

Abstract

Against the backdrop of the centuries-old historical record covering both insurgent and incumbent use of terrorist tactics, the distinction between the older terrorism and the “New Terrorism” is artificial at best. This is because the differentiation it seeks to create is subjective and likely event-and interest-driven. A reappraisal of the “New Terrorist” paradigm is necessary.

Two new trends in terrorism introduced in this essay – *impact scalability*, defined as the trinity of the will, ability and capability to quantitatively manipulate conventional or unconventional mass casualty terrorism, and the *dynamic of reciprocal threat perception*, here identified as a likely catalyst for the future political violence movements’ (PVM) use of unconventional mass casualty terrorism – are intricately linked to the terrorist actors as the terminus a quo of terrorism. Both conceptions lend themselves to the conclusion that terrorism has become *even more dangerous* than suggested, and for reasons not addressed, by the proponents of the “New Terrorism.”

In a near future, PVMs’ capability of almost limitless “*impact scalability*” due to the development of precision delivery systems will be, and is already taking shape as, the single most important contributing factor to a radical transformation of terrorism, and indeed of warfare, that will give new meaning to the conception of “strategic asymmetry.” Moreover, the author proposes that it is the “*reciprocal dynamic of threat perception*” that acts as the principal structural catalyst in the reification of mass casualty terrorist attacks with conventional or unconventional weapons.

In the light of a seemingly inexorable proliferation of ABC weapons that will likely not stop at the state level, and especially once weapons of mass destruction (WMD) become available to

the future perpetrator, knowledge of his psychological individual or group profile – of the way his mind works – will become the most powerful asset in the service of those forces opposing him. On the side of prevention, academic risk analysis and operational intelligence analysis, as shown in an example on the protection of critical infrastructures (CIP), will have to review the importance of qualitative research and the methodological aspects this involves – not least in the case of actor-centered analysis.