TERRORISM AND COUNTERTERRORISM

Lecture: Tues., 6:20-8:50
Office Hrs: Tues., 8:50-9:30 and by appointment

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This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.

— Winston Churchill

Description

This course examines the origins and evolution of modern terrorism, challenges posed by terrorist groups to states and to the international system, and strategies employed to confront and combat terrorism. We assess a wide variety of terrorist organizations, and explore the psychological, socioeconomic, political, and religious causes of terrorist violence past and present. We also analyze the strengths and weaknesses of various counterterrorism strategies, from the point of view of efficacy as well as ethics, and look into ways in which the new threat of global terrorism might impact the healthy functioning of democratic states.

The course is divided into two parts. Part I focuses on the terrorist threat, including the nature, roots, objectives, tactics, and organization of terrorism and terrorist groups. Part II addresses the issue of counterterrorism, including recent American efforts to combat terrorism, the strengths and weaknesses of counterterrorist tools and instruments, the issue of civil liberties and democratic values in confronting terrorism, and international strategies and tactics.

Requirements

Grading is based on the results of an optional take-home midterm exam (25%); a backgrounder memorandum (25%); and a cumulative take-home final exam (50% or 75%). Regular attendance and class participation may also factor into your final grade. The midterm questions, covering the first seven weeks of the semester, will be handed out at the end of class on October 17, and due the beginning of class on October 24. The memo assignments will be handed out on November 14, and due in class on November 21. The final exam will be handed out on the last day of class (December 5) and due in my mailbox by close of business on December 12.

Backgrounder Memorandum

On November 14, each student will be randomly assigned a terrorist group from the State Department’s list of Designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations, and charged with providing a detailed memorandum (2-3 pages, single-spaced) to the Assistant to the President of the United States for National Security Affairs (National Security Adviser) prior to his/her official trip to the nation/region where the group operates. Each memorandum must cover the following: 1) a concise history of the terrorist organization; 2) an explanation of its primary grievance(s); 3) its goals; 4) its primary tactics and strategies used to achieve those goals, and the utility thereof; 5) the ability of its target(s) to effectively confront/combat the organization; and 6) brief suggestions the National Security Adviser should offer on how to best bring about an end to the violence.
**Required Readings**
The following texts are available at the NYU Bookstore, as well as on reserve at the library. All other required readings are available on the Classes server.


**Course Outline and Dates of Importance**

Week 1 (9/5): Introduction
Week 2 (9/12): Defining Terrorism; Active Terrorist Groups
Week 3 (9/19): The Evolution of Terrorism I  *Movie: Battle of Algiers*
Week 4 (9/26): The Evolution of Terrorism II
Week 5 (10/3): Root Causes, Motivations, and Justifications; Logic of “Sacred Terror”
Week 6 (10/10): Al Qaeda Before 9/11
Week 7 (10/17): Al Qaeda After 9/11  *Movie: Al Qaeda’s New Front*  *MT exam handed out*
Week 8 (10/24): The New Tools of Terrorism I  *MT exam due in class*
Week 9 (10/31): The New Tools of Terrorism II
Week 10 (11/7): Counterterrorism Pre-9/11
Week 11 (11/14): Counterterrorism Post-9/11  *Terrorist groups assigned for memo*
Week 12 (11/21): Democratic Values and Counterterrorism  *Memos due in class*
Week 13 (11/28): Global Strategies and Challenges  *Movie: Dirty War*
Week 14 (12/5): The Road Ahead  *Final exam handout*

Final Exams due in my mailbox by 5pm on Tuesday, December 12.
PART I. THE TERRORIST THREAT

Week 1
*Introduction*

Week 2
*Lecture*

*Defining Terrorism*

*Active Terrorist Organizations*

**Readings** [~110 pp.]
- United States Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2016* (July 2017), Ch. 7, “Legislative Requirements and Key Terms”; Ch. 6, “Foreign Terrorist Organizations.”

Week 3
*Lecture*

*The Evolution of Terrorism I*

Traditional Terrorism: Ideological, Ethno/Separatist, Nationalistic

Movie: *The Battle of Algiers* (1965)

**Readings** [~130 pp.]
Week 4
Lecture
The Evolution of Terrorism II
The Modern Variant: Global Terrorism

Readings [~135 pp.]
Hoffman, Inside Terrorism, Ch. 3, “The Internationalization of Terrorism,” pp. 63-80.
Louise Richardson, “Global Rebels,” Harvard International Review (Fall 1998), pp. 52-56.

Week 5
Lecture
Root Causes, Motivations, and Justifications
The Logic of “Sacred Terror”

Readings [~255 pp.]
Gottlieb, Debating Terrorism, Ch. 2, “Does Poverty Serve as a Root Cause of Terrorism?” (James Piazza: No; Karin von Hippel: Yes), pp. 35-68.
Gottlieb, Debating Terrorism, Ch. 3, “Can Terrorism Ever Be Justified?” (Tamar Meisels: No; Ted Honderich: Yes), pp. 69-100.

Hoffman, Inside Terrorism, Ch. 4, “Religion and Terrorism,” pp. 81-130.
Samuel Huntington, “Clash of Civilizations?” Foreign Affairs (Summer 1993), pp. 22-49. (Skim)
Week 6  
Lecture  
*Al Qaeda Before 9/11: While America Slept*

Readings  
[~190 pp.]  
Al Qaeda Training Manual (late 1990s). (Skim)

Week 7  
Lecture  
*Al Qaeda After 9/11: The Global Network and Beyond*  
Movie: *Al Qaeda’s New Front*  

Readings  
[~100 pp.]  
Department of State, *Country Reports 2016*, Ch. 1, “Strategic Assessment.”  
PBS Frontline, “Terror in Europe,” Oct. 18, 2016. (View on your own)  
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/terror-in-europe/  
Jason Burke, “Hamza bin Laden – a potent weapon in the rivalry between al-Qaida and Isis”  
Letter from Ayman al-Zawahiri to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi on al-Qaeda strategy, July 9, 2005.  

Week 8  
Lecture  
*The New Tools of Terrorism I*  
The Quest for Catastrophic Weapons  

Readings  
[~170 pp.]  
Gottlieb, Debating Terrorism, Ch. 6, “Is Nuclear Terrorism a Real Threat?” (Matthew Bunn: Yes; Susan Martin: No), pp. 172-208.

**Week 9**

**Lecture**

*The New Tools of Terrorism II*

Emerging Methods, Strategies, and Tactics

**Readings** [~185 pp.]

Hoffman, Inside Terrorism, Ch. 5, “Suicide Terrorism,” pp. 131-171.
Gottlieb, Debating Terrorism, Ch. 5, “Is Suicide Terrorism an Effective Tactic?” (Gordon McCormick and Lindsay Fritz: Yes; Max Abrahms: No), pp. 136-171.
Economist, “Tech giants are under fire for facilitating terrorism,” June 8, 2017.
PART II. COMBATING THE TERRORIST THREAT

Week 10  
Lecture  
*The State of Counterterrorism: Pre-9/11*

**Readings** (~185 pp.)  
Report from the National Commission on Terrorism, “Countering the Changing Threat of International Terrorism,” June 2000. (Skim)  
http://www.fas.org/irp/threat/commission.html

Week 11  
Lecture  
*Wake-Up Calls and Shifting Sands: Counterterrorism Post-9/11*  
*Terrorist groups assigned*

**Readings** (~180 pp.)  
Department of State, *Country Reports 2016*, Ch. 4, “Global Challenge of CBRN Terrorism.”  
Week 12
Lecture
Democratic Values and Counterterrorism: Balancing Liberty and Security

*Memos due*

Readings [~130]
Alberto Gonzales and Robert Mueller, testimony on Patriot Act and FISA before Senate Intelligence Committee, April 27, 2005.
Barack Obama, Remarks at the National Archives, May, 21, 2009.
Dick Cheney, Remarks at the American Enterprise Institute, May 21, 2009.
Stuart Gottlieb, “Staying the Course,” American Lawyer (November 2010).
Gottlieb, Debating Terrorism, Ch. 10, “Is an Outright Ban the Best Way to Eliminate or Constrain Torture?” (Michael Posner: Yes; Alan Dershowitz: No), pp. 312-344.

Week 13
Lecture
Global Strategies and Challenges
Movie: Dirty War

Readings [~160 pp.]
Gunaratna, Inside Al Qaeda, pp. 294-322.
Department of State, Country Reports 2016, Ch. 5 “Terrorist Safe Havens” (skim the rest).
9/11 Commission Report, Ch. 12.
George W. Bush, speech before the National Endowment for Democracy, Nov. 6, 2003.
Gottlieb, Debating Terrorism, Ch. 8, “Can Spreading Democracy Help Defeat Terrorism?” (Gregory Gause: No; Jennifer Windsor: Yes), pp. 243-275.
Gottlieb, Debating Terrorism, Ch. 9, “Can International Organizations Make a Difference in Fighting Terrorism?” (Zachary Shirkey: No; Bruce Cronin: Yes), pp. 276-311.
Department of State, Country Reports 2016, Ch. 3, “State Sponsors of Terrorism.”

Week 14
Lecture
The Road Ahead

Readings [~45 pp.]