



An Analysis of Terrorism as a Form of Warfare

Donald J. Hanle, Naval Postgraduate School

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This book examines the proposition that terrorism is a form of war. To do this, this book first analyzes warfare in terms of what it is and how it functions. This is done by surveying classical military thinkers such as Thucydides, Sun Tzu, Machiavelli, von Clausewitz, and Liddell Hart, to name just a few. This provides an understanding not only of the nature and purpose of war, but of the basic immutable principles under which it operates. These offer a means to construct a paradigm with which terrorism can be tested to determine whether or not it is a form of war. Once the constant elements of war are analyzed and understood, the variable factors are then examined. Here the book focuses upon the evolution of war, highlighting what changes and why. From this it is possible to understand not only why terrorism came into being, but the environment in which it operates as well.

The second part of this study begins with an analysis of the terroristic method of force employment, followed by an examination of seven major types of terrorism to determine which, if any, qualify as a form of war. These include: psychotic, criminal, mystical, revolutionary, repression, military and state sponsored terrorism. Of these, three are found to qualify as a form of war — military, revolutionary, and state sponsored terrorism.

These three types of terrorism are then analyzed as forms of warfare in terms of how they employ force, as well as to what end that force is used. What becomes apparent is that not only does this terroristic force operate in the same basic manner as that employed in traditional warfare, it has the same basic capabilities and weaknesses of classical military force. This latter is significant because it suggests that countervailing strategies must be based upon classical principles of war and combat. These general countervailing strategic guidelines are presented in the final part of this work.

The significance of this book, then, is that it determines that terrorism, or certain types of terrorism, are indeed a form of war. Moreover, these not only have the same end but operate in essentially the same manner as the more classical or traditional forms of warfare. Consequently, the only proper means to neutralize these forms of terrorism is to treat them as a form of war and apply military force against them in accordance with the principles of war and combat.

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