Clinton's War on Terror: Redefining US Security Strategy, 1993–2001

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The Clinton Administration and Terrorism

War on Terror is an expression that became synonymous with the administration of President George W. Bush as a result of the policies that were implemented following the attacks of September 11, 2001. The events of that day are routinely portrayed as the start of a new era in which the United States government, begrudgingly and belatedly, abandoned a previous naive stance adopted by the Clinton administration to enact a series of policies designed to quash international terrorism. These included the operations in Afghanistan, the global manhunt for Osama bin Laden, the covert missions around the globe, the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the establishment of a prison camp at Guantanamo Bay, the use of "extraordinary rendition," the establishment of secret sites to facilitate "enhanced interrogation techniques," the deployment of drone technology, and the various bureaucratic moves made to ensure an efficient prosecution of a new kind of war: a perpetual War on Terror. According to this interpretation of events, President George W. Bush executed this war remorselessly before it was scaled back by his successor, Barack Obama, under whose leadership the United States finally located and killed Osama bin Laden. This narrative, however, is fundamentally flawed.

Acts of political violence have shaped the course of history on the North American continent long before the establishment of the United States of America in 1776. From the dawn of the republic, not having been immune to the horrors associated with terrorism, Republicans and Democrats alike have been challenged to address the menace of political violence as various groups seeking political change perpetrated acts of terrorism. A study of US history reveals a contradictory pattern between declared intentions and actionable policies, between high-minded statements and pragmatic decisions, as politicians repeatedly struggled to confront the perpetrators of political violence. The result has been an unremitting series of violent incidents

spanning more than 300 years in which assassinations, bombings, kidnappings, and acts of international and domestic terrorism have played a significant role in the political development of the United States.

The attacks of September 11, 2001, focused the attention of the world on the threat posed by radical groups and radicalized individuals determined to wreak havoc in the name of their chosen ideology. The scale of the destruction and the coordinated nature of the attacks in Manhattan and Washington, DC, led many to question responsibility within the United States. It served George W. Bush, having been in office for only nine months, and his administration to highlight differences from his predecessor and to shift responsibility for the security lapses that had allowed the attacks to occur. This process of allocating culpability to the Clinton administration began in earnest as smoke still billowed over downtown Manhattan and across the Potomac River. Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson initially blamed the attacks on abortionists and homosexuals, but responsibility was quickly leveled against the Clinton administration, with allegations of budgetary cuts and codes of conduct imposed on the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) during the 1990s having left the nation vulnerable.[1] Rush Limbaugh urged that President Clinton "be held culpable for not doing enough when he was commander-in-chief," while Republican congressman Dana Rohrabacher of California blamed Clinton for "letting the Taliban go, over and over again."[2] Sean Hannity noted that "had Clinton and Gore understood the importance of national security, it's quite possible that 9/11 could have been avoided."[3] Such attacks, however, did not originate solely from Republicans. Democratic senator Bob Kerrey lamented that President Clinton had erred in his response to previous incidents and "should have treated them as an attack on the United States."[4] President Clinton's former military aide, Robert Patterson, later accused the Clinton administration of "gross negligence and dereliction of duty to the safety of our country, which the president was sworn to defend."[5]

Rather than failing to recognize the seriousness of the terrorist threat, however, the Clinton administration developed practices and policies specifically designed to prevent such attacks from affecting the United States and its global interests. From its first days in power, the Clinton White House confronted acts of political violence, including the bombing of the World Trade Center, the crashing of an aircraft into the White House, the killing of CIA employees, plans to bomb the Lincoln and Holland Tunnels in New York, the destruction of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, and attempts to launch coordinated strikes to coincide with the Millennium Eve celebrations. Internationally, American citizens and institutions were targeted in attacks on the Khobar Towers complex in Saudi Arabia, on the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, and on the USS *Cole* in Yemen. Partly in response to such incidents, the Clinton administration initiated

policies during its eight years in office that redefined the national counterterrorism strategy. Subsequently, several of these policies, including rendition, the deployment of drones, and efforts to address cybersecurity, became the target of criticism under the George W. Bush administration, but they all had been utilized to various degrees during the Clinton era.

To date, the efforts of the Clinton administration to address the challenge posed by those willing to engage in acts of terrorism have been misunderstood, causing a false narrative to emerge in regard to its policies. US counterterrorism policy during the 1990s was designed for a specific political age—after the end of the Cold War, but before the attack on the homeland in September 2001. An appreciation of these policy initiatives is vital if the evolving counterterrorism strategy of the United States in the years prior to the attacks of September 11, 2001, is to be correctly understood.

This book, therefore, challenges the orthodox interpretation of the Clinton administration and its handling of counterterrorism to place its policies in their correct political and historical context. It does so to reveal the extent to which the Clinton administration was merely the latest in a long line to face the challenges posed by forces of political violence in the history of the United States. Focusing on declaratory policy, this work traces the development of US counterterrorism strategy between 1993 and 2001 and draws on official administration documents, many only recently declassified, as both a guide to analyze policy and a tool to consider emerging policies. The book draws extensively on primary material, including interviews with former administration officials, speeches, National Security Strategies, documentation from the National Security Council, Presidential Decision Directives, Presidential Review Documents, public and private papers from the Library of Congress, and recently declassified materials from the Clinton Presidential Library.

These sources reveal the extent to which the president and his national security team were confronted by political violence from their first days in the White House. The book considers the incidents that set the stage for the Clinton presidency, the terrorist events that occurred during the administration's time in office, and the policies that it enacted. It considers the individuals responsible for the development of policies, the government departments tasked with implementing them, the philosophical and political factors at work, and the manner in which counterterrorism strategy was deployed. Doing so ensures that this book explains the hitherto misunderstood approach toward acts of political violence that the Clinton administration adopted during the 1990s as it sought to define an appropriate response to what it saw as a growing challenge to US interests in the aftermath of the Cold War.[6]

The book opens by examining the bureaucratic challenges that attempt to address political violence face, the difficulties in defining terrorism, and the extent to which such activity has had a devastating impact on global

affairs. It also proffers a definition of terrorism that is used to address the subject throughout the course of the text. The book then places the Clinton era in context by examining two distinct phases in US counterterrorism strategy. Chapter 2 reveals the extent to which acts of terror have influenced life on the North American continent for over 300 years, providing a chronology that reaches back to the dawn of the American experience to contextualize events that challenged the Clinton administration. Chapter 3 addresses President Clinton's political inheritance by examining the counterterrorism strategies adopted by Presidents Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and George H. W. Bush. An analysis of the policy reactions by these administrations after events such as the Iranian Revolution and the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 reveals a bipartisan hesitancy in dealing with acts of terrorism in the years immediately prior to the start of the Clinton administration.

The second part of the book addresses the terrorist threats that the Clinton administration faced and the manner in which it addressed them. Chapter 4 addresses the danger posed to the federal government by militias and cults determined to forge their own identities and ways of life, often in contravention of the US Constitution, laws, and regulations. The true extent of their menace was revealed in the destruction of the federal building in Oklahoma City in 1995. Chapter 5 discusses the Clinton administration's efforts to address state sponsors of terrorism. It examines the dual containment strategy designed to quell the dangers emanating from Tehran and Baghdad and the decision to construct the rogue state concept to deal with a wider group of nations, including Cuba, North Korea, and Libya. Chapters 6 and 7 analyze what President Clinton referred to as "the dark side of this new age of global interdependence," as cyberterrorists and nonstate actors emerged to threaten catastrophic damage to the United States and its citizens.[7]

Having considered the events that defined the Clinton administration's War on Terror, the third part of the book turns to two controversial policy tools that were utilized by the White House during this era. Chapter 8 considers the development of drones, or unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), to detail how these craft were a natural progression from the U-2 and the SR-71 high-altitude surveillance aircraft that were slipping in and out of official retirement. The chapter also considers the political and legal ramifications of drone technology and the extent to which the Clinton administration identified drones as a new platform of choice. After the discussion of technology in Clinton's War on Terror, Chapter 9 focuses on the policy of rendition. The chapter considers the rationale for its development, the extent of its use, and its long-term impact as the Clinton administration implemented what it saw as "a new art form" to confront the forces of international terrorism. Finally, to complete an assessment of the Clinton administration's counterterrorism strategy, the concluding chapter reflects on the policies to consider what was achieved and what failed. Chapter 10 discusses the extent to which Clinton's

counterterrorism policies can be considered a success and the impact of subsequent events on their continued relevance.

The Challenge of Political and Bureaucratic Resistance

Of all the challenges that hindered the Clinton administration's ability to quell the rise of domestic and international political violence, few proved as daunting as those caused by bureaucratic tensions and policy differences among senior individuals and their respective departments. Although ostensibly working on the same team, the lack of imagination on the part of policymakers, bureaucratic turf wars, political machinations, electoral timescales, official secrecy, and partisan politics have historically ensured that US counterterrorism strategy routinely failed to receive a sustained, focused attention at the highest levels of government. Policymakers' lack of imagination was a particular challenge that administrations faced when addressing terrorism in the pre-9/11 era, when the concept of a devastating attack on the homeland remained confined to the pages of Tom Clancy thrillers. So long as acts of political violence occurred overseas, or only in random circumstances at home, politicians were forgiven for dismissing their significance and for prioritizing issues that presented more immediate threats to the United States.

Debate surrounding political priorities sustained another challenge: consistency. Campaign slogans calling for "change" all too often result in "change for change's sake" by an incoming administration. Having run against the policies of its predecessor, the new team often feels inclined to reverse existing policy as a matter of principle, which results in a pattern of undulating policy in key areas. Counterterrorism strategy, and the priority it received, repeatedly fell victim to this cycle of behavior between 1977 and 1992. Politicians who adopted a hands-off approach risked accusations of lacking the requisite attention to detail, while those who became intimately involved with the subject risked the backlash that accompanied failed initiatives and flawed covert operations. With politicians locked into a fixed political schedule of national elections every two years, the US political calendar has proven to be a hindering influence on strategy makers. The constant need to plan, fund, and run for reelection has a detrimental impact on the ability to implement long-term initiatives, causing US counterterrorism strategy to become beholden to short-term domestic political constraints.

Even when administrations have sought to bring the requisite attention to counterterrorism strategy, the structures of the US political system have often constrained their efforts. Executive branch departments, theoretically at the whim of the administration, have repeatedly resisted policy initiatives seen as detrimental to their departmental well-being. This has routinely

resulted in political inertia as political in-fighting develops over competing bureaucratic interests. With institutional memories seemingly able to recall the slightest infraction, relations between the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the Department of Defense (DOD) have historically been an impediment to the implementation of counterterrorism strategy.

With agencies at odds with one another, it is not surprising that mistakes are made that result in congressional hearings. The Church Committee of 1975–1976 and the Tower Commission of 1987 demonstrate the impact that investigations can have on agencies and agents when the employees and senior officials at the CIA and the National Security Council (NSC) become the focus of intense scrutiny. Such hearings also demonstrate a dilemma in regard to the need for covert activity. With a free press, Freedom of Information requests, a politically motivated Congress, and suspicion of government motives, engaging in effective counterterrorism initiatives has become a thankless task. It is conducted under a necessary veil of secrecy in which failures are dynamic but successes are rarely revealed. The media, Congress, and political expediency have ensured that policymakers fear becoming scapegoats if operations fail to go as planned. As a result, balancing the responsibility to protect the lives and rights of the American people and the potential need to curtail those rights in an effort to safeguard lives and liberties has become a recurring dilemma for successive administrations. This tension has been at the heart of the decisionmaking process throughout the American experience and remains central to the debates surrounding US counterterrorism strategy.

The Challenge of Defining Terrorism

The threats posed by terrorism and acts of political violence have challenged politicians, policymakers, and security services for centuries. For as long as terrorists have inflicted their violence on society, policymakers have sought to define terrorism in their efforts to defeat it. To date, all attempts to establish an agreed-upon definition of terrorism have proved futile. Indeed, this task has proven so challenging that it has been likened to another elusive quest, that for the Holy Grail, in that "periodically, eager souls set out, full of purpose, energy, and self-confidence, to succeed where so many others before have tried and failed."[8] Much like beauty, perhaps, terrorism appears to be in the eye of the beholder: known when seen, yet impossible to define. A key task confronting the Clinton administration, therefore, was how to define terrorism.

As Bruce Hoffman noted, terrorism has become a subject about which "most people have a vague idea or impression . . . but lack a more precise, concrete and truly explanatory definition."[9] In 1988, the editors of *Political*

Terrorism, who identified more than a hundred definitions of the word, noted the scale of the challenge facing those seeking to define the subject.[10] The continued inability to define terrorism ensures that a degree of subjectivity remains a constant in any debate on the subject. As Martha Crenshaw noted, the term *terrorism* "was coined to describe the systemic inducement of fear and anxiety to control and direct a civilian population."[11] The challenge of defining terrorism creates problems for academics (who are required to teach an ill-defined concept), law enforcement agents (required to enforce ill-defined legislation), politicians (required to justify conflicting and, at times, contradictory policies), and the general public (required to live with the risks posed by those who would use terrorism, regardless of how it is defined). In 1938, Antoine Sottile observed, "The intensification of terrorist activity in the past few years has made terrorism one of today's most pressing problems."[12] Despite the passage of time since this remark, and the steady escalation of terrorist incidents, an agreed-upon definition of the term remains elusive. Political, cultural, social, and personal perspectives ensure that the old maxim "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter" remains as relevant today as ever before, notwithstanding repeated efforts by scholars, politicians, and international organizations to find a universal definition.[13]

Within academia, a wide range of scholars have sought to define terrorism. In 1979, Ray S. Cline noted that "there is no consensus on [terrorism's] meaning and consequences" and speculated correctly that "the historical and contemporary debate over the threat and use of 'extra-legal' force as well as over how society can and should deal with it will probably not soon be resolved." Cline argued that this was, at least in part, because "so many contradictory national interests are perceived by different governments and sub-state groups."[14] Complexity, it appears, begets complexity, which begets a problematic lack of definition. In 1998, Harvey W. Kushner defined terrorism as "the use of force (or violence) committed by individuals or groups against governments or civilian populations to create fear in order to bring about political (or social) change."[15] As Arthur H. Garrison noted in 2004, however, terrorism "is not explained by the cause, because causes change." Instead, it is defined "by the rationalization, logic, and perception of how to effect change."[16] This focus on the mode of terrorism is a perfectly acceptable academic pursuit, but it fails to assist in any meaningful attempt to arrive at a definition of the subject.

Countless scholars have made repeated efforts to provide succinct (and not so succinct) definitions to create an academic framework within which to study and appraise the issue of terrorism. A major challenge is that the term *terrorism* is usually utilized as "a pejorative label, meant to condemn an opponent's cause as illegitimate rather than describe behavior."[17] The sense that the term is loaded has not assisted the quest for an agreed-upon definition. Although parameters regarding the use of violence for political

gain and attempts to intimidate a populace into forced acquiescence are widely accepted, disagreement continues over precise wording, which ensures that attempts to define terrorism are "as illusory as ever."[18] With the increased study of terrorism, and an increasing number of scholars eager to make their mark on the subject, the chances of arriving at a definition appear to diminish rather than improve.

Nowhere is the need for an adequate definition of terrorism more urgently required than in international law, yet here again discrepancies abound. As Christian Walter observed, "Despite its prior exclusive use as a pejorative political term of stigmatization, 'terrorism' is increasingly used as a legal term and therefore should be accompanied by a discrete meaning."[19] Such meaning has thus far proven elusive in the international arena, which has sought to define terrorism since at least the 1931 Third Conference for the Unification of Penal Law at Brussels.[20] Six years later, the League of Nations Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of Terrorism sought to address the issue, but with limited effect.[21] The international failure to define terrorism is evident at the United Nations, which passed its first terrorism resolution in 1972.[22] As Caleb M. Pilgrim noted, the UN's response to terrorist attacks has been reactionary in nature, and it has proven unable to deliver on its stated policies.[23] Such was the case with the 1979 UN Hostages Convention, designed to address a key aspect of political violence but which did little to reduce incidents of hostage taking. This reinforced a continuing stalemate, whereby the "law alone is insufficient; it must be buttressed with faithful enforcement and effective prevention strategies."[24] Although this predicament is not the sole preserve of counterterrorism, the challenge faced by the global community to address these issues in the current climate highlights the gulf between declared policy and its effective implementation.

The failure of the UN to define and, therefore, address issues of terrorism is exacerbated by the veto power of the five permanent members of the Security Council. This has enabled Cold War antagonisms to routinely prevent the development of policies designed to address international outrages. In 1973, the USSR stated it had no objection to the adoption of measures under debate at the Ad Hoc Committee on International Terrorism, which would have imposed specific obligations on states to prevent terrorist acts.[25] The Soviet representative, however, refused to accede to any broad interpretations of international terrorism that included national liberation movements because during the Cold War the Kremlin openly viewed terrorism as a method to destabilize Western governments.[26] Cline lamented the fact that divisions among its member states prevented the United Nations from arriving at "any agreement on a definition of 'terrorism,' its root cause, or the appropriate steps necessary to be taken to cope with it."[27]

During the 1990s, the United Nations continued to debate the issue of terrorism. Although the Cold War had ended, agreement on the issue

remained elusive, in part because historic ties continued to stymie efforts to quell acts of terrorism around the world. In 1998, President Clinton dedicated his speech at the UN General Assembly to the subject of terrorism, an issue he had raised previously but to no avail. A year later the UN defined terrorism as any "act intended to cause death or serious bodily injury to a civilian, or to any other person not taking an active part in the hostilities in a situation of armed conflict, when the purpose of such act, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population, or to compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act."[28] Terrorism, however, remained absent from the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, partly because of a continuing inability to define the criminal components therein.[29]

In the wake of the 9/11 attacks in the United States, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1373 obliging member states to fight terrorism.[30] The resolution declared that "acts of international terrorism constitute one of the most serious threats to international peace and security in the twenty-first century," but exactly what this meant remained subject to conjecture.[31] Only four months later, in January 2002, a meeting of more than a hundred UN diplomats failed to arrive at a definition of terrorism, itself not without implications, because "without a definition the UN cannot pass a comprehensive treaty requiring all members to cooperate with each other on the fight against terrorism."[32] In 2005, the UN secretary-general identified 21 global or regional treaties that related directly to terrorism, yet few made direct reference to terrorism, revealing the continuing inability of the international community to adequately address the issue of political violence.

Notwithstanding the inability of the international community to define terrorism, it might be expected that the United States would have developed its own agreed-upon definition. Surprisingly, perhaps, this is not the case. The US government has at least three separate statutes and regulations on the subject, all of which define terrorism differently. The FBI defines terrorism as "the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives."[33] The State Department defines terrorism as "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by sub national groups or clandestine agents."[34] Finally, laws that define federal crimes and criminal procedure define terrorism as "activities that involve acts dangerous to human life that are a violation of the criminal laws of the United States" and which "appear to be intended to intimidate or coerce a civilian population, to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination or kidnapping."[35] The same inability to

define terrorism that has hampered international experts, therefore, has routinely hindered domestic US lawmakers.

This is more than a semantic exercise, because "the lack of a social or legal definition creates problems. . . . American police and security agencies literally do not know what terrorism is . . . [and] agencies charged with countering domestic terrorism often have no idea what they are looking for."[36] Until 2001, the criminal prosecution of terrorists by the Department of Justice was "a critical, if not the dominant, method of counterterrorism." In such circumstances, "the effectiveness and fairness of such an approach turns on whether there is a clear definition of terrorism in the applicable laws."[37] Uncertainty over the legal definition of terrorism, therefore, provides for the potential manipulation of the legal process, because loopholes and contradictions are exploited in an attempt to evade justice. Precisely what constitutes terrorism varies from individual to individual, from institution to institution, and from department to department, ensuring that definitions of the issue remain elusive.[38]

Terrorism herein is defined as a tactic employed to instill fear and uncertainty in a populace through the use of violence, or the threat of its implementation, in an effort to effect political change that would not be feasible using less direct methods. This use of politically motivated violence as a tactic to further a stated political goal has been employed by groups from the far left to the far right of the political spectrum. Likewise, it has been adopted by religiously motivated groups and individuals determined to implant their own brand of faith on an otherwise disinclined society. Terrorism can be domestic or foreign in both origin and implementation; as this book reveals, Americans and foreign nationals alike have been both the target and the purveyor of attacks on civilians and elected officials at home and abroad.

The challenges that exist in defining terrorism are also present in efforts to decide who constitutes a terrorist. Madeleine Albright observed that the expression "is a loaded one, especially controversial when applied to those struggling on behalf of a nationalist cause."[39] Individuals engaged in terrorist activity in the United States have proven to be remarkably diverse in background, though not in age, with most between the ages of 18 and 30 years. They are from all social strata, including from relatively privileged pedigrees and educated backgrounds, from the extremes of the political spectrum, from black and white communities, and from various religious groups, including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.[40] Although various groups have espoused and engaged in political violence, all too often such acts have been committed by lone individuals, adrift from affiliation and society at large. As Christopher Hewitt noted, "It is, one suspects, this confusing and fragmented quality possessed by American terrorism that makes every terrorist incident seem *de novo*."[41] Walter Laqueur observed terrorists "are often closer to each other than they know or would like to admit to themselves or others."[42]

The same is true of those who seek to define the term, because semantic wordplay, coupled with political and academic pride, has stymied efforts to thwart the terrorist actions that have proven so difficult to quantify.

The Targets of Terrorism

Given that a central premise of terrorism is to terrorize, it is unsurprising that perpetrators of political violence have routinely targeted both the powerful and the general population in their efforts to effect political change. Few sectors of society have been spared the consequences of political violence because agitators have sought to maximize both the devastation and the political impact of their atrocities. Perpetrators have routinely demonstrated an inability or unwillingness to discriminate amongst targets, instead actively seeking to inflict maximum carnage on as wide a range of demographics as possible in the name of their particular ideology. Speaking to an audience gathered at the Windows on the World restaurant atop the World Trade Center in April 2000, Madeleine Albright noted that terrorism had "created a battlefield populated by civilians."[43] Politicians, corporate executives, union leaders, academics, students, schoolchildren, and sports figures have all been victims of political violence, ensuring that no one can feel secure, irrespective of their status or level of personal protection.

One of the great dangers of terrorism is the threat it presents not only to the security of the individual but also to the security of the state. Terrorists' random infliction of mayhem and carnage constitutes a direct challenge to the organizing principles of government and, so long as these individuals "remain free to engage in terrorism, the power of the state diminishes."[44] It is unsurprising, therefore, that governments of all political leanings are quick to clamp down on such activities regardless of their political motivations. Indeed, one of the unifying aspects of acts of political violence is the willingness of groups of all political persuasions to resort to such atrocities. As Laqueur noted, "There have been many self-appointed saviors of freedom and justice, impatient men, fanatics and madmen invoking the right of self-defense . . . using the sword not as the last refuge but as a panacea for all evils, real or imaginary."[45]

The extent to which the United States has routinely been stalked by such "impatient men, fanatics and madmen," often referred to as "lone wolves," is a troubling facet of American life that stretches back throughout the history of the republic. The natural political order has been regularly upset by crazed, disturbed individuals whose actions are portrayed as being at odds with society and avowedly un-American. In the United States, 15 percent of all terrorist victims have been killed by unaffiliated individuals; this number is on the rise, with such individuals accounting for 26 percent of terrorist activity between 1978 and 1999.[46] Commentators, politicians,

lawmakers, and the media have routinely disregarded such individuals, labeling their actions as "extraordinary" and removed from the American norm, as it has proven far easier to dismiss them as insane than to examine their motivations or political intent.[47] Yet the history of the United States is littered with perpetrators of political violence who possess little apparent motive except for a need to vent their anger and frustration on society. From the assassinations of the Kennedy brothers and Martin Luther King to those of other political leaders, acts of political violence are rarely explained as the result of conspiracies but rather as the behavior of disturbed, lonely young men eager to make their mark on history, even if it is the last thing they do.

Such individuals are not unique to the United States. As Aristotle noted, "There are men who will not risk their lives in the hope of gains and rewards however great, but who nevertheless regard the killing of a tyrant as an extraordinary action which will make them famous and honorable in the world; they wish to acquire not a kingdom, but a name."[48] A small number of organizations provide notable exceptions, including the Ku Klux Klan and the Weather Underground, but the lone individual has long been the most likely perpetrator of political violence in the United States. Recent examples include the Unabomber, Ted Kaczynski; the Atlanta Olympic Park bomber, Eric Rudolph; and President Reagan's would-be assassin, John Hinckley. Even debate surrounding the death of President Lincoln—perhaps the most consequential conspiracy in US history—centers on its leader, John Wilkes Booth.

This focus on the individual, rather than on an organization, differentiates the United States from the rest of the world, where actions have traditionally been instigated by groups, such as the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in Great Britain, the Baader-Meinhof Gang in Germany, and the Basque separatist group ETA in Spain. Political violence on the European continent has uniformly been seen as the act of dedicated groups conspiring to overthrow leaders in an attempt to implement a specific philosophy, even if that was mere anarchy, with motivations ranging from the religious to the ideological and covering both extremes of the political spectrum.[49] During a six-year period beginning in 1894, anarchists assassinated President Carnot of France, Empress Elizabeth of Austria, the prime minister of Spain, and King Umberto I of Italy. The 1914 assassination of Archduke Ferdinand of Austria triggered the First World War, and political violence was central to the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 that resulted in the murder of the czar and his family.

In Great Britain, the IRA sought to assassinate British prime ministers Margaret Thatcher and John Major in the 1980s and 1990s and killed both Lord Mountbatten and member of Parliament Airey Neave in 1979 and MP Ian Gow in 1990. Italian premier Aldo Moro was murdered in 1978, and Pope John Paul II was shot in 1981. In Sweden, Prime Minister Olof Palme

was assassinated in 1986, followed by the murder of foreign minister Anna Lindh in 2003. Assassins claimed the lives of Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995, Rajiv and Indira Gandhi of India in 1991 and 1984, respectively, and Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan in 2007. All too often, leaders have been struck down by groups dedicated to the promotion of an ideology or religion they felt to be endangered by the political status quo.[50] In 1999, Laqueur observed that "terrorist movements are usually small; some very small indeed, and while historians and sociologists can sometimes account for mass movements, the movements of small particles in politics, as in physics, often defy any explanation."[51] As the history of the United States has demonstrated, small particles have played a vital and at times devastating role in the development of the nation.

The Clinton administration took power at a time when the threat of terrorism did not warrant serious national attention. Despite this, the administration made a series of policy decisions designed to redefine national counterterrorism strategy. The end of the Cold War had unleashed tensions identified by the president in his 1993 inaugural address as "ancient hatreds and new plagues."[52] These included, but were not limited to, international terrorism and acts of political violence. In the eight years that followed Clinton's inauguration, his administration was forced to address a series of challenges presented by those intent on inflicting harm on the United States. Domestically, the White House faced acts of political violence perpetrated by far-right-wing militia groups as well as by foreign nationals determined to wreak havoc on American soil. Internationally, the United States became the target of choice for a new breed of terrorist, motivated less by capital gain and more by religious fervor.

In the years preceding September 11, 2001, the US government was engaged in a conflict with international terrorism that went unnoticed by the population and underreported by the media. The Clinton administration instigated the final US counterterrorism strategy before the attacks of 9/11. Since then, successive administrations, both Republican and Democratic, have waged a War on Terror. US armed forces have been deployed in multiple countries, most notably Iraq and Afghanistan, to reduce the threat to the United States from nation states and nonstate actors such as Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Although 9/11 is portrayed as a break from previous practices, many policies from the Clinton era were continued in this new era. As memories of 9/11 fade, as terrorist leaders are killed, and as new priorities emerge, the United States will doubtless revert to a pre-9/11 security standing. When that happens, the Clinton administration's peacetime counterterrorism strategy will be a logical point of reference. It is, therefore, vital to appreciate its strategy, to understand what was implemented, where it succeeded, and where future administrations will need to make improvements.

Following 9/11, national security emerged as the preeminent concern of governments and was used to justify increased domestic surveillance, foreign military interventions, and new governing maxims. The Clinton administration's tenure in office was retrospectively defined as a lost decade during which opportunities to confront a growing challenge to US interests were missed by a president more focused on remaining in power than exercising leadership. Political opponents disparaged the Clinton administration for failing to implement a cohesive response to terrorism, but this does not mean that the administration did not seek to define a coherent strategy. The Clinton administration may be criticized for its failings, but these need to be placed in a wider context if its intentions are to be understood.

Notes

1. Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, quoted in Joe Klein, "Closework: Why We Couldn't See What Was Right in Front of Us," *New Yorker,* October 1, 2001, 44–49.

2. Rush Limbaugh and Dana Rohrabacher, quoted in John F. Harris, "Conservatives Sound Refrain: It's Clinton's Fault," *Washington Post,* October 7, 2001, A15.

3. Sean Hannity, *Deliver Us from Evil: Defeating Terrorism, Despotism, and Liberalism* (New York: Regan Books, 2004), 128.

4. Bob Kerrey, quoted in John F. Harris, "Conservatives Sound Refrain," A15.

5. Robert B. Patterson Jr., *Dereliction of Duty* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2003), 132.

6. For analysis of US foreign policy during this time, see James D. Boys, *Clinton's Grand Strategy: US Foreign Policy in a Post–Cold War World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015) and John Dumbrell, *Clinton's Foreign Policy: Between the Bushes, 1992–2000* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2009).

7. William J. Clinton, "The Struggle for the Soul of the 21st Century" (Richard Dimbleby Lecture, London, December 14, 2001).

8. Geoffrey Levitt, "Is 'Terrorism' Worth Defining?" *Ohio Northern University Law Review* 13 (1986): 97.

9. Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism,* rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 1.

10. Alex P. Schmid and Albert J. Jongman, eds., *Political Terrorism*: *A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories and Literature* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1988).

11. Martha Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism," *Comparative Politics* 13, no. 4 (July 1981): 380.

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