we have reprinted an extract from our online counterpart: the excellent five-part series on drone warfare entitled ‘The Good, The Bad, The Drones’, which was posted online over the course of April.

The other major change has been the revamping and expansion of the reviews section, thanks for which must go to my co-editor Nikolai Gourof. We have four reviews this issue, on texts ranging from early modern history to (post)modern political theory. Issue four will see this section expand further.

Of course, the skeleton of Strife Journal has been and remains its extended pieces, and there are four in this issue. Nikolai Gourof writes about Sergei Eisenstein’s Ivan The Terrible, and draws parallels between it and Stalin’s contemporary regime. Alexander Langer, meanwhile, draws attention to Church resistance against state oppression in Latin America. Langer speculates as to why the state responses to broadly similar resistance movements in Nicaragua and El Salvador took such different forms. Alexandra Gallovicova’s piece is another Strife first: it is split into two instalments, the first of which is printed here, the second of which will be published in Issue Four. In her first part, Gallovicova explores the idea of the ‘image’ in IR theory, and lays firm groundwork for the case study that will form her piece’s second instalment: French and British perceptions of Germany in the wake of its abstention from the UN Security Council vote on establishing a no-fly zone in Libya during the 2011 Libyan Civil War. Finally, Thomas Colley looks at propaganda in the Yugoslav conflict of the 1990s. Colley asks whether any of the lessons learnt then can be applied to the current crisis in Ukraine.

As always, many thanks are due to the department of War Studies at King’s College London, which has provided unceasing support. Special thanks are due to Dr Christine Cheng, Prof. Vivienne Jabri, Dr Oisin Tansey, Prof. Mats Berdal and Dr Kieran Mitton. Thanks are of course also owed to all the contributors to this issue, who have handled our editorial demands with grace and rapidity. We have continued with the peer-review model established in Issue 2, and we thank all our reviewers.

We are always on the lookout for interesting perspectives on conflict for both the journal and the blog; anyone interested in contributing is encouraged to pitch an idea or simply declare interest via email.

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Few issues in the social sciences are as fiercely contested as the concept of terrorism. Yet as academics consistently lament, rarely is the field of terrorism studies graced with original scholarship. *The Foundations of Modern Terrorism* by Martin A. Miller is a notable exception, providing an original and provocative study of the origins of terrorism as we know it today.

The main departure of Miller’s work from much of the terrorism literature is the focus on the reciprocal role of insurgents and the state in producing political violence, of which terrorism is a subset. The author acknowledges the bifurcation in how terrorism is typically conceptualised and studied. First, there is the popular concept of illegitimate political violence by subnational factions attempting to undermine governments, often through attacking civilians. Second, there is state terror usually associated with Robespierre, Stalin, Hitler *et al.* Miller instead combines the two, adopting a ‘revisionist position that integrates, rather than separates, the historical antagonists’, i.e. states and insurgents, and their reciprocal role in generating political violence.

The book appears to have two related elements, held together by a clear central thesis. The majority of the text is a history of political violence, with emphasis on the relationship between states and the insurgents who oppose them. This is brought to a head in the final chapter which applies the author’s central argument to terrorism as currently conceived. The argument itself is controversial but clear: that terrorism cannot function without the agentive role of states and insurgents, and that both are in some way responsible for it. Moreover, the contemporary concept of terrorism is but a recent phenomenon, and one that modern Western states have actually done much to create.

A welcome change from many works on terrorism is that the author explicitly avoids engaging in any detailed discussion of the hundreds of definitions of terrorism found in the literature. With countless reviews of the issue available, it is refreshing not to be forced into the same early chapter of seminal definitions and discussions which invariably concludes that terrorism is politically contested and there is no single definition that can be universally applied.

Instead, the author gets down to his conceptualisation of terrorism straight away and then moves directly on to the main argument. Miller defines terrorism as involving repeated acts of political violence that generate an atmosphere of fear and insecurity in civilian society. Similar to other authors, the issue that gives rise to terrorism is the contestation over the legitimacy of state power (p. 2). Miller characterises terrorism as involving violent combat between states and insurgents over unresolved political issues. These conceptualisations reflect the author’s focus: the antagonistic relationship between state and insurgent, both of which are integrally responsible for terrorism.

Miller’s concept of terrorism is necessarily broader than those of many other terrorism scholars. The result is a book that is more a general history of political violence rather than terrorism as tactically defined today. There are two advantages to this however. First, by arguing that both insurgents and states can employ terror, Miller maintains a modicum of
emotional neutrality on the issue of what is labelled as terrorism. Second, by focusing broadly on political violence, Miller situates modern terrorism in a far broader historical narrative going back to Biblical times. In doing so, the extensive if not predominant role of the state in perpetrating terror becomes apparent.

One of the overwhelming strengths of the book is its chronological breadth. From Aristotle to Al Zawahiri, Miller covers an impressive body of literature on the relationship between regimes and political violence. His argument qualifies terrorism as a particular form of political violence, and therefore one aspect of a phenomenon that has existed for millennia rather than centuries. Like any narrative, particularly one attempting to cover such a broad and varied topic, depth is sacrificed. Readers wishing to gain in-depth analysis of specific cases may find their treatment somewhat superficial, although this is acknowledged by the author himself. So impressive is the breadth of cases interwoven into the overall thesis, though, that this is a minor issue. Such cases are judiciously chosen, necessitated by the author's attempt to demonstrate the interaction between state and insurgent terror in specific historical moments.

After briefly reviewing the history of political violence over the millennia, the author turns to his main narrative of ‘modern’ terrorism, which covers two hundred years, from the French Revolution to the end of the Cold War. The French Revolution represented ‘the watershed moment in which terrorism entered the politics of modern Europe’ (p. 2). This starting point differs from those proposed by authors who focus on terrorism as an illegitimate anti-state phenomenon, and who tend to credit nineteenth century Russian anarchists with the invention of terrorism as a tactic. The significance of the French Revolution was, according to Miller, that it altered notions of state legitimacy, specifically by reinforcing the right of citizens to rebel against oppressive governments by any available means. Thereafter, terrorism was ‘an evolving complex of in civilian forces zones of violent combat over control of state power between officials in government and insurgents in society’ (p. 3).

Miller’s narrative encompasses specific sections on terror in nineteenth century Europe, Russia and the USA. It follows on to examine the diverse ‘Terrors’ of the twentieth century, including the authoritarian terrors of communism and fascism, followed by specific examples of terror during the Cold War. A plethora of cases are examined, be they Russian anarchism, King Leopold’s Congo, the Algerian civil war or the apartheid regime in South Africa. The final chapter applies the overall thesis to present day ‘contemporary’ terrorism, concluding that political violence in both state and anti-state forms is as prevalent as ever.

Early in the book, the author rightly points out that terrorism is but ‘one of a number of genres of political violence, which also includes war, genocide and ethnic cleansing’ (p. 1). Nevertheless, the author often uses terrorism and political violence interchangeably. At times one is left with the impression that all forms of repression are in some way terroristic. While this is convincingly argued, it broadens the scope of terrorism beyond the many authors who view it as a specific tactic, as practised by figures such as Bakunin and Bin Laden.

A thought provoking aspect of Miller’s argument is that people within democratic states may be reluctant to accept that their governments may play a role in fostering the violence perpetrated against them. As Miller explains, the ‘official narrative’ after 9/11 was one of innocent America under attack from radical, destructive religious fanatics (p. 242). This narrative then justified the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as clampdowns on civil liberties such as the Patriot Act. The notion that US foreign policy in the Middle East had in any way contributed to Al Qaeda’s emergence was scarcely evident in post-9/11 Western political discourse.

To that end, a recurring theme of the book is that states may be reluctant to admit their own engagement in acts of terror, or their role as provocateurs in the very violence from which they are attempting to protect their citizens. Controversially, Miller defines both the American treatment of native American Indians and the lynching of African Americans as examples of state-sanctioned terrorism.
However, rarely have these aspects of American history been labelled as terrorism, even though terror more than adequately describes how Native Americans or African Americans must have felt at the time.

Miller’s critique of the contemporary concept of terrorism extends to both academic theory and liberal democracies themselves. He argues that in liberal democratic political discourse, terrorism is myopically viewed as an externally created phenomenon, in comparison to democracies that are inherently peaceful and non-violent. He is also critical of the state-centric approach of orthodox terrorism theory, in which state violence against opponents is legitimate and defensive while oppositional violence is automatically illegitimate. Instead, he argues that the forces that bring forth terrorism are ‘permanent features of modern nation states’, brought forth by both governments and their opponents (p. 254).

Citing casualty figures, Miller points out that states have been responsible for exponentially more deaths in the last century than those caused by insurgent terrorist groups. Miller’s statistics make states responsible for 179 million deaths in the twentieth century, not including the world wars, the Holocaust, Hiroshima or Nagasaki (p. 253). As he says, ‘every kind of government (not every government), whether authoritarian or democratic, has been complicit in terrorizing its own citizenry at some point in its history’ (p. 253). Indeed the author calls on nations to more honestly confront the atrocities they have committed in the past, rather than burying or sanitizing them.

Overall, The Foundations of Modern Terrorism is a thoughtful and compelling contribution to a body of literature so extensively researched and rehashed that it is often tough to find anything new. Those looking for immediate prescriptions on how to prevent radicalisation, or the tactical minutiae of current counter-terrorism policy may need to look elsewhere. Readers who see terrorism solely as the work of illegitimate non-state actors will find the analysis uncomfortable reading. However, those looking to contextualise modern terrorism historically, and sceptical of the rhetorical labelling of terrorists in contemporary political discourse, will find Miller’s work challenging and insightful. Whether one accepts the author’s argument or not, by encouraging deeper reflection on the role of the state in creating the permissive conditions for terrorism, the book makes a telling contribution.

Thomas Colley

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