



# SPECIAL REPORT

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## ABOUT THE REPORT

Political violence remains a serious threat to life in much of the world, and it can have a corrosive effect on the political processes that contribute to domestic and international peace. On

April 12, 1999, the United States Institute of Peace, together with the British-based Airey Neave Trust, convened a working group meeting on the subject "How Terrorism Ends." The workshop, which attracted the participation of academic experts, current and former government officials, and security consultants, was conducted as an activity of the International Research Group on Political Violence, which the Institute co-sponsors with the Airey Neave Trust and which is chaired by the Rt. Hon. Sir Adam Butler.

Panelists at the workshop included Professor Martha Crenshaw of Wesleyan University, Professor Paul Wilkinson of St. Andrews University, Jon B. Alterman of the Institute, and Ambassador Teresita Schaffer of the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Institute President Richard H. Solomon moderated the meeting, which was attended by some forty authorities in the field of political violence. This report, written by Dr. Alterman with the help of former research assistant Sara Simon, summarizes the points made by the panelists.

**The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect those of the United States Institute of Peace, which does not advocate specific policies.**

May 25, 1999

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# How Terrorism Ends

## Briefly...

- The nature of the grievance matters. Ethnically based terrorist campaigns can be harder to end decisively than politically based ones, because they often enjoy broader support among a population they seek to represent.
- Political violence by itself can rarely achieve its aims, but it can sometimes do so in conjunction with less violent political action.
- By the same token, deterring terrorism and prosecuting terrorists may be insufficient to end terrorism, especially when a large population supports the terrorists' cause. In such situations, negotiated settlements may provide the only solutions.
- In Sri Lanka, the government appears to have concluded from its victory over the Maoist JVP that law enforcement and compulsion can end a terror campaign. However, the LTTE has a much broader base of support than the JVP ever did, and the LTTE is unlikely to go away simply through government-applied force.
- One of the most effective strategies at governments' disposal may be to split off pragmatists from radical rejectionists. Such efforts can diminish public support for the terrorists and deny them a strong base from which to operate.
- In the cases of the IRA and the PLO, the initiation of political negotiations has not conclusively ended terrorism, but it has swung public support behind a peaceful solution and helped diminish popular support for the terrorists.
- Making concessions to causes espoused by terrorists can arouse hostility from those who believe that terrorism is "being rewarded." Weak governments find it difficult to make such concessions.
- Peace overtures must be well-timed. Ideally, they should come at a time when the government is strong and the terrorist organization is undergoing a period of introspection. Good intelligence can make a difference in these cases.

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In an attempt to better understand what governmental actions can hasten the end of political violence, the workshop began with an overview of the problem by Martha Crenshaw. Her presentation was followed by three case studies. In the first, Paul Wilkinson of St. Andrews University discussed the Irish Republican Army (IRA), and in the second, Jon B. Alterman of the United States Institute of Peace discussed the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Both were considered "successful" case studies, because the organizations in question have embraced political dialogue instead of violence to pursue their aims. In the third case study, Teresita Schaffer of the Center for Strategic and International Studies discussed the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), who have been fighting for autonomy for Tamil-populated areas in Sri Lanka for almost two decades. The LTTE was considered a "failed" case because government actions have been unable to end the violence.

## Martha Crenshaw on How Terrorism Ends

As we try to create governmental policies aimed at ending terrorism, it is useful to enumerate some of the variables that distinguish different situations.

The first set of variables involves the terrorist groups themselves.

- **Internal factors.** How does the organization make decisions? How does the organization perceive its environment? What are the internal psychological dynamics? Is the organization divided internally? All of these things are important to know but often difficult to ascertain.
- **External factors.** How does the relative strength of the terrorist organization compare with that of the government it opposes? Are the terrorists ideologically or ethnically motivated? What kinds of ties do they have to outside groups who may support them? Is the conflict best characterized as a secessionist movement's civil war, or does the conflict involve a battle over civil society and representation?

The second set of variables involves the tools that a government uses to respond to terrorism. Many of these options can be pursued simultaneously.

- **Deterrence.** Governments can use their coercive capacity to make terrorism too costly for those who seek to use it. They can do this by military strikes against terrorist bases, assassinations of key leaders, collective punishment, or other methods. There are several drawbacks to this approach, however. On the one hand, it can lead to unacceptable human rights violations. In addition, groups may not come to government attention until movements are so well developed that efforts to contain them through deterrent methods are insufficient.
- **Criminal justice.** Governments can treat terrorism primarily as a crime and therefore pursue the extradition, prosecution, and incarceration of suspects. One drawback to this approach is that the prosecution of terrorists in a court of law can compromise government efforts to gather intelligence on terrorist organizations. In addition, criminal justice efforts (like deterrent efforts) are deployed mostly after terrorists have struck, meaning that significant damage and loss of life may have already occurred.
- **Enhanced defense.** Governments can make targets harder to attack, and they can use intelligence capabilities to gain advance knowledge of when attacks may take place. As targets are hardened, however, some terrorist groups may shift their sights to softer targets. An example is the targeting of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in August 1998 by truck bombs. Although the attacks are strongly believed to have been coordinated by individuals with Middle Eastern ties, targets

in Africa were chosen because of their relatively lax security compared with targets in the Middle East.

- **Negotiations.** Governments can elect to enter into negotiations with terrorist groups and make concessions in exchange for the groups' renunciation of violence. While governments are often reluctant to do so at the beginning of terror campaigns, negotiations may be the only way to resolve some long-standing disputes.

Given the above sets of variables, the end of terrorism may result from one or more of the following situations:

- **Success.** The terrorists may have accomplished their objectives, such as the overthrow of a government or the end of an occupation. Terrorism per se cannot achieve long-term goals such as revolution or independence, but it can sometimes do so in conjunction with less violent political action.
- **Preliminary success.** A corollary to achieving objectives is having at least achieved public recognition for an organization and the cause it espouses. In this case, continued terrorist actions may alienate supporters, sponsors, or key third-country actors for whom continued violence is unacceptable.
- **Organizational breakdown.** Terrorist organizations, like any organizations, must constantly work to maintain themselves. If recruiting dries up, or if funding becomes unavailable, the organization may be unable to sustain itself. On the other hand, self-preservation may in fact force organizations to continue terrorist activities even if the leadership otherwise wishes to give them up. It may be that the only way for the organization to continue to attract new recruits and financial support is to continue to gain publicity for its terrorist actions.
- **Dwindling support.** Organizations may lose the support of their various constituencies—the populations they seek to represent or the governments or other organizations that support them. They can do so for reasons of ideological or strategic differences, personality clashes, or simple fatigue. Terrorist actions can also provoke moral outrage and undermine support.
- **New alternatives.** At times, other options for political change emerge. They can include more traditional forms of warfare or revolution, mass protests, or political negotiations.

As suggested above, many of the factors and consequences outlined above may occur simultaneously. Both governments and terrorist organizations can pursue many tracks at once, and organizations may confront a wide series of challenges simultaneously.

Governmental decisions about how to confront terrorism are made more difficult by the frequently high degree of uncertainty governments have about the nature of terrorist organizations, their motivations, and the effects of government actions on those organizations. The need for understanding terrorist organizations is highlighted by the fact that such groups' calculations are based on the groups' perceptions of costs and rewards, not those of the authorities confronting them or of objective observers.

So called "get-tough" measures against terrorist groups can have unintended consequences. Trying to "decapitate" a movement may radicalize the whole movement or some splinter faction. Assassinations and military force can provoke a desire for revenge, and raids and arrests can reinforce martial images, create mythologies of martyrdom, or feed paranoia and secretiveness (which makes the movements even harder to penetrate for reasons of either understanding motivations or foiling actions).

In the event that organizations are primarily motivated by a desire for recognition, how should policymakers respond? Should the government recognize the organizations and eliminate their motivation for terrorism? Since terrorist actions most often are con-

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sidered newsworthy events by media organizations, it is beyond governments' control whether the actions garner attention or not. Governments can play an effective role, however, in influencing how terrorist events are portrayed to the public, and thus influence (but not control) how the public interprets those events.

Public opinion is important because it strongly affects the amount of financial and operational support the terrorists enjoy. In some cases, support comes from abroad and is difficult for governments to control. In other cases, however, governments have control over populations sympathetic to the terrorists. In this event, they must walk a difficult line. On the one hand, repressive measures can encourage antigovernment hostility and support for the terrorists. On the other, fear of punishment for the terrorists' excesses can undermine a population's willingness to support terrorist activities. In this balance, the terrorists have two weapons on their side. The first is their own ability to mete out punishment against those who do not support their actions, and the second is their ability to build on group solidarity to overcome reservations about their methods.

One effective tactic against many terrorist organizations may be to promote their disintegration from the inside. Governments can demonstrate to groups that their support among the populations those groups supposedly represent is waning. Even if such allegations are true, however, groups may be resolute in believing they enjoy support even after that support has dissipated. Governments can also split off members from a group, either by offering large rewards for information that undermines group solidarity or by making promises of leniency for imprisoned group members. Finally, governments can unilaterally enact reforms that reduce public support for the terrorists without rewarding the terrorists directly, or even negotiating with them.

Another tactic may be to put pressure on states sympathetic to a terrorist group's goals, even if the states are not outright sponsors of the group. Expulsion from a haven often causes financial pressures or logistical difficulties and can sometimes end a group's viability. In many cases, however, affected countries lack the necessary ties to effect such pressure, or laws governing free expression make it very difficult to crack down on an organization's activities.

If efforts to eliminate a terrorist group through compulsion fail, however, governments are left trying to reach a peaceful settlement with that group. In civil conflicts, such a settlement will entail negotiations for amnesty on both the individual and group levels.

Governments must confront opposition on two fronts: among rank-and-file members, who may be more disposed toward violence than the leadership, and among their own populations, who may oppose the government's sitting down with killers and "rewarding violence." Groups opposed to a peaceful reconciliation at that time will act to undermine the peace, often by undertaking terrorist actions of their own. In this event, governments that have only a precarious grip on power will find it difficult to move decisively toward peace.

In addition, governments must time their peace overtures carefully, first by making such gestures when their ability to reward good behavior and punish bad is strong, and second, by making them when the terrorist organization is going through some period of internal questioning. In such situations, effective intelligence can be crucial, since it can both identify auspicious times for a peaceful gesture and help inform the nature of that gesture.

## Paul Wilkinson on the IRA

Of Martha Crenshaw's models presented above, we can discount three with regard to the IRA.

- We cannot let the terrorists win on their own terms. The prospect of conceding the future of Northern Ireland to those who have shown little regard for democratic processes is simply horrifying.
- We cannot wait for the terrorists to discount themselves. The idea of the IRA just "withering away" in the medium term or even the long term is highly unlikely because through a long process of socialization, predilections toward extreme violence are deeply embedded in some elements of society in Northern Ireland.
- State use of "draconian military force" is unacceptable because it suspends democratic rights and allows terrorist groups a victory at the expense of democratic institutions.

These options eliminated, three main areas for maneuver remain. The first is what might be called "politics, diplomacy, and prophylaxis." That is, to use democratic processes to address the underlying grievances of various groups in the region. Such a response is an important tool for any democratic government. In fact, a democratic government should be responding to the kinds of grievances that lead to violent conflict before that conflict turns violent at all. That being said, once violence has broken out, it is possible for a democratic system to address the causes of violence and reduce the violence that results from people's grievances.

Along these lines, the example of the Basque population in Spain is instructive. The new democratic government in Spain in the late 1970s made a bold and farsighted decision to grant autonomy to the Basque regions. Consequently, popular support for the Basque terror group ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna, or Basque Fatherland and Liberty) has been reduced enormously. ETA has become so fragile in recent years that it has decided to investigate following the Northern Ireland example. The Spanish government is understandably cautious about negotiating, but negotiating may represent a way forward in that conflict.

It is important to remember, however, that political rapprochement cannot end violence entirely. It is unrealistic to expect that, after decades of violence, a single document can put an end to every violent act. A political agreement can, however, attract the support of a large segment of a population, and that support can be a very important component in ending a cycle of violence.

The second model to be considered involves criminal justice and law enforcement. The United States and other democratic countries reach for this model almost instinctively, and rightly so, for terrorist actions are crimes. The criminal justice system is an important weapon in both reducing and deterring violence, and it remains an important tool to combat terrorism in Northern Ireland.

As part of its execution, the criminal justice model may have to include military aid to the civilian power if the civilian police are unable to maintain order on their own. In such a case, it is important that the military assistance remain under the firm authority of the civilian police, because, if unchecked, the military power threatens to destroy democratic rights and processes.

The third model is enhanced international cooperation against terrorism. Even though many terrorist groups carry out their actions in a narrowly defined geographical area, groups waging violence have developed increasingly sophisticated international support structures. Such support may be in terms of political and diplomatic support abroad but could also include significant fund-raising and arms procurement activities.

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AP Photo/Alastair Grant

John Dillon carries one of his son's coffins in Rasharkin Tuesday, July 14, 1998, as the three coffins of Richard, Mark, and Jason Quinn, are moved to the Catholic church at Rasharkin, Northern Ireland. The three brothers were killed in a sectarian arson attack on their home on July 12. Their deaths shocked the province and led to serious soul-searching about the future of Northern Ireland's shaky peace. Their funeral highlighted the emotional distress that more than 20 years of violence have wrought on individual families.

Even localized terrorism can have a crucial international element, and it takes international cooperation to diminish the terrorist threat.

In the case of Northern Ireland, all three of these models are being used. Since the Downing Street declaration and the start of the Northern Ireland peace process, there has been a very heavy stress on prophylaxis and politics. The Good Friday Agreement worked out by George Mitchell expresses well the fears of both sides in the Northern Ireland conflict, and it enjoys overwhelming support in the communities affected by it.

Nonetheless there remain threats to the Good Friday Agreement. The most important is neglect of the key relationship between peace and security. A broadly inclusive political settlement must include groups with a long and brutal terrorist past that lack a genuine commitment to democratic principles. In the case of the IRA, its political wing, Sinn Fein, is highly experienced and committed to making political progress. But its military wing, especially at the grass roots, is much more skeptical about progress through a political process and has wanted to keep its traditional weapon—force—ready and waiting if politics does not gain it the results it wants.

Consequently, there has been deadlock over the issue of decommissioning weapons. The IRA maintains a large stockpile of highly destructive weapons, including the explosive Semtex, mortars, and machine guns. While perhaps not numerically larger than the stockpiles of the Loyalists, the IRA stockpiles contain more destructive weapons. The Good Friday Agreement provides a two-year time frame for decommissioning forces, but more than one year into the agreement, not a single weapon has been handed in on either side. The IRA argues that giving up any weapon is an act of surrender. Still, decommissioning of weapons is the litmus test of the Agreement, not only for its practical effects but also for its psychological effects on the parties.

Given the present state of affairs, the respective governments may wish to link various events in the Northern Ireland peace process to increase the incentive for terrorists' cooperation. For example, the original agreement does not link the release of large numbers of prisoners to the decommissioning of weapons. This strategy may bear revisiting.

Another way out may be to try to split Sinn Fein off from the IRA. Sinn Fein may decide that progress at the political level is important enough that it will distance itself from the armed wing of the IRA and sever links with that wing if it refuses to cooperate with the political process. Such an outcome occurred with the Basques.

Whatever the IRA, Sinn Fein, or the Loyalist terrorists decide, democratic parties must continue the political process. The political framework must function even if some factions remain attached to terrorist groups. Along these lines, it is hard to imagine one terrorist group completely making the transition to a political party; perhaps a split is the best we can hope for.

Some groups are not on board in this peace process, so we have not eliminated the problem of terrorist groups. Therefore, our best option now may be to use public opinion to marginalize the terrorists while using the criminal justice system to punish those who continue to pursue terrorism.

## Jon Alterman on the PLO

Although originally established in 1964 by the Arab League, the PLO absorbed a number of other movements in the aftermath of the 1967 war and has been an umbrella organization dominated by Fateh in general and Yasser Arafat in particular. Arafat's constant effort to build coalitions between Fateh and other organizations has made the PLO something of a less rational actor on the one hand, but more responsive to changes in Palestinian public opinion on the other hand.

A second characteristic of the PLO is that since an early period it has resembled a government, with a large resource base (perhaps exceeding \$1 billion per year in the late 1980s), its own bureaucracy and entitlement programs, and the recognition of at least some world governments.

A third characteristic is that it has been able to rely on sympathetic regional governments for logistical support. Moving from Jordan to Lebanon to Tunisia (and with fighters in an even wider array of countries), the PLO has been able to rebound from setbacks.

The decision to abandon armed struggle has not been unanimous, but the idea has garnered increasing support within the organization since it first surfaced in the early 1970s. Several developments accelerated that move:

- **Soviet policy.** The Soviet Union was a strong ally of the PLO for many years, but Mikhail Gorbachev made it clear to Arafat in the late 1980s that Soviet support for Palestinian armed struggle was diminishing (as indeed were the larger fortunes of the Soviet Union).
- **Intifada.** The Palestinian uprising against the Israeli occupation occurred without PLO coordination and forced the PLO leadership to move quickly to reassert their centrality to Palestinian life. In so doing, they were forced to choose between those favoring a violent solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict (many of whom were in exile) and those favoring a negotiated one. They chose the latter (in the process incorporating such local leadership as Hanan Ashrawi and Faisal Hussein) but have been careful not to crack down too hard on the former, especially Hamas.
- **Gulf war.** By all accounts, the PLO's embrace of Saddam Hussein following the latter's invasion of Kuwait was a horrible miscalculation that led to the expulsion of huge numbers of Palestinian workers from the wealthy Gulf monarchies and a dramatic cut in those countries' subsidies to the PLO.
- **Madrid.** In exchange for Arab support in Desert Storm, the Bush Administration orchestrated a conference in Madrid to find a permanent solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. While the Madrid Conference itself did not produce progress, it created an environment in which the Oslo Accords could be struck.

While many of the factors in the PLO's turn to diplomacy are specific to that case, there appear to be several generalizable lessons.

- The PLO had an **unusually rich resource** base to draw on. It was not merely a terrorist organization but also a government in exile, a business conglomerate, and a source of significant patronage—it had durability.
- The PLO was a **responsive organization**. As a loose confederation of nationalist organizations, it often had to (and did) shift policy to reflect the opinions of its constituency or rebound from changes in the international environment.
- **U.S. diplomacy** played an important role. As early as the 1970s, PLO leaders began to understand that they could not achieve their goals without at least tacit

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support from the United States. American conditions for a dialogue shaped to some degree PLO behavior in the 1980s and even 1990s.

Israeli law enforcement measures appear to have played little role in the PLO's decision to turn toward a negotiated solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Broader strategies such as the village council plan of 1980-81 were ineffectual, and Israel's widely reported support for Hamas in its earliest phases appears to have backfired.

Two Israeli decisions have played a crucial role in the PLO's transformation, however. The first was the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, which at one stroke denied the PLO territoriality and removed it from Israel's borders. Although Lebanon has turned into a quagmire for Israel, it marked a decisive end to any PLO illusions about victory through force. Second, the government of Israel was willing to negotiate when the opportunity presented itself at Oslo. Despite having ignited a political backlash at home, it helped pave the way for an as yet to be achieved negotiated end to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

### **Teresita Schaffer on the LTTE**

Sri Lanka has the distinction of having had two civil wars going on at the same time; and in a number of ways, Sri Lanka's two different experiences with terrorist organizations have complicated the task of dealing with its terrorist problems. One of Sri Lanka's terrorist experiences has happened two times. The government has twice put down a majority Sinhalese group called the JVP (Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, or National Liberation Front) using police action verging on military force. The government has also battled for a decade and a half with the LTTE, although that effort has been markedly less successful.

Of the Sri Lankan population of 18 million, 75 percent are Sinhalese and 19 to 20 percent are Tamil. The two groups are ethnically and linguistically distinct, and Sinhalese are predominantly Buddhist while the Tamils are predominantly Hindu. More than half of the Tamils live in the North and East, with smaller concentrations in major cities such as Colombo. Other Tamils are plantation workers whose ancestors were brought over from India about 100 years ago by the British to work on the tea plantations; they are known as "Hill Tamils" or "Estate Tamils." The remainder of the population consists primarily of Tamil-speaking Muslims who tend to oppose the Tamil militants.

The experience of twice putting down a group with extreme political views has left an unfortunate legacy of allowing people in the Sri Lankan government to think that they know how to deal with terrorism. First founded in the 1960s, the Maoist JVP had ties to the Chinese Communist Party but was philosophically closer to Peru's "Shining Path." The organization was avowedly revolutionary, and its support in the early years came mainly from university students and frustrated high school graduates. In the late 1960s these youth mobilized politically and also armed themselves. In the 1970 Sri Lankan election, they threw their support to the Sri Lankan Freedom Party, which was victorious. By April 1971, however, they had grown disaffected with mainstream politicians, and one night they coordinated simultaneous attacks on five police stations, followed by a series of political killings. The JVP was put down by military action supported by India, Pakistan, China, and the United States. Members were either jailed or killed, and the group virtually ceased to exist.

In 1977, politicians seeking to show that the JVP could not survive in the political arena allowed the party to reestablish itself legally. The experiment appeared to work; in a 1981 election the group registered less than 5 percent of the vote nationally, and in its strongest district received just 13 percent of the vote. In university elections, however, the group enjoyed significant support.

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In 1987 the Indian government sent 100,000 troops to Sri Lanka to enforce a peace agreement following four years of Sinhalese-Tamil armed strife. The presence of Indian troops on Sri Lankan soil agitated members of the ferociously nationalist JVP, and the organization's militant opposition to those troops helped it gain support among many Sri Lankan nationalists.

By the late 1980s, the JVP's membership was almost completely different than it had been twenty years before. Although Rohana Wijeweera still led the JVP, most of its old members had gone on to more mainstream political affiliations, and a new crop of young, unemployed graduates once again comprised the rank and file. The group's first actions were a series of general strikes, but in late 1988 the JVP began to target the families of police officers. In response, the government closed ranks behind the police and attacked the JVP mercilessly. At the height of the conflict, the weekly death toll topped 300 people. By early 1990, the entire JVP leadership had been killed and the organization was destroyed.

Almost a decade later, the legacy of the JVP remains. Many Sri Lankans lost friends or relatives in the violence, and memories of those days remain fresh in many people's minds. In addition, many Sri Lankans harbor resentment over what they perceived to be lectures by Western officials demanding that they respect human rights in their deadly battle against the JVP. Finally, many Sri Lankans have concluded that the government did what it had to do against the JVP and that they now understand how to counter terrorist campaigns.

In fact, the government's campaign against the JVP succeeded in part because the JVP lacked a broad constituency. Put quite simply, the JVP's grievances did not capture the imagination of any major concentrations of people. Even at the height of its popularity, there was no district in which the JVP would have won an election. As a consequence, the JVP's campaign of terror got it more attention and influence than it would have gotten through political means. At the same time, the JVP failed because there was never a huge reservoir of people who said, "We don't like their methods but at least they've gotten us on the map." It makes a difference how much resonance the underlying grievance has.

The LTTE has been a different phenomenon. Ethnic rivalry has a long history in Sri Lanka, but the roots of the present-day ethnic conflict lie in the period after its independence from Britain in 1948. For centuries, intercommunal ties between Tamils and Sinhalese have been close at the elite level, but Sri Lanka's first post-independence government made a catastrophic decision. In a blatant attempt to tighten the Sinhalese grip on power, the government wrote a nationality law that effectively disenfranchised the Hill Tamils, who constitute almost half of the Tamil population. The error was compounded in 1956 when a prime ministerial candidate, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, decided to campaign on a call for the primacy of Sinhalese language, culture, and religion in Sri Lanka. The two moves served to heighten intercommunal tension and led first to Tamil militancy and later to separatist sentiments.

The first Tamil militant groups were founded in the 1960s, and they took as their goal greater rights for the Tamil population. By 1976, the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) had emerged as the first political group calling for a separate Tamil state. In 1983, however, the Sri Lankan government adopted a constitutional amendment criminalizing advocacy of a separate state within Sri Lankan territory and requiring that all members of parliament swear an oath not to support separatism in any way. That decision forced the TULF out of the parliament and deepened the alienation between the Tamil population and the government. As a result, support for the LTTE increased.

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In the early years, much of the support for Tamil independence came from individuals in their thirties who were primarily motivated by the language issue. Starting in the 1970s, the cause of Tamil independence began to attract a younger crowd, in part because of quotas on university admissions aimed at limiting the number of Tamils with access to higher education. In the 1990s, the trend toward youth has accelerated. Some members are as young as thirteen or fourteen years old. Many of these younger members are fanatical; they are issued a cyanide capsule on completion of their basic training with the LTTE, and they have been engaged in suicide bombing.

The LTTE's first acts of terrorism were directed against Tamils who opposed the LTTE's policies; LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran got his start assassinating the mayor of the predominantly Tamil city of Jaffna in the mid-1970s. Since 1985, the four targets of frequent terrorism have been

- VIPs, such as Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 and Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa in 1993;
- Tamil rivals;
- isolated Sinhalese and Muslim populations on the borders of Tamil-majority areas;
- civilian population centers, such as mosques and the Temple of the Tooth Shrine.

In combating the LTTE, the Sri Lankan government has employed three strategies.

- **Law enforcement efforts** have placed constraints on the LTTE and have imprisoned a number of their followers and sympathizers, but at the same time have alienated many Tamils.
- **Military efforts** have been inconclusive, in part because the Sri Lankan military has not proven particularly competent, and in part because it does not appear to possess a clear strategy. The military has never been able to hold the main Tamil population centers in the North and East of the country simultaneously.
- **Efforts to negotiate a political settlement** have generally been cases of too little, too late. A 1995 peace proposal started out with great promise but is now moribund.

The Sri Lankan government has not tried three strategies that may hold out the promise of ending the long-running conflict.

- **Engage in public diplomacy.** The Sri Lankan government could launch a major "hearts and minds" campaign to win the support of large segments of the Tamil population away from LTTE sympathy. The present government mounted a limited effort along these lines in the so-called "White Lotus" campaign, but a major campaign has yet to be tried.
- **Demonstrate that autonomy can work.** The Sri Lankan government could mount a major effort to show that autonomy can work. Constitutional amendments introduced in 1987 provided for a degree of decentralization of power. This could have been an opportunity to show that the Sri Lankan government was capable of allowing local authorities, including Tamil-dominated ones, to run their own affairs effectively. The near-normalization of life in the East in 1994 and the government's taking control of Jaffna in 1995 could have led to similar "demonstration projects" in devolution. In each case, the opportunity slipped away, reinforcing the concerns of skeptics in the Tamil community about whether devolution could work.
- **Conclude a peace settlement.** The Sri Lankan government could reach a peace agreement with the LTTE. There have, of course, been a whole series of negotiating efforts, which thus far have come to naught.

*In the 1990s, the [LTTE's] trend toward youth has accelerated... many of these younger members are fanatical.*

The chief lesson to be learned here is that if we focus only on the criminal side of terrorism, then we will fail to solve even that side of terrorism. In the Sri Lankan case, resolving the terrorism arising out of the ethnic conflict will require at least two approaches: a political negotiation and an integrated military strategy. This government understood the importance of the political part of the package but was unable to deliver on it. It then turned to the military arm as a separate response but, despite its success in capturing the LTTE's stronghold in Jaffna, was not able to put the military and political parts of its strategy together. The LTTE, of course, had by then lost interest in the negotiation, leaving the conflict in a new and bloodier stalemate.

Success in the initial political negotiations might not have eliminated terrorism. When one is dealing with hard-bitten adversaries, some of whom see little personal advantage in a peaceful settlement, the risk is high that extremist elements will continue to use terrorism even if the mainstream has settled. However, under these circumstances, terrorism would be reduced to its criminal element. With the underlying grievances at least headed for resolution, the terrorism problem would assume manageable proportions.

## Conclusions

One of the hardest problems facing government officials dealing with terrorism is deciding when to employ what strategy. Negotiations with those perpetrating violence are not the solution to every problem; by the same token, many terrorist campaigns cannot be stopped by law enforcement actions alone. Many participants suggested a decisive factor determining the sufficiency of law enforcement activities is the support that the terrorist groups have among the populations in which they are based. Narrowly based terrorist groups can be rooted out, but groups that rely on a broad base of support (some of which can come from beyond a nation's borders) have a durability that may defy such efforts. For that reason, ethnically based groups may be harder to eliminate through force than class-based groups, since ethnicity has proven a stronger tie than class in most cases.

If negotiations are pursued, two conditions should be present. The first is that the government should enjoy a strong popular mandate. Political opponents often portray negotiating with terrorists as "giving in to terrorism." Such an attack can topple weak governments or, short of that, stymie whatever agreement has been reached through negotiations.

The second condition is that the terrorist organization is going through a period of self-evaluation. In such circumstances, the government may be able to successfully split off pragmatists from hard-line terrorists, bring the population along with the pragmatists, and dry up popular support for those continuing to pursue violence.

Throughout, participants stressed the importance of intelligence. In confronting terrorism, the nature of the grievance does matter, and the nature of the organization putting forth the grievance matters as well. Intelligence is important not only to prevent terrorist attacks but also to understand how the organization works and how its decision making processes can be affected.

A consistent theme in all of the presentations was the extent to which terrorism is an international problem. Money and weapons flow across borders, and supporters of terrorism (if not the terrorists themselves) often have established bases in other countries. Increasingly, law enforcement efforts aimed at stemming terrorism have an international component, and such a strategy will require more international cooperation in the future.

## About the Panelists

**Jon B. Alterman** is a program officer in the United States Institute of Peace's Research and Studies Program, where he covers the Middle East. His most recent book is *New Media, New Politics? From Satellite Television to the Internet in the Arab World*.

**Martha Crenshaw** is John E. Andrus Professor of Government at Wesleyan University in Middletown, CT. She is the author of a number of works on political violence and terrorism and was co-editor of *The Encyclopedia of World Terrorism*.

**Teresita Schaffer** is director of the South Asia Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. She is a thirty-year veteran of the Foreign Service and served as U.S. Ambassador to Sri Lanka from 1992 to 1995.

**Paul Wilkinson** is a professor of international relations and chairman of the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. He is the author of several authoritative works on terrorism and political violence. His book most recent book, *Terrorism and Liberal Democracy*, will be published shortly.

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