

Fall 2003 - Syllabus

THE POLITICS OF TERROR:
CONFRONTING VIOLENT POLITICAL CHANGE
Mark Danner

First Class will meet in Olin 201: 2:30-5:00

Sept. 5: Introduction: The Rationale of Terror

Discussion: The Politics of Terror – What do terrorists want to achieve?
What is power? How does one obtain it?

*The Sept. 11 terrorists want to end United States' involvement in Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

*Cutting off United States' support would be one of the first steps in trying to overthrow those governments.

*How would we as a group set off an insurrection that would bring us power?

Sept. 9: Terror and the Road to Insurrection

Readings for today:

1) Aouiss, General Paul, *The Battle of the Casbah: Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism in Algeria 1955-1957*. New York: Enigma Books, 2002.

2) Jack, Ian, "Gibraltar," from *The Granta Book of Reporting*
Watched "The Battle of Algiers," directed by Gillo Pontecorvo, 1967.

Discussion:

The Battle of Algiers

*An example of a successful use of terrorism to achieve independence

* How can a clandestine organization play a role in politics?

* Gaining political prestige, and lowering the prestige of the government, through police killings, the destruction of public order and, finally, the bombing of innocent

* Released in 1967, during a time of decolonization struggles around the world, notably in the Congo; the beginning of anti-Vietnam protests; the Six-Day War

- * A story of enlightenment and coming into “authenticity” from a state of colonial occupation
- * The terrorists begin shooting police to arm themselves, to destroy the prestige of the state and to build a movement
- * The Islamic wedding, the prohibition on drunkenness, etc. assert this authority and show that the present “authority” is unauthentic
- * Ali is given the task of shooting the policeman but no ammunition
- * Like bin Ladin now, the Algerians resorted to terrorism to reveal the true fascist character of colonist power. Terrorism is used to make the state use its power and show that the society is unjust and based on force.

Sept. 16: The Basic Practice of Politics

Readings for today:

- 1) Lourie, Richard, *The Autobiography of Joseph Stalin: a novel*. Da Capo Press: 1999.

Sept. 23: On the Definition and the History of Terrorism

Readings for today:

- 1) Hoffman, Bruce, *Inside Terrorism* (Columbia, 1998), pages 1 – 157
- 1) *From Confronting Fear: A History of Terrorism*. Ed. Isaac Cronin. New York: Thunder Mouth Press, 2002. pp. xi-43:
 - a) Cronin, Issac, “Introduction.” pp. xi-3.
 - b) Laqueur, Walter, “A History of Terrorism.” pp. 4-16.
 - c) Most, Johann, “The Science of Revolutionary Warfare.” pp. 17-21.
 - d) “President McKinley shot, The Trial and Execution of Leon Czolgosz.” pp. 22-32.
 - e) “Propaganda by Deed – The Greenwich Observatory Bomb of 1894.” pp. 33-35.

September 30: The Rise and Meaning of Al Qaeda

- 1) Gunaratna, Rohan, *Inside Al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror*. (Berkeley, Penguin, 2002, rev. ed.)

Discussion:
Inside Al Qaeda

- * Osama bin Laden styles himself a populist leader, but comes from a wealthy and influential family.
- * He contributed money, a Western business model and above all his charisma to the group. He is very tall, handsome, a fine horseman and photogenic, (he resembles Saladeen) so he is an excellent spokesman and icon.
- * His philosophy, radical conservatism, harks back to the original pure state of early Islam

Oct. 7: Thinking Like Al Qaeda

Readings for today:

- 2) Wright, Lawrence, "The Man Behind Bin Laden: How an Egyptian doctor became a master of terror." The New Yorker Sept. 16, 2002.
http://www.newyorker.com/printable/?fact/02091fa_fact2
- 3) Raban, Jonathan, "My Holy War." The New Yorker, Feb. 4, 2002.
http://www.newyorker.com/printable/?fact/020204fa_FACT
- 4) Cappello, Daniel, "The Second Man: Interview of Lawrence Wright." The New Yorker Sept. 16, 2002.
- 5) "Mujahid Usamah Bin Laden Talked Exclusively to Nida'ul Islam About The New Powder Keg in the Middle East," Nida'ul Islam, Oct. – Nov. 1996: 15.
<http://www.fas.org/irp/world/para/docs/LADIN.htm>
- 6) "Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders," World Islamic Front Statement, Feb. 23, 1998.
<http://www.fas.org/irp/world/para/docs/980223-fatwa.htm>
- 7) "Transcript of Usama bin Laden Video Tape," Dec. 13, 2001.
<http://www.fas.org/irp/world/para/ubl-video.html>
- 8) Ajami, Fouad, "The Uneasy Imperium: Pax Americana in the Middle East," in How Did This Happen? Terrorism and the New War. Eds. James F. Hoge Jr. and Gideon Rose. New York: Public Affairs, 2001. pp. 15-30.
- 9) Doran, Michael Scott, "Somebody Else's Civil War: Ideology, Rage and the Assault on America," in How Did This Happen? Terrorism and the New War. Eds. James F. Hoge Jr. and Gideon Rose. New York: Public Affairs, 2001. pp. 31-52

10) Gause III, F. Gregory, "The Kingdom in the Middle: Saudi Arabia's Double Game," in *How Did This Happen? Terrorism and the New War*. Eds. James F. Hoge Jr. and Gideon Rose. New York: Public Affairs, 2001. pp. 109-122.

Bin Laden texts:

"Bin Laden rails against Crusaders and UN," BBC Monitoring, Nov. 3, 2001.

* Strategy: He is downplaying the advantage technology gives us and saying that American soldiers are really cowards, which is why we need so much technology.

* He adds to his legend by emphasizing that he escaped, despite heavy bombing in a small space, and asserts that our war on terrorism was really a victory for them.

* It is true that it is difficult to get into the many deep trenches and bunkers with conventional weapons, although people are trying to develop more effective ones.

* Al Qaeda, "The Base," made connections and maintained a listing in a decentralized system of groups all over the world.

The New Yorker readings

o Raban's story seems to suggest that the West represents temptation to these radical conservatives, along with corruption.

o Wright's indicates that most of the Al Qaeda leaders had exposure to the West, had studied abroad and met in Hamburg.

o We discussed whether it is right to explain terrorists as understandable people, such as these articles do, and whether such articles seem to justify their actions.

Oct. 14: No Class. Fall Break

Oct. 21: In-Class Midterm

The midterm will consist of a series of essay questions administered in the classroom. They will test your familiarity with the reading and our discussions about it, and your ability to analyze and criticize what we have read. If you have done the reading and taken part in class discussions, you should be well prepared to answer these questions.

Oct. 28: The State Responds: Counter-Terror and Torture

Readings for today:

1) Benjamin, Daniel and Steven Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror*. New York: Random House, 2002.

Discussion:

The Age of Sacred Terror

* State and Defense departments are enormous bureaucracies. To change their priorities are enormous tasks.

* Even though people in the government were aware of the risk posed by Al Qaeda, they couldn't ready any defense. Why?

* Reasons why the government was unprepared for Sept. 11 include:

- 1) government reluctance to give up the "state-sponsored" paradigm,
- 2) rivalries between government departments, and
- 3) scandals diverting the president's attention.

* Someone like Richard Clark at the NSC can be effective because he is nonpolitical, he's been in the government through several administrations, he's somewhat ruthless and he really cares about terrorism and defense. People don't want to fight him.

* The failure of the military's plan to get Osama bin Laden. (pp. 294-295.) Military officers thought the task was a political and diplomatic one, and that the military risked becoming politically vulnerable – a scapegoat – by mounting a mission to get him. So it came up with a cautious, long and extensive plan, knowing that the president, who wanted something quick and quiet, would reject it.

* Clinton wanted Osama bin Laden but couldn't get him, even though he had a huge number of forces at his disposal, because of his opposition within his own government.

* Trying to use a dependent ally: The United States tried to get Osama bin Laden arrested through our relationships with Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. The way power in the Saudi kingdom works, the leaders can't arrest him because he is too powerful.

Nov. 4: Political Realism and the Risks of Terror

Readings for today:

- 1) Machiavelli, Niccolo, *The Prince*. The Modern Library, New York: 1950.
- 2) Kennan, George, *American Diplomacy* (Chicago, 1985, rev. ed.)
- 3) Luttwak, Edward, *Coup d'Etat: A Practical Handbook* (Harvard, 1980)

Discussion:

Coup d'Etat and *The Prince*

* The goal is to take power, and policies are subjugated to the need to take power

Nov. 11: Orwell and Modern Revolutionary War

- 1) Orwell, George, Homage to Catalonia (Harvest, 1969)
- 2) Fanon, Fritz, “The Wretched of the Earth,” pages 47 – 57 in Cronin, Confronting Fear
- 3) Marighella, Carlos, “Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla,” in Cronin
- 4) Sanguinetti, Gianfranco, “On Terrorism and the State” in Cronin
- 5) Antokol, Norman, “No One A Neutral: Political Hostagetaking...” in Cronin

Nov.18: The First Age of Terror: Anarchism and Revolution

Readings for today:

- 1) Conrad, Joseph, The Secret Agent. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Discussion:

Today’s political situation

* Four in 10 Americans believe Saddam Hussein was behind Sept. 11. The Bush administration has subtly encouraged this misunderstanding.

* Al Qaeda’s presence in Iraq is not evidence of collaboration with the regime.

Confronting Fear

* 1848 was a time of revolution throughout Europe. The failure of revolution led to conservative backlash and much frustration. Believing that orthodoxy would never bring about change, and resorted to terror, including assassination and bombing.

* Many politicians and leaders were assassinated from the 1880s on, because terrorism was relatively new, there was little security and successes led to a rash of new attempts.

The Secret Agent

* Conrad creates a parallel world where the distinction between right and wrong, as well as reality itself, is hard to grasp, giving us appearing and disappearing police, buildings with addresses that don’t go in order, surprise confrontations and surreal conversations.

* His anarchist characters are ineffectual and accomplish nothing.

* The Professor is a provocateur, hoping to provoke the state into overreacting and damaging its own image.

* The novel is prophetic in that it makes the terrorist the survivor; the method, not the ideology, remains.

Nov. 25: Dostoevsky's Demons: Nihilism, Liberalism, Terror

Readings for today:

1) Dostoevsky, Fyodor, Demons. 4th ed. New York: Vintage Books, or Random House, Inc., 1995.

2) "Bin Laden, Dostoevsky and the reality principle: an interview with André Glucksmann," March 31, 2003. <http://www.opendemocracy.net/debates/article-2-95-1111.jsp>

Demons:

* Dostoevsky blamed liberals for the radical movement in Russia.

* He uses Stepan to represent this idea, whose name is "almost on par with the names of Chaadaev, Belinsky, Granovsky, and Herzen," according to Dostoevsky. He patterned Stepan after this earlier generation of intellectuals.

Dec. 2: Nihilism and the Liberal Weakening of Authority

Readings for today:

1) Dostoevsky, Fyodor, Demons. 4th ed. New York: Vintage Books, or Random House, Inc., 1995.

2) Frank, Joseph, Dostoevsky: The Miraculous Years, 1865-1871. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995. pp. 396-498.

Demons:

* Dostoevsky started Demons after the murder of Ivanov. The Nechnev trial was happening while he was writing, and the transcripts were appearing in the press. He was trying to figure the source of that type of violence, and came up with Stepan as one of the answers.

* Stepan has announced his atheism, but hasn't followed through, intellectually, on the consequences of atheism. Pyotr and others of the next generation do.

* Dostoevsky concludes God and orthodoxy are essential, or you end up with barbarism and tragedy.

Dec. 9: Liberalism and Terror: The New Crusade

Readings for today:

- 1) Berman, Paul, *Terror and Liberalism*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003.
- 2) President George Bush's speech on Sept. 20, 2001, regarding the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>
- 3) Danner, Mark, "Marooned in the Cold War: America, the Alliance, and the Quest for a Vanished World," *World Policy Journal*, Fall 1997.
http://www.markdanner.com/wpj/fall1997_Marooned.htm
- 4) Danner, Mark, "Marooned in the Cold War: An Exchange between Mark Danner and George F. Kennan, Strobe Talbott and Lee H. Hamilton," *World Policy Journal*, Spring 1998. http://www.markdanner.com/wpj/Sping1998_Marooned.htm
- 5) The National Security Strategy of the United States of America.
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html>
- 6) Herf, Jeffrey, "What is Old and What is New is the Terrorism of Islamic Fundamentalism?" *Partisan Review*, January 2002.
<http://www.partisanreview.org/archive/2002/1/herf.html>

Discussion:

From President Bush's Sept. 20 speech:

"We have seen their kind before. They are the heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the 20th century. By sacrificing human life to serve their radical visions -- by abandoning every value except the will to power -- they follow in the path of fascism, and Nazism, and totalitarianism. And they will follow that path all the way, to where it ends: in history's unmarked grave of discarded lies."

Terror and Liberalism

- a. Berman elaborates on Bush's line throughout his book, arguing that despite the completely different ideologies, the uniting factor of all those groups is they believe they are morally permitted to do anything to achieve their goals.
- b. Berman doesn't address bin Laden's goals of removing the United States' influence from the Persian Gulf and the Middle East, and ridding these areas of the secular governments now in place.

Dec 16: Terror, Liberalism and the Prospects for Political Change

Discussion:

7) Gillo Pontecorvo, Burn (1969)

a. This movie explores colonialism, how people exert power over others. Elements of the colonial and post-colonial era relate to the Iraq war. The disparity between technologies is one similarity. Both wars are fought to secure rights to a commodity: In Quemada, sugar; in Iraq, oil.

b. Using or compromising with the middle class to stunt revolution.

c. The “liberal” leader, Teddy Sanchez, doesn’t understand the politics of power and is used by the British. This depiction of a liberal, through revolutionary eyes, ridicules those who think change can be accomplished gradually.

d. Jose Dolores, the rebel who was politically awakened by William Walker, the agent provocateur, decides freedom given to him is not real freedom and makes the free choice to die.

Discussion:

8) The class becomes an Al Qaeda cell in Afghanistan or Pakistan, trying to devise a plan to respond to the coming US war in Iraq.

9) For each possible plan, the cell must consider the message it would send: how much media attention we would get, the difficulty of the plan, the number of deaths and the type of response we would be likely to get.

10) We came up with a number of options: attacking Israel, terrorizing Egypt and Saudi Arabia, using agent provocateurs to incite police violence during anti-war demonstrations in Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

11) We decide to attack the United States to show that we are the only authority fighting for the Arabs. We considered attacking restaurants, malls and theaters to intimidate consumers, as well as attacking gas stations, before settling on poisoning consumer products, which would be a way to cause a lot of terror with very few operatives, little cost and little preparation.

Assignment:

12) Write a memo to Osama bin Laden proposing a strategy for taking advantage of the United States’ seemingly pending war with Iraq to hurt the United States economically.