



# Terrorism Old and New: Counterterrorism in Canada<sup>1</sup>

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*The paper starts with a new typology of terrorist acts based on a database of Canadian incidents. Terrorism is classified according to the scope of the stated objectives and the justification given for the acts committed. The typology is then used to extract the essential characteristics of different forms of terrorism and to explore the kinds of counterterrorist strategies which are most likely to be effective against each. Special attention is given to so-called 'new' terrorism and the best strategies to prevent or repress it.*

*Keywords:* Terrorism; Counterterrorism; Canada; Typology of Terrorism; Policing

## 1. Introduction

When the Hon. Paul Martin succeeded Jean Chrétien as Canada's new Prime Minister in December 2003,<sup>2</sup> his most conspicuous move was to appoint a Cabinet that included a new Ministry of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness (MPSEP), clearly patterned on the US Department of Homeland Security—though the Martin government is reluctant to admit it. The minister responsible for Public Safety is the Hon. Anne McLennan, who was also appointed as Vice-Prime Minister of Canada, a telling expression of the importance of the new ministry.

The creation of the MPSEP was not a response to a specific attack—Canada, although explicitly mentioned by an Al-Qaeda spokesman as being among seven targeted countries, has not been the object of recent terrorist attacks.<sup>3</sup> Instead, its creation testifies to the global character of terrorism, whereby countries are accountable to fellow countries in countering terrorism. It also bears witness to the new worldwide defensive stance that followed the tragedy of September 2001. This tragedy

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exemplifies a perceptible evolution towards what has been called a *new* terrorism (Hoffman, 1997; Laqueur, 1997, 1999, 2003; Pape, 2003). In our view 'new terrorism' has features that call for an equally 'new' counterterrorism. Our analysis rests on four assumptions: (i) efficient counterterrorism necessitates knowledge of the kind of organization that is being fought; (ii) the knowledge that is needed must support action—that is, it must be knowledge that can efficiently match core features of terrorist organizations with police responses (to the extent that the new terrorism is in fact a police problem. More on this later); (iii) though the tactics of important terrorist organizations, such as the Basque ETA, have not really evolved, there has been a momentous change in the nature of terrorism worldwide and in Canada; (iv) counterterrorism must therefore adapt to changes in terrorism.

In line with these assumptions, this paper is divided into four parts, followed by a brief conclusion. First, we propose a broad typology of terrorism based on our current research. Second, we present typical instances of 'conventional' and of 'new' terrorism in Canada and compare the features of both kinds of terrorism. Third, we review the most threatening kind of terrorism that plagued Canada in the 1970s in order to highlight one of the most important factors of a successful police response: parallelism between police and terrorist strategies. Finally, we explore possible strategies to deal with the (harder to define) features of new terrorism in Canada.

## 2. Terrorism in Canada, 1973–2003: An Operational Typology

Attempting to produce a typology of events that are both rare and extremely diverse in nature can be a perilous undertaking. At worst, it can distort the events that are being considered by imposing forms dictated by the researcher's needs rather than the particular characteristics of the events under consideration. In an attempt to avoid this, the typology we offer in this section is at once minimal in its determining variables and maximal in its scope. It is meant to answer the specific question of how much influence the global new terrorist trend has had in Canada. We have therefore started our analysis in 1973, to exclude the large number of terrorist attempts committed between 1963 and 1973 by members of the *Front de libération du Québec* (FLQ), which represent a paradigm case of conventional terrorism. We return to these instances of terrorism in the next part of this paper.

We have built a *qualitative* database of the large number of incidents that took place in Canada between 1973 and 2003, using a number of existing sources. One major source was Kellett, Beanlands, Deacon, Jeffrey, and Lapalme (1991), who have produced a monumental reference on terrorism and political violence up to 1989, itself based in part on work by Ross (1988). Starting from this we have completed the chronology through the 1990s and 2000s (in part with the help of Mickolus, 1980, 1993; Mickolus, Sandler, & Murdock, 1989; Mickolus & Simmons, 1997; Vareilles, 2001). We also added much contextual information on the incidents and increased the amount of cross-incident linking in an effort to escape the conventional database approach, which has proven to be somewhat sterile. We would like to move instead towards a 'narrative' database in which incidents are considered together rather than being extracted as

discrete events. We do not think it particularly promising to construct a classification of separated *incidents*. Incidents are deceptive both in their apparent internal unity (often constructed by the media) and in their artificially enhanced discreteness. The stories of terrorism we are working with are complex, intermeshing, and vary greatly in the degree in which they result from planned action. We would like to avoid some of the problems that Kellet et al. (1991) had with classification, especially when filing *incidents* and ignoring relationships between them, even the most obvious, such as the identity of the perpetrators. This approach led to their categorizing one attack by the Direct Action/'Squamish Five' members, the Litton Industries bomb of 1982, as 'left wing' while another, the firebombing of the 'Red Hot Video' premises a few months later, is categorized as 'single issue' terrorism, opposition to pornography apparently not considered to be 'left wing.' Even if 'left' and 'right' wing were helpful categories, which is doubtful, this incident-based classification clearly does not fit the reality it is meant to describe.

We have also decided, at least for the time being, to adopt an extremely wide interpretation of the phrase 'terrorism in Canada' not only with respect to the 'terrorism' element, which we take to include hoaxes, threats, individual attacks, support activities such as fundraising, and failed or foiled plots, but also with regard to the 'Canadian content' of the situations being considered. To us any link to Canada is interesting, even if it is only that an aeroplane hijacked in the USA had to refuel in Gander on its way to a third country. (Our project includes the study of all kinds of responses to terrorism, which in this case would simply be the refuelling of the craft.) Any plotting, preparation, or fundraising activity in Canada, even if the actual attacks are to take place elsewhere, is of course included.

Still, for the more quantitatively inclined we can produce an approximate count of terrorist events in Canada drawn from 400 entries during the 1973–2003 period: 6 hijackings; 2 aeroplane bombings; 73 disruptive hoaxes; 9 hostage takings or kidnappings; 4 letter bombs; 170 bombs, firebombs, and arson; 59 threats; 35 attacks on individuals; 45 acts of vandalism; 14 plots and foiled attacks; 32 instances of support. This list is partial and we are still gathering information. For instance, we are trying to take into account all cars, weapons, explosives, and other equipment stolen in order to conduct a terrorist attack.

For the purposes of this paper it is not necessary to devise a universal and definitive typology—one that effectively differentiates between the broad variants of Canadian terrorism and those of the 'new' extremist terrorism should be sufficient. Towards that goal we study *situations*, rather than events or actors, meaning that events that are linked together through their perpetrators or through practical consequences (for instance, murder following a kidnapping) are considered as a unit. These situations are then arranged in four interrelated sets according to two qualitative variables. The first variable is the scope of the desired impact (however unrealistic from the observers' point of view). That scope can be very narrow, such as putting an end to the release of sour gas around the perpetrator's ranch, or extremely wide if it involves fundamental changes in society, such as abandoning the capitalist-liberal system. The second variable is the timeframe of the element that is held to have justified the act. When terrorist

**Table 1** Terrorist Fundamental Rationales

Justification of action <sup>b</sup>	Scope of <i>desired</i> <sup>a</sup> impact	
	Narrow	Wide
Forward-looking	Demand-based terror	Revolutionary terror
Backward-looking	'Private-justice' terror	'Restoration' terror

<sup>a</sup>Likelihood of success or reasonableness of expectations and desires is not considered.

<sup>b</sup>This is an internal moral justification; no attempt is made to determine whether it would be considered legitimate by others.

acts are a response to a perceived (real or otherwise) slight or injustice that happened in the past, we consider them to be 'backward-looking'; if, on the contrary, the act is meant to achieve a goal at a later time (e.g., to force an entity to fulfill a demand), we categorized it as 'forward-looking.' This gives us four broad categories based on the underlying rationale of the perpetrators, as presented in Table 1.

Note that this rationale-based typology can also be applied to what is often referred to as 'state terrorism,' in both its international 'state-sponsored' and its domestic or repressive guises. We do not consider Canada to be engaged in state terrorism, but it has been known to give refuge to individuals who have engaged in such terrorism in their respective countries. Private enterprises whose actions support repressive regimes might also be considered as at least partially responsible (sociologically if not legally) for state terrorism.

*(a) Demand-Based Terror*

Demand-based terror has always been the most common type of terrorism in Canada. Typically, it involves small groups, often ad hoc formations, focused on a specific object that is perceived as a problem. It is forward-looking in the sense that the action taken is aimed at correcting the problem. Here, despite the frequent conviction that the authorities who might or should be responsible are either incompetent, corrupt, or actually at the source of the problem, the main goal is not to *punish* them but to ameliorate a situation. It is interesting to note that these demands are often not addressed to the state, as has traditionally been understood to be the case with conventional terrorism. In many cases the acts amount to violent intimidation of private persons, groups, or enterprises. It should also be noted that the category does not quite fit the conventional 'single issue' type used in the literature, since that category spans both our 'backward-looking' and 'forward-looking' categories.

In Canada, demand-based terror consists mainly of acts of vandalism by animal rights and ecology groups. Their targets include mink farms, university departments and private laboratories that use animals for tests, and meat packing plants. Eco-terrorism is rare but Canadians are sometimes involved in acts of sabotage abroad, such as the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society's attack on whaling equipment in Iceland in

November 1986. Alberta farmer and commune leader Weibo Ludwig was involved in over 150 incidents of vandalism against oil installations around his property in 1997 and 1998. He was trying to stop oil companies from polluting the area with sour gas.

In Quebec the language/nationalist debate has provoked a great number of small incidents clustered around political events perceived as endangering French or English in Quebec (depending on the political preferences of the perpetrators). One of these events was the 1980 referendum, when a few cases of threats, against both the 'Yes' and 'No' camps, were recorded. Tempers flared again in 1982 around the constitutional debate and a new language law. Actions included leaving unarmed dynamite in various politically meaningful sites, especially Parti Québécois offices, the destruction of billboards, attempted arson, and various forms of vandalism against shops and other commercial enterprises displaying English-only signs. In December 1986 a court ruling allowing bilingual signs provoked a new wave of bomb threats, Molotov cocktail attacks, and other forms of vandalism against enterprises without a sufficiently French appearance. Another ruling in December 1988 triggered attacks, one of which caused \$200,000 worth of damage to the Montreal offices of Alliance Quebec (an 'English rights' organization). In 2000 ex-FLQ member Rhéal Mathieu was arrested for attempted arson against companies with English names (especially Second Cup cafes) and against a church where an English-rights group was to meet. Finally, and more recently, the debate around the fusion of municipalities within Montreal became polarized over the language issue and in late 2003 served as the focus point for militant threats and acts of vandalism against a former municipality's town hall.

Another important area of demand-based terror is the targeting of abortion clinics and their staff. Actions have included stealing and destroying medical equipment, vandalizing premises with acid, destroying and attempting to destroy premises by arson or bombing, threatening staff (in particular, Dr Henry Morgentaler), and three cases where obstetricians who performed abortions were shot.

Demand-based terror also includes local attempts perpetrated at a micro level such as one in 1979 when parents of children in Langley, BC, set fire to five school officials' homes in a dispute over the admission of their children to school.

*(b) 'Private Justice' Terror*

Private justice involves a response to an event, situation, or conflict that is intended to obtain retribution, as defined by the attacker. In its various guises it may attempt to obtain reparation and redress, but more often than not its main goal is punishment. It can be a sophisticated response or straightforward revenge, but it is always characterized by a claim of previous victimization.

Examples of private justice terror include the many acts of arson and other forms of destruction committed in British Columbia by members of the Doukhobor 'Sons of Freedom' religious community (the SOF, or 'Freedomites' are a subset of the wider group). Sons of Freedom militants typically reacted against the presence of installations or buildings that were deemed to be offensive in some way to the religious purity of the physical context in which they lived. Most of these attacks were intended to destroy

unholy or sacrilegious buildings, monuments, etc. Others were essentially punitive, targeting the property of individuals who were perceived to be Doukhobor victimizers. The SOF have burned homes, schools, a post office, and municipal buildings and have repeatedly bombed CP Rail tracks. SOF arsonists have been far less active during the period under study than in the first half of the 20th century, when they burned hundreds of homes and other buildings. Active mainly between 1980 and 1986, when they committed some 40 cases of arson and explosions, the SOF are no longer in the news (quite a few are in jail). There are a few exceptions, such as the burning of a computer lab in 2001, causing some \$150,000 worth of damage. The arsonist, an 81-year-old woman, was trying to commemorate an important Doukhobor religious anniversary.

This category also includes acts of intimidation carried out by xenophobic groups such as skinheads, the KKK, and various other groups, some of which having ties to US groups. In many cases xenophobic attacks have been carried out by ad hoc groups who have used the 'KKK' symbol to threaten their victims but have no confirmed relation with the Klan. East Indians in BC have been targeted, suffering beatings, murders, arson, bombings, and cross burnings. In April 1981 three Canadian extremist right-wingers were embroiled in a plot to overthrow the government of Dominica and set up a white supremacist utopia on the island, pushing 'private justice,' xenophobic terror into revolutionary terror. In 1986 a bomb was placed in a Canadian Immigration Centre in Vancouver, with a note blaming Canadian immigration policy for 'dumping' 'third world persons' in Canada. In 1988 five skinheads were caught on tape bragging about their murder of Nirmal Singh Gill, 65, on the grounds of the temple where he worked. In 1992 Austrian police arrested a group of neo-Nazis who were plotting violent attacks in Vienna and found they were financed in part by Canadian-based Holocaust denier Ernst Zundel.

In 1986 Québecair was sold to CP Air, leading to a series of threats against Québecair and CP Air flights and planes. The sale of the airline, seen as a symbol of Quebec entrepreneurship, was interpreted by some as a loss of economic power in Quebec to the benefit of Western Canada. The disruption of operations could have been a knee-jerk reaction but may have been intended to cause financial losses.

In this category should be included three types of state terror. First, there are repressive states abroad who attempt to control their dissidents who have sought refuge in Canada. Such was the case of Lybia, who was in 1988 in the middle of an FBI investigation into travel agencies used as fronts for Lybian agents. One such agency, the Manara Travel Agency in Ottawa, which was closely tied to xenophobic groups in Canada and the USA, was dismantled when the FBI arrested some of its operators for plotting to kill Iran-Contra conspirator Oliver North. During the end of the 1970s, Yugoslavia was attempting to control its dissidents in Canada and some of them reacted by attacking Yugoslavian government targets in Canada, as well as other institutions that were seen as friendly to the Tito regime. After the publication of *The satanic verses* in 1988, Iran pronounced a *fatwah* against its author, Salman Rushdie. In Canada this translated into threats and arson attacks on bookstores that carried the book as well as counter-threats against Iranians in Canada. When the government of Canada refused to designate the

book as hate literature, Revenue Minister Otto Jelinek and Foreign Affairs Minister Joe Clark were also threatened. Iran has also sent agents to Canada, for instance Mansour Ahani, who was arrested in Italy in 1992 for plotting the assassination of a prominent Iranian dissident, and Djafar Seyfi, who was caught attempting to intimidate Iranians in Canada. Second, a few Canadian-based transnational enterprises have been supporting repressive regimes abroad, which may or may not count directly as terrorism but could eventually provoke retaliation here. Third, there are former agents of repressive states who migrate to Canada. For instance Léon Mugesera, instigator of the Rwandan genocide, arrived in Canada in 1993.

(c) *Revolutionary Terror*

Revolutionary terror aims at fundamental changes at the state level. In Canada such terror is usually aimed at another country, with Canada serving as a base for action elsewhere (e.g., India). One exception would be the FLQ, as already explained.

The Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) conducted a series of attacks on various targets in the beginning of the 1980s. Its overall goal was the independence of Armenia from Turkey and it targeted Turkish diplomats in Canada, newspapers felt to be unsympathetic to its cause, and other Armenians who questioned its approach or refused to fund it when asked. In May 1982 a bomb placed in an Air Canada freight terminal in Los Angeles was defused 15 minutes before it was timed to explode. It was meant as retaliation for the arrest of Armenian extremists in Canada some weeks earlier. The Justice Commandos for the Armenian Genocide (JCAG) assassinated a Turkish diplomat in Canada in August 1982. In 1985 three ASALA gunmen invaded the Turkish embassy in Ottawa, killing a security guard and holding the building for four hours. Two weeks after their arrest ASALA sent a letter to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) threatening to blow up the Toronto subway if the trio was not released from custody. The Montreal RCMP office received the same threat to the Montreal Métro.

The IRA is also the source of some events concerning Canadians. In a few cases Canadian citizens have been arrested at the US border while trying to smuggle IRA members across. In 1994 a Canadian was arrested in Spain for attempting to deliver weapons to the group. As well, while we have not investigated the fundraising activities of the IRA in Canada, we think it likely that they are quite extensive.

Sikh extremists have been particularly active since 1984, when the Indian government attacked separatists who had barricaded themselves in the Golden Temple of Amritsar, Sikhism's most important shrine. The attack left the Temple severely damaged and hundreds dead and wounded. Some terrorist attacks were intended as responses to the battle at Amritsar and, to the extent that this was their motivation, could thus be considered 'private justice.' For instance, shortly after the tragedy a group of Sikhs attacked the Indian high commissioner and another stormed the Indian consulate in Toronto. These attacks, however, only took place because of the pre-existing claims and demands of those who had appointed themselves fighters for a future Sikh homeland. Sikh extremism in Canada ranges from raising funds for violent attacks

to intimidation and assassinations. While the overall goal is the creation of an independent Sikh homeland ('Khalistan') in India, much violence in Canada occurs around the more immediate concerns of control of local groups and the intimidation (and murder) of vocal dissidents (most notably newspaper editor Tara Singh Hayer, who survived a shooting in 1988 but was finally killed in 1998, while wheelchair bound). However, with the Air India/Tokyo airport bombings of June 1985 (another Air India plane was scheduled to be bombed in May 1986 but the plot was foiled by police in Montreal), Sikh extremism clearly spilled over to our next category, restoration terror.

Tamil terrorism in Canada is largely limited to fundraising activities, mostly in Toronto; there are a handful of exceptions, most directed against intra-group dissidence, with damage to property and violent attacks against individuals who failed to conform to the demands of the group. Tamil terrorist financing organizations are particularly adept at disguising their activities, even fooling then-ministers Paul Martin and Maria Minna into participating in a fundraising dinner in May 2000.

Direct Action, a small group named after a French extremist group, targeted capitalism in general as well as certain of its aspects which it felt to be particularly hateful, such as pollution (blowing up a power relay station), the defence industry (blowing up cruise missile sub-contractor Litton), and pornography (torching three X-rated video shops). Its members were eventually arrested in Squamish, BC, and were subsequently referred to as the 'Squamish Five.'

When a state of emergency was declared in South Africa in 1986, there were a few incidents in Canada (as well as elsewhere) to protest against the apartheid government. Some of these, credit for which was claimed by the Azanian People's Liberation Front (APLF), an essentially unknown organization, while ultimately revealed as hoaxes, caused heavy financial losses. In one instance the APLF claimed to have poisoned South African fruit, which then had to be destroyed; 3,000 bottles of wine were also destroyed when another group using the name 'Direct Action' claimed to have poisoned them.

Canadians Christine Lamont and David Spencer were arrested and tried for the kidnapping of a supermarket chain owner in Brazil in an attempt to finance various leftist revolutionary groups in South America. In 1993, when a cache of weapons and false papers was discovered by accident in Nicaragua, letters by Lamont and Spencer were found with passports in the name of one of the World Trade Center bombers.

*(d) Restoration Terror*

As we shall see, 'restoration' terror now occurs mainly within the context of the 'new terrorism.' It involves various kinds of attempts to re-establish a historical situation. The desired situation may have existed fairly recently or been part of a very distant, sometimes mythical, past. It is often pursued through deeds that show such disregard for human life that they are almost impossible to describe objectively. Such deeds, separately or combined, can be described as epic, desperate, or self-sacrificial. They are based on grandiloquent or simply 'irrational' versions of historic misdeeds, or as the result of wide-scale victimization that fuels desires for revenge, reparation, and, ultimately, restoration. One powerful illustration is Osama Bin Laden's references to the

Muslim debacle in Spain in the 15th century as a slight that must be remedied. His hortatory discourse over the need for a regained Muslim international dominance is at least in part meant to recruit followers and justify more down-to-earth power struggles, but it nonetheless manages to inspire some to make the ultimate sacrifice of their lives. Bin Laden's Al-Qaeda network has recruited a few Canadians and others, such as Ahmed Ressam, who live in Canada but are having difficulty obtaining their citizenship or resident status.

Visions of historic struggles within millenarian or other eschatological worldviews also fit this category and share an absolutist morality that leaves no room for compromise or negotiation. The Muslim extremists' desire to restore the golden age of the Caliphate or their battle against the 'apostates' who rule Islam-dominated countries today is one example. Egypt and its 'pharaohs,' as Islamic fundamentalists refer to Egyptian secular leaders, have been prominent targets. In 1995 the Egyptian embassy in Pakistan was bombed with the financial help of Canadian citizen Ahmad Kahdr (whose son Abdulrahman was recently released from Guantanamo by the US military; Kahdr senior was killed in a firefight with the Pakistani army).

As far as Muslim extremism is concerned, perhaps the most important event in this category is the 'millennium bomber' incident, Ahmed Ressam's attempt to set off a bomb at the Los Angeles airport in 1999 or 2000. The plot failed but the story speaks volumes about the workings of Islamic restoration terror in Canada. Trained in Afghanistan and given 'seed money' to devise an attack on the USA, Ressam was arrested almost by chance—and because he couldn't stay calm under pressure. His connections to terrorists in France, the USA, Afghanistan, Algeria, and Canada reveal a group of individuals that falls somewhat short of being a 'network' but was animated by a powerful overarching mission to strike for the greater glory of Islam, even—if not preferably—at high cost.

### 3. Conventional and 'New' Terrorism: A Contrast

Canada has been largely and happily ignored by history—it has generally been spared from violence, although Canadians have fought in European wars. However, when left-ist terrorism was rampant in Europe, with groups such as the Red Brigades, the Baader–Meinhof gang, and several others motivated less by Marxism than by nationalism (the Basque ETA and the Irish IRA), Canada also had its 'classic' terrorist episode.

#### (a) *Conventional Terrorism: The FLQ as a Canadian Prototype*

This terrorist episode took place mainly in the province of Quebec, where a group that called itself the *Front de libération du Québec* (FLQ or Quebec Liberation Front) was active between 1963 and 1973. In October 1970 it generated the greatest political crisis in Canadian history.

The history of the FLQ falls into two periods. The first spans 1963–68, when the FLQ's political platform was based on traditional right-wing nationalism and its main demand was the independence of Quebec (Fournier, 1998, p. 35). It can thus be

described as demand-based terrorism during the first part of its history. During that time the FLQ perpetrated numerous bomb attacks to get media attention but it was generally careful not to target people and was in fact responsible for only a few accidental casualties.

By 1968 the police had arrested many members of this first FLQ wave, and the group started to reorganize itself under the leadership of intellectuals who were pursuing two goals: the traditional goal of Quebec's independence was coupled with the goal of emancipating the working class and both objectives were pursued at the same level of militancy. The FLQ evolved from limited demand-based terror to revolutionary terror and became increasingly violent. The tradition of not endangering people's lives was generally upheld but FLQ attacks gradually became more and more vicious. In January 1969 a bomb exploded near the home of the Montreal police chief; in February of the same year another bomb at the Montreal Stock Exchange wounded 20 people, three seriously. On 24 June 1970—the National Day of French-Canadians—a bomb exploded at the Department of Defence in Ottawa, killing one person.

The policy of not targeting individuals changed drastically in October 1970. On 5 October 1970, the FLQ's '*Libération*' cell abducted James Richard Cross, a British diplomat appointed to the UK consulate in Montreal. The FLQ made several demands, one of which was the public reading, on state television, of its manifesto. The Canadian government gave in to this demand and the manifesto was read on television by a news anchor on 8 September (it had been read the day before by a private radio station). Unexpectedly, the manifesto, which denounced the exploitation of Quebec's working class by both the English- and French-speaking 'bourgeoisie,' had a profound impact on Quebec public opinion. Its positive reception transformed what had been perceived as a simple kidnapping into a national issue. This issue became a full-fledged crisis with the dramatic abduction of the vice-premier of Quebec, Pierre Laporte, by another FLQ cell, the '*Chénier*' cell (it was later learned that the cells were not acting according to a coordinated plan).

The police forces in Quebec seemed to be overwhelmed and on 15 October the federal government used forgotten World War I legislation—the War Measures Act—and enacted a set of emergency regulations that abrogated civil liberties in Quebec (Brodeur et al., 1971). The Canadian Forces (CF) were activated in Quebec and on 16 October some 500 citizens were arrested and put in preventive custody<sup>4</sup> (all were later released without criminal charges being laid). On 17 October the body of the abducted minister was found in the trunk of a car and the 'October Crisis' reached its climax. One of his abductors, Bernard Lortie, was arrested in Montreal on 6 November. At the end of November the RCMP finally discovered where Mr Cross was being held hostage. His release was negotiated in exchange for safe conduct to Cuba for his five captors and he was freed, unharmed, on 3 December 1970. The three remaining members of the '*Chénier*' cell who had abducted Mr Laporte were arrested on 28 December, bringing the crisis to an end. As we shall see in the third part of this paper, the FLQ continued its armed struggle from 1970 to 1973 but was ultimately defeated by the police. It was no longer a threat after 1973.

*(b) Contrasting Internal Terror and the New Global Wave of Terrorism*

Although not as violent as other terrorist organizations that operated at the same time in other parts of the world, the FLQ can serve as a basis for the formulation of hypotheses about the various features that define a paradigm of terrorism that started to break down in the 1980s and does not fit post-9/11 terrorism. Murderous attempts such as the 1985 bombing of an Air India flight out of Vancouver, which killed 320 people, and the explosion of a Pan Am flight over Lockerbie in December 1988 (270 casualties), were already anomalies with respect to the conventional type of terrorism that had occurred in the 1960s and 1970s (Baader–Meinhof in Germany, Red Brigades in Italy, ETA in Spain, IRA in Ulster and the UK, and various groups of Palestinian terrorists, the Palestinian groups having never fit clearly in the paradigm from the beginning). Some of the features that we will discuss may seem obvious, but they are important to understanding observable changes in terrorism in Canada.

AQ1

*(i) Territoriality*

Most of the conventional movements listed above operated within one country, their main goal being to change its political regime or to provoke the secession of a part of its territory inhabited by a minority group (ethnic, linguistic, or religious). The Palestinians, who operated both inside and outside Israel, were a partial exception to this model. Following a suggestion in Mickolus et al. (1989, Vol. 2, pp. xiii–xiv), we make a distinction between *transnational* and *international* terrorism. A transnational terrorist organization is based in one country but operates at times outside its territory. An international organization not only operates outside a particular territory but is also based in several countries and is comprised of members of different nationalities. Palestinian terrorism is transnational, whereas Al-Qaeda is truly international.

*(ii) Terrorism as communication*

There are two leitmotifs in the literature on terrorism. The first is that terrorism is the weapon of the weak (Laqueur, 1987 and his numerous followers); the second that it is a form of communication (Crelinsten, 1997; Gressang, 2001; Schmid & de Graaf, 1982; Wieviorka, 1988; Wieviorka & Wolton, 1987). That terrorism thrives on media coverage is true of all its forms. This truism should not, however, blind us to important differences between the old (conventional) and the new terrorism—whether internal or global. Here are some of the main differences.

- *Signature.* Conventional terrorism devoted considerable effort to claiming responsibility and to justifying or at least explaining its deeds. The issue of signature plays a lesser role in the new terrorism. For instance, the attacks against the Air India (1985) and the Pan Am (1988) flights were never claimed by any organization or any state or proto-state. Libya has belatedly accepted responsibility for the Lockerbie incident. After the longest investigation in Canadian history, charges were finally brought in 2003 against suspects of the Air India bombing, and the motives have finally become explicit. As has been the case with more recent attacks, it would seem

that the new terrorists purposefully use an ambiguous signature to maximize the terror they seek to provoke.

- *Dominant feature.* Terrorism is a mixture of physical violence and informational content and terrorist organizations could be categorized according to the balance they strike between violence and information. The FLQ would then be at the least violent end of the spectrum as its general strategy was to derive maximum effect from minimal violence through communiqués that spelled out the meaning of the violence (in many cases, sending a threatening communiqué was the *only* violence). This balance has been reversed in the new terrorism, where maximum violence is not accompanied by discursive explanation.
- *Words and images.* Conventional terrorism communicated mostly through the written word, in a national language understood by all, to an audience generally considered to be literate. The new terrorism communicates through images of devastation, intended for an international audience that does not share one language and that is characterized, in some countries, by a high percentage of illiteracy. For the great German sociologist Jürgen Habermas, the collapse of the World Trade Center twin towers was a unique event in the history of terrorism because its enfolding could be watched on television in real time throughout the world (Habermas, Derrida, & Borradori, 2003, pp. 53–78).
- *Privileged channels.* The creation of all-news channels such as CNN, Fox News, and Al-Jazeera has brought about a new level of conflict as these news organizations are aimed at a particular audience and, in certain instances, offer openly partisan coverage. The conflict in the field is now matched by media warfare.
- *Radicalization.* This feature is partly a result of the preceding features, which it blends together. Radicalization means the intensification of a conflict at all levels, including ‘media warfare.’ More importantly, it also refers to a simplification of the issues underlying that conflict. Conventional terrorism blended physical aggression with an explicit intention to convey its meaning and its implications. It was *reflexive* violence: it reflected upon its purpose, which in some instances had a certain level of complexity (e.g., political independence and social reform), and repeatedly tried to communicate this reflection (Brodeur, 1991). In several cases terrorists claimed to be the military arm of a legitimate political movement that was attempting to achieve its goals through persuasion. The new terrorism, in most instances uninterested in conveying an articulate message, instead produces a form of *expressive* violence that signifies little beyond anger, frustration, and a desire to return to some mythical and glorious past. Some observers have even concluded that the content of expressive violence is so thin that it can regress into nihilism (Glucksman, 2002; Ignatieff, 2004; Wieviorka, 1988).

Interestingly, Canadian law (among others) explicitly defines terrorism as violent action in pursuit of goals, be they political, religious, or ‘ideological.’ Yet one important aspect of extremist terrorism today is precisely the absence of the expected logical connection between tactical means and strategic ends. The means actually used or sought after are at times so catastrophic—up to nuclear terrorism—that they do not



allow for a distinction between means and goals: they are either all instrumentality or all finality, finality being understood here as a generic referring to wilful intention (e.g., to harm) without a specific purpose.

*(iii) Motivation*

There is one easily identified difference between conventional and new terrorism. Politics can be said to inspire all conventional terrorism. Indeed, 'politically motivated violence' has been a dominant definition of terrorism. However, it is religion that is at the root of the present wave of terrorism. Obviously, religion also played a part in some conventional forms of terrorism: for instance, the confrontation between Catholics and Protestants in Ulster comes to mind immediately. In truth, the distinction between politics and religion is often problematic—especially with all forms of fundamentalism. Islam may be easy to narrow down to a religion for people who are not part of it, but for its more enthusiastic adepts the separation of politics and religion is a sin, since the only truly moral politics follows the revealed truths of religion. The connection between religion and politics is also highly problematic in the case of 'failed state terrorism'—Chechnya, Somalia, the partitions of ex-Yugoslavia—where there are no longer stable political institutions to serve as background for differentiating religion and politics.

The best way to model the relationship between politics and religion in trying to understand terrorism is probably to use the notion of 'dominant feature' that we used previously to depict the balance between violence and communication. In terms of its dominant feature, fundamentalist terrorism, whether Islamic, Sikh, or Hindu, could be said to be *mainly* motivated by religion, which we would characterize briefly as beliefs organized around revealed truths and supernatural authority. This would account for two additional features. First, conventional terrorism rests on a political program that is realized in time, this time being determined in identical units such as years. The time-frame of religious terrorism that is embodied in such notions as jihad or holy struggle is much less defined and tends ultimately to blend with timelessness or eternity, as conceived by religion. The second element in modelling the contrast between politics and religion is much more problematic and, for want of a better term, we shall use the word 'irrationality' to designate it. Some caution is warranted here, since irrationality is a notorious conceit often used to deny an alternative logic of thought to an action that we fail to understand or which we mean to condemn. Thus, the introduction of an element of 'irrationality' in our understanding of religiously motivated terrorism can also serve as a reminder that there is much that escapes us in considering worldviews that we feel foreign to our own and that we should be cautious in our conclusions on them.

*(iv) Individualization*

This last feature can also be seen as forming a spectrum between two extremes. At one end, both terrorists and their victims are individuals with a precise identity. For instance in 1975 the terrorist known as Carlos attacked an OPEP conference held in

Vienna, taking some 70 hostages and killing three. In this case the victims were targeted for their symbolic value and the terrorist had an elaborate escape plan that finally worked. Although many forms of conventional terrorism have slipped into violence for its own sake (Wieviorka, 1988) individuals who have not renounced their own identity and who want and plan to enjoy the fruits of victory generally are nevertheless conducting it. And, as we just saw, they generally target individuals who are symbols of what they are opposing (heads of state, diplomats, bankers, and so forth).

By contrast, new terrorism is akin to 'bit by bit' genocide. It does not discriminate among individual members of its target group, with consequences startling in their horror. Not only are civilian men, women, and children indiscriminately killed if they are perceived to belong to an enemy state, nation, or ethnic or otherwise identified group ('apostates,' Jews, US citizens, Westerners), but recent events have shown that the boundaries of nationality are also becoming irrelevant and that even the remotest connection with the 'enemy,' such as working for the UN or the Red Cross in Iraq, qualifies one as a potential target. Importantly, this de-personification is also reflected on the side of the perpetrators, who are used as expendable bomb delivery systems and who only regain their name for propaganda purposes, after their death.

#### **4. Correspondence between Features of Conventional Terrorism and Successful Counterterrorism**

One purpose of our comparison between conventional and new terrorism is to lead us into a discussion of police strategy, building on our assumption that police counterterrorism tactics must be woven on the distinctive warp of their targets. As we have seen, Canadian police agencies did not expect the October Crisis of 1970 and the CF were activated in Quebec in an effort to regain control over what was understood to be a dangerous situation. However, the police soon recovered and fought a winning battle against the FLQ, which ceased to be a threat by the end of 1973. The instrument of this success was infiltration, which produced invaluable intelligence information and allowed manipulation of the membership.

The FLQ tried to reorganize after the October Crisis but it was infiltrated by a key police informant (among others) from 4 November 1970 until its dissolution in 1973 (Québec, 1981a, 1981b).<sup>5</sup> This informant, Carole de Vault, held the key position of courier between the various remaining FLQ cells and was thus able to brief her police handlers extensively on their activities.<sup>6</sup> Even more crucially, she was entrusted with the task of issuing the FLQ communiqués, which she eventually wrote herself, under the supervision of her police handler. In November 1971, the Montreal police department counterterrorism unit succeeded in recruiting yet another informant, who operated at the top of the organization. The FLQ had become so much of a police colony that when it tried to disband in December 1971, at the call of one of its main ideologues (Pierre Vallières), the RCMP issued a fake FLQ communiqué in the name of a fictitious cell denouncing Mr Vallières as a turncoat and urging the FLQ terrorists to continue to pursue the armed struggle (Québec, 1981b, p. 91). The FLQ increasingly became an object of derision in Quebec and after 1973 it was replaced, as



the clandestine group to be reckoned with, by the Maoist organization *En Lutte*, which was not a terrorist organization. One of the two main police informants active in the FLQ pursued his activities within the Maoist group, which dissolved after learning that it had been infiltrated.

Keeping the FLQ as a case study of demand-based and revolutionary 'conventional' terrorism, we now look at how the four aspects of terrorism—territoriality, communication, motivation, and individualization—affect the probability of success of counterterrorism strategies.

*Territoriality.* In cases of national terrorism, terrorists and counterterrorists usually share the same nationality and hence often also share the same physical appearance, language, and culture. As shown by the police struggle against the FLQ, this ethnic homogeneity greatly facilitates infiltration and, more generally, the collection of human intelligence (HUMINT). Differences in physical appearance, language, customs, and other conspicuous features help insulate terrorist organizations from police and intelligence agencies.

*Communication.* In the case of the demise of the FLQ, this was the critical feature. The major strength of this group was not violence but communication: the public approval of the FLQ manifesto generated the October Crisis. With unerring instinct, the police succeeded in infiltrating the FLQ where it mattered most: in the writing of its communiqués.

*Motivation.* The motivation of the FLQ was directly related to its actions, meaning that a clear, direct connection existed between its actions and its goals. This allows two things: first, likely targets can be identified and protected (*target hardening*). Second, negotiation is possible and with the FLQ helped resolve at least one of the issues (the liberation of one hostage). In the case of more ambitious revolutionary terrorism however, where targets tend to be larger and the attacks less discriminate, the resources needed by the terrorists tend to become more sizable and/or more difficult to obtain, as is the case with controlled substances (poisons, explosives, CBRN materials). The obvious police strategy in these cases is to intensify surveillance of the means by which these substances can be obtained.

*Individualization.* Target individualization was a prominent feature of the FLQ—it abducted a British diplomat and a Quebec government minister who was reputed to be corrupt. Again, this feature permits target protection—all cabinet ministers and British diplomats were put under protection during the October Crisis. Individualization was also a feature of the FLQ's members. Although the various 'cells' of the organizations were insulated one from the other, a cell was not infrequently comprised of members of the same family. This facilitated the work of investigators who only needed to identify one member of a cell to discover the identity of others.

**Table 2** Strategic Parallelism—Conventional Terrorism

Type of terrorism	'Actionable' characteristics	Possible responses
Demand-based	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Emphasis on message</li> <li>2. Proximate goals</li> <li>3. No ethno-cultural disparity</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Interference with delivery</li> <li>2. Target-hardening, strategic negotiation</li> <li>3. Infiltration</li> </ol>
Private justice	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. High predictability, proximate goals, identifiable targets</li> <li>2. Self-identification</li> <li>3. No ethno-cultural disparity</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Target-hardening</li> <li>2. Surveillance/arrest</li> <li>3. Infiltration</li> </ol>
Revolutionary	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Emphasis on message</li> <li>2. More restricted resources needed</li> <li>3. Communication network needed</li> <li>4. Proximate goals</li> <li>5. No ethno-cultural disparity</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Interference with delivery</li> <li>2. Surveillance of procurement</li> <li>3. Surveillance of communications</li> <li>4. Strategic negotiation</li> <li>5. Infiltration</li> </ol>

We have summed up these conclusions in Table 2. The table also includes 'private justice' terrorism, which on the whole does not fit the FLQ but is certainly part of conventional terrorism in Canada. To a large extent it resembles demand-based terrorism, with the added feature that those who engage in it tend to self-identify, in the sense that their grievances about specific injustices, by their very nature, immediately point to their author. This greatly simplifies surveillance and investigation activities.

**5. Finding Correlations between Features of 'New' Terrorism and Successful Counterterrorism**

It is useful to further clarify the nature of new terrorism because, as is the case with revolutionary terror, its scope places it closer to the boundary where police responses are replaced by military responses. We have already seen how the CF were brought in to deal with what was presented at the time as an insurrection led by the FLQ. In this case faulty intelligence and political manoeuvring were at the heart of the disproportionate response. However, new terrorism, at the international level, is in fact insurgent terrorism and, as such, at least in part a military target. This does not mean, however, that the police have no role to play, especially in countries like Canada.

It may be helpful to distinguish between what we would call 'primary' and 'secondary' areas of international and transnational terrorist activity. Primary activity areas are those where terrorists and terrorist groups conduct their principal operations, i.e., violent attacks. Secondary activity areas serve as bases for support activities such as recruitment, planning, sheltering fugitives, and funding. Secondary areas tend to have low levels of violence in order to minimize political and police attention. Canada, by this measure, is a secondary activity area.



While military response might be called for in primary areas, given a certain level of violence or risk of property damage, secondary areas clearly call for police response. Let us consider the same four aspects to see if we can match them to police strategies that might be more successful for Canadian and US policing and intelligence agencies in their struggle against Al-Qaeda and violent Islamic fundamentalism.

*Territoriality.* Terrorist activities in Canada, a secondary activity area, generally involve fundraising, organizing, recruiting, intimidating, and other support activities. These are, for the most part, conducted by foreign nationals or Canadians who are part of minority ethnic groups, which complicates infiltration efforts. Not that infiltration is impossible—witness ‘American Taliban’ John Walker Lindh and, on a less anecdotal note, the fact that most ethnic Canadians are not terrorists, are not controlled by terrorists, and that many have joined various counterterrorist agencies, thus being in a position to play a part in infiltration. Yet, in our opinion, in these cases infiltration remains especially difficult and probably not the best way to spend limited counterterrorist resources against restoration terrorism, at least in its present form in Canada. Furthermore, infiltrating whole communities on the sole basis that they are mainly comprised of immigrants from a particular part of the world—say, the Middle East—may be tantamount to practising racial or ethnic profiling on a grand scale, when this practice has already been shown to flaunt human rights when applied on a limited, individual scale. The problem with infiltration is that it seems trapped in a vicious circle: one needs to infiltrate in order to identify terrorists, but when these are very few or non-existent, infiltration only generates feelings of harassment and dread that may be conducive to retaliation terrorism in unfairly targeted communities.

*Communication.* We have described the absence of an articulated communication strategy with defined targets that characterizes new terrorism—its actions, the spectacular destruction that it wreaks, are its means of communication. However, international terrorists must communicate with one another in order to operate. These communications can be intercepted, as can traces of money transfers and other needs in manpower and logistics. In other words, SIGINT (Signal Intelligence, as collected in intercepting electronic communications) can take over where HUMINT is too risky for agents or for human rights. It can do so, however—and this we cannot emphasize too much—only to the extent that it is coupled with the adequate capacity for analysis and to ‘connect the dots.’ Needless to say, when there is incontrovertible evidence that a group is dangerous, it is a legitimate target for infiltration.

*Motivation.* We have seen that terrorist motives are too broad and too far removed from actions to help in devising preventive tactics. One may reasonably expect attacks against populated infrastructures (in particular, public transportation), which maximize spectacular destruction and loss of life. This is, however, not descriptive enough to be of any practical use. To the extent that controlled substances may be needed for maximum damage, rigorous monitoring of all means of procuring these substances, as

was suggested for revolutionary terrorism, might be of help—but it is unlikely to be very effective. Thus, realistically, we believe that resources would be better spent on emergency response.

*Individualization.* As explained earlier, new terrorism de-individualizes both its victims and its agents, with the rare exception of emblematic figures such as Bin Laden himself. However, membership in organizations that promote, in addition to a worldview, a lifestyle and the authoritarian imposition of rituals may provide counterterrorist agencies with a certain level of self-identification: potential terrorists may act differently than others and thus reveal their affiliation. We see this in the case of Ahmed Ressam, who joined a group of extremists already under surveillance by CSIS (Canadian Security Intelligence Service) but who were (mistakenly) considered to be relatively harmless—just a ‘bunch of guys’ (‘BOG’; see Sageman, 2004, p. 101). A stronger analytic capacity might have made it possible to identify this BOG or some of its members, such as Ressam, as constituting a real threat. The difficulty lies in identifying the line between *talkers* holding meetings to rant against Israel and call for jihad and potential *terrorists* who are likely to take action. To make this distinction between the two groups one needs background knowledge about terrorism and, as noted, a strong analytic capability to apply this general background to particular cases.

Table 3 completes the categories set up in Table 2 by adding restorative terrorism. It should be immediately obvious that counterterrorist strategies that parallel ‘new’ terrorism may violate the individual rights of Canadians—which is why disproportionate security responses have been identified as a ‘win’ for terrorists, to the extent that one of their goals is to undermine the confidence of Westerners in their own governments. Increased interception and surveillance of mere suspicion based on apparent affiliation are extremely dangerous to our civil liberties and should be considered only where there are strict accountability and overview/review structures, which are sorely lacking in many police agencies in Canada.

## 6. Conclusion

One last feature of the Ressam affair allows insight into the nature of terrorism prevention. Counterterrorist agencies are often criticized for failing to prevent terrorist attacks that kill hundreds, if not thousands. Yet there is a crucial difference between an

**Table 3** Strategic Parallelism—New Terrorism

Type of terrorism	‘Actionable’ characteristics	Possible responses
Restoration	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 More/restricted resources needed</li> <li>2 Communication network needed</li> <li>3 Self-identification more likely</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Surveillance of procurement</li> <li>2 Surveillance of communications</li> <li>3 Surveillance/arrest</li> <li>4 Improved analysis of surveillance products</li> </ol>



actual attack and one that has been prevented. We know in all its painful detail what we failed to prevent, since the event unfolded completely, with all its tragic consequences. In fact even the terrorists themselves did not foresee some of these consequences—such as the collapse of the twin towers of the World Trade Center. In contrast, when an event is prevented we have only very limited knowledge of what might have occurred. For instance, we know exactly what we failed to prevent on 11 September 2001—we can count the dead and assess the damage. We are in no such position with the failed attack of the millennium bomber, who was intercepted with a trunk load of explosives. We can try to imagine what might have happened if he had been able to set off his bomb at the Los Angeles airport but we cannot know, among the many possible scenarios, what might have happened. For instance, the truck might have been blown up near an underground fuel tank that would also have exploded, setting off a chain of catastrophic events. All we can know for sure is that Ressam was prevented from setting off his homemade bomb at LAX. The cost in lives, property, and social trauma of his having succeeded remains pure conjecture. The bottom line is that when considering prevention, it is probable that blame for failure will always be greater than praise for success. This should be remembered when the performance of security services, police organizations, and their individual members is being assessed.

### Notes

- [1] The authors wish to thank the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) for its financial assistance (grant No. 410-2003-1259).
- [2] Paul Martin succeeded Jean Chrétien through the Canadian constitutional process, Chrétien having resigned as Prime Minister. Martin was elected head of a minority government in 2004.
- [3] Its safety is sometimes believed to be the result of its serving as a refuge for terrorists. According to this view, widely held in the USA, terrorists sheltered in Canada routinely creep across the border to commit their nefarious acts in the USA. Actually, only one high-profile incident supports this belief: the 1999 'millennium bomber' incident implicating Ahmed Ressam, who was caught with a trunk load of homemade explosives when he tried to cross to the USA from Vancouver.
- [4] Fournier (1998, pp. 507–512) gives a list of 355 names, explicitly designated as incomplete.
- [5] Québec (1981a) (the Duchaine Commission) and (1981b) (the Keable Commission) are two reports bearing respectively on the FLQ and on counterterrorism in Quebec that were commissioned by the provincial government of Quebec. One of the authors of this paper (Brodeur) was director of research for the Keable Commission, drafting its report, and consultant for the Duchaine report.
- [6] Mrs de Vault became a public figure after her testimony before the Keable Commission and co-authored a book on her activities as a police informant (de Vault & Johnson, 1981).

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