

## **Fear and Loathing: The Rhetoric of Fear-Inducing Terrorism**

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### **Abstract**

Authoritative works on terrorism give varying accounts of the role of fear in acts of violent terrorism. Some regard the production and exploitation of fear as an essential—even a definitional—component of terrorism. Others give little attention to the role of fear or ignore it altogether. I argue that while fear is normally a natural response to an act of violent terrorism, the exploitation of fear is not necessarily a principal part of the rhetorical structure of violent terrorism. When the use of fear is a primary aim, the nature of the fear and the way it is used will vary with the goals and intentions of its agents. Furthermore, the effectiveness of the production of fear will depend on the nature of the fear produced, including on the extent to which the fear takes a less or a more deliberative form.

The name of our land has been wiped-out.  
—Hecuba, in Euripodes, *Trojan Women*

America's towers, too, have burned. Compassion and terror are in the fabric of our lives.  
—Martha Nussbaum, "Compassion and Terror"

... and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death. And the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.  
—Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*

### **Introduction**

What role does the production of fear play in a program of terrorism? Authorities on terrorism give vastly different answers. For some, fear is an essential, even a defining part of an act of terrorism. Bruce Hoffman gives such a definition. We may now therefore attempt to define terrorism as the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change.<sup>1</sup> Other accounts, however, analyze terrorism with little or no attention to the topic of fear.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, English argues that fear (or terror) is not “what is centrally and distinctively going on” in terrorism and “that the literal sense of the word ‘terrorism’ misleadingly suggests a distinctively central for ‘terror’ itself.”<sup>3</sup> It is clear, perhaps, that fear is a natural response to acts of terrorist violence. However, in order to determine whether the instilling of such fear is an essential part of the aim of a terrorist act, we must consider the rhetorical structure of such acts.

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<sup>1</sup> Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1998), 40.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Gus Martin, *Understanding Terrorism* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003); Louise Richardson, *What Terrorists Want* (New York: Random House, 2007); and Richard English, *Terrorism: How to Respond* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> English, 6-7.

Insofar as an act of terrorism is constituted by an act of violence, the terrorism is a rhetorical act. For, the violence done in an act of terrorism is done as an act of communication, a communication that aims at persuasion. Violent terrorism seeks to persuade through its use of violence, and so it aims at persuasion through intimidation. The violence of such terrorism can, and often does, cause fear. However, inducing fear is not necessarily a principal aim of the terrorism, and when it is such an aim, the nature of the fear and the use made of the fear by the terrorist will vary according to the terrorist's intentions.

When an act of terrorist violence does have as a specific aim the producing and using of fear, its use of fear will be instrumental to the rhetorical structure of the act. How the terrorism endeavors to make use of fear, in such cases, will be a part of how the terrorism endeavors to persuade or intimidate. Since the nature and use of fear—and even the intention to make use of fear at all—will vary with the intentions of the terrorist, the particular way that a given act of terrorism aims to cause and make use of fear will contribute to what I shall call the *secondary rhetorical structure* of the terrorism. Acts of violent terrorism, then, will vary in their secondary rhetorical structure, including in how they endeavor, through violence, to cause and make use of fear. However, all acts of violent terrorism share a *basic* or *fundamental rhetorical structure* in that, whatever else they may seek, all such acts use violence to issue a message of intimidation.

### **I. The Basic Rhetorical Structure of Terrorism**

Violent terrorism communicates a meaning that points beyond itself in the way of a *gesture*. As such, then, the rhetorical meaning of an act of violent terrorism consists in its being as a gesture, a pointing to something beyond itself. In this way violent terrorism always carries a message. That it is in this way a gesture is a basic and an essential feature of such terrorism, whatever else might be involved in an act of terrorism; and it is in the nature of what is done in an act of violent terrorism that in so acting, whatever else may be intended, the terrorist sends a gestured message.

In this way, then, an act of terrorism is akin to a *performative* speech act.<sup>4</sup> An act of violent terrorism is such that it uses a physical act of violence as a way of performing a kind of utterance, a communicative gesture. In performing the violence the terrorist thereby gestures, utters or issues a communication. Depending on the intentions of the terrorist, that act of violence can serve to perform various acts of this sort, such as issuing a warning, protest or condemnation, expressing outrage, or commanding attention. However, although it may serve as a way of doing more, the violence always serves as a way of gesturing further violence. Violence of this sort occurs in the context of felt grievance, and violence done in such a context betokens the possibility of more such violence. Thus, whatever else it may do, in respect to its basic rhetorical structure, the violence serves to perform an act of gesturing or pointing to future violence.

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<sup>4</sup> J.L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words*, Second Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

The performance of a speech act can misfire, and the terrorist act of violence can fail as well as a gesture of violence. One way is if the act of violence itself misfires, in that it is so poorly executed as not to count as a genuine act of intimidating violence. This seems to have been so in the case of the “shoe bomber” who failed in his attempt to ignite a bomb.<sup>5</sup> Here, the agent failed to execute the act of violence by which he would have issued a threat of future violence and so he failed to issue the threat in this way. Alternatively, the agent may succeed in committing violence, but in a way or in circumstances in which the intended threat misfires. Thus, the violence may have been so harmless or misdirected that it could not possibly succeed to deliver a threat.<sup>6</sup> If the attempt is sufficiently feeble or misdirected, it may fail to count at all as an act of terrorism. Even as feeble or misdirected, however, an act of terrorism will have a basic rhetorical structure by virtue of which it will be a (perhaps failed or infelicitous) gesture of violence.

The basic rhetorical meaning of violent terrorism, then, is located in its violence. Such terrorism performs violence in a way that renders the act of violence also an act of gesturing. As we have seen, violent terrorism involves violence in two ways, for in violent terrorism the act of doing violence is also as a way of gesturing violence. Terrorism, then, is a “gesture of violence” in two senses: in the sense that it is a gesture made by doing violence and in the sense that its gesture points beyond the violence done to violence to come. In this way, violence constitutes a two-fold meaning of the terrorist act: the meaning of what the act of terrorism *is* and the meaning of what it thereby *gestures toward*.

The action performed in terrorism is an action that is aimed at a target. In its basic rhetorical structure violent terrorism involves two actions and so each action has a target: the violence done is violence done to or aimed at one target, and the gesture made is a gesture sent to or aimed at another target.<sup>7</sup> There are, then, two targets of an act of terrorism and so terrorism is, in this sense, *bifocal*.<sup>8</sup> The target of the gestured message of violence, in fact, is a “target” in three

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<sup>5</sup> “Shoe bomber: Tale of another failed terrorist attack,” CNN, December 25, 2009, [http://articles.cnn.com/2009-12-25/justice/richard.reid.shoe.bomber\\_1\\_terror-attacks-american-airlines-flight-qaeda?\\_s=PM:CRIME](http://articles.cnn.com/2009-12-25/justice/richard.reid.shoe.bomber_1_terror-attacks-american-airlines-flight-qaeda?_s=PM:CRIME), retrieved 6:54, September 14, 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Note that an act may be a threat even when no threat is intended. Violent acts, particularly when executed in successful acts of terrorism and in contexts of grievance, naturally serve as threatening future action, whether or not they are so intended.

<sup>7</sup> While there can be said to be two targets in this way, they are “targets” in different ways. In the one case, the “target” is that to which the harm of the violence is intended. In the other case, the “target” is that to whom the message is sent. Nevertheless, each may be said to be a “target” in that the respective actions are, in some way, directed at them.

<sup>8</sup> That terrorism is bifocal is a point made by many authors. Michael Baur attributes this conception to Haig Khatchadourian, while Claudia Card credits Carl Wellman. See Michael Baur, “What is distinctive about terrorism?” in *Philosophy 9/11: Thinking about the War on Terrorism*, edited by Timothy Shanahan (Peru, IL: Open Court, 2005), 11; Haig Khatchadourian, *The Morality of Terrorism* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998), 6; Claudia Card, “Making War on Terrorism in Response to 9/11,” in *Terrorism and International Justice*, edited by James Sterba

ways. It is, first, the target of the message, the target to whom the message is directed. Second, it is the indirect target of the immediate violence, since the violence sends the message to this target. Finally, it is the target of the gestured violence, the target subjected to the possibility of future violence.<sup>9</sup>

It is the indirect target that is always the *primary* focus of the violent terrorism insofar as concerns its basic rhetorical structure.<sup>10</sup> This is because the violence done to the direct target is done as a means to acting on the indirect target. The direct target is made to suffer violence so that the message of violence may be sent to the indirect, primary target. The direct target is used in this way as a means to sending the message to the primary, indirect target. For this reason, those who are the direct target of the violence typically are not those who are the target of the message, especially when the violence is severely damaging. In such cases, those who constitute the direct target of the violence are treated as disposable means that are used for the further end of sending a message to those who are the primary, indirect target.

While those serving as the direct target and those serving as the indirect target need not be the same, they nevertheless must be connected in a way such that the immediate violence done to the direct target will constitute a gesture of violence toward the indirect target. The connection must be such that, for example, members of the indirectly targeted group identify with, or are identified with, members of the directly targeted group. In this way, the connection between the performance of the immediate violence and a successful performance of the gesture of violence further depends on a meaningful connection between the direct target and the indirect target. Given the nature of the violence done to the direct target, and given the connection between the direct target and the indirect target, performing the action of doing violence to the direct target will serve as a way of performing a gesture of violence toward the indirect target.

The gesture of violence in terrorism is a gesture of violence to come. In this way, the gesture is a *promise* or a *declaration* of further violence. If the violence is effective, then to the indirect target of the violence, the gesture will be a *threat* of violence—or, more specifically, a threat of *harm* from violence. Thus, in committing violence, the terrorist thereby performs an action of gesturing further violence that constitutes an action of *issuing a threat* of further violence. Furthermore, in threatening in this way acts of further violence, the terrorist thereby performs further communicative acts, including a *declaration of willingness* and an *assertion of vulnerability*. The performance of violence against the direct target is done willingly, and so the threatening of further violence serves additionally as a way of declaring a *willingness* to engage

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(New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 173; and Carl Wellman, “On Terrorism Itself,” *Journal of Value Inquiry* 13 (1979), 250-258.

<sup>9</sup> Note that there remain two targets even when those who are the targets of the immediate violence are identical to those who are the targets of the message of violence. See note 4.

<sup>10</sup> In some cases the secondary rhetorical structure is such that the primary aim of the terrorism may be the damage done to the immediate victims. This may be the case in some acts of terrorist assassination. Even here, however, the violence has the basic rhetorical structure of a gestured message sent via the violence to an indirect target.

in such violence toward the primary (indirect) target. In turn, the performance of the immediate violence is done with the intention of success, and so the threatening of further violence serves additionally as a way of asserting the *vulnerability* of its primary (indirect) target to such acts of violence. Whatever else it may mean, then, the performing of an act of violence in terrorism serves as a gesture toward further violence; and the gesture toward further violence itself has the rhetorical structure in which the gesture consists of three actions: the action of issuing a threat of further violence, the action of declaring a willingness to perform such violence, and the action of asserting the vulnerability of its primary (indirect) target to such violence.

Violent terrorism can cause fear either as a direct reaction to the occurrence of the immediate violence or as a response to the threat of further violence. In the former case, one might be moved to fear as a direct victim of the violence or out of sympathy for or identification with the direct victims. While many cases of violent terrorism, such as the terrorism of the 9/11 attacks, cause such fear, we will see shortly that not all cases of violent terrorism will. In the latter case, one will be moved to fear to the extent that one takes oneself to be a potential target of future violence. Thus, if the terrorism is successful in delivering its threat of fear, it will tend to cause fear among members of the indirect target group.

Violent terrorism can be directed at property rather than at persons and in such a case fear might not be directed at the immediate violence in itself. Nevertheless, if it is successfully delivered, the threat of future violence, even if it gestures violence toward property rather than toward persons, will tend to cause at least the fear of loss of property. In this way, causing fear of future violence is the point of gesturing such violence, and thus the aim to do what tends to cause such fear is part of the basic rhetorical structure of violent terrorism. On the other hand, it will be a matter of its secondary rhetorical structure whether the violence itself is meant to cause fear as well as what kind of fear is intended and how the fear is meant to be used.

A vivid illustration of these rhetorical features of an act of violent terrorism can be found in remarks attributed to Osama bin Laden shortly after the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington, D.C. The following presents a selection of these remarks.

This is America, God has sent one of the attacks by God and has attacked one of its best buildings. And this is America filled with fear from the north to south and east to west, thank God.

And what America is facing today is something very little of what we have tasted for decades. Our nation, since nearly 80 years is tasting this humility...

And when God has guided a bunch of Muslims to be at the forefront and destroyed America, a big destruction, I wish God would lift their position...

... those people have defended and retaliated to what their brothers and sisters have suffered in Palestine and Lebanon ... so God has given them back what they deserve.

And to America, I say to it and to its people this: I swear by God the Great, America will never dream nor those who live in America will never taste security and safety unless we feel security and safety in our land and in Palestine.<sup>11</sup>

In these remarks, bin Laden alludes to the violence against the Twin Towers in New York (the attack on one of America's "best buildings") and interprets the significance of this act, a significance that includes the threat of further violence (that "those who live in America will never taste security and safety"). Thus, there was violence done to immediate victims, and, thereby, a promise or threat of further acts of such violence was sent to a primary target (America and those who live in America), where the message included a declaration of willingness to commit such acts of violence ("I swear to it [America] and to its people"), and an assertion of America's vulnerability to such acts of violence ("America will never taste security and safety"). Indeed, bin Laden's remarks consist of a celebration of these aspects of the violence as signs of the success of the attacks.

These remarks state as well, with clear approval ("thank God"), that America is "filled with fear." In part the celebration of this fear is a celebration of the success of the attacks. In the first place, the fear is an indication of the success of the violence, an indication that the violence has succeeded in producing its intended harm and destruction, and thereby in producing the fear of the violence felt both by those receiving and those witnessing the violence and its harm and destruction. To those who celebrate the attacks, the resulting fear will be a welcome sign that harm has been done. More importantly, however, the fear is a sign that the message carried by the violence has been successfully delivered. That America is "filled with fear" suggests not only that the fear is widespread, but that it is felt personally as a threat to one's own safety. The thought that future violence of this sort is possible (or even likely), that there are those willing to perpetrate such violence, and that one is vulnerable to such violence, will have converted the sympathy felt at the sight of the harm and destruction to an intensely felt personal fearing of the possibility of future attacks. That bin Laden celebrates what he takes to be fear of this sort shows that the causing of such fear is indeed the basic point of the violence.

These remarks serve to illustrate the role of fear in the rhetorical structure of a violent terrorist act. In that fear is a natural expression both of harm suffered and of threat received, the provoking of such fearing through the act of violence is part of the point of such violence. Yet, while the provoking of fear is natural in this way, it is not essential to the terrorist act as such that

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<sup>11</sup> Osama bin Laden, "Bin Laden: America 'Filled with Fear,'" CNN.com/world, 2001 Oct. 7 [Posted: 2010 June 7; 5:57 PM EDT (2157 GMT)]. Available from:

<http://archives.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/central/10/07/ret.binladen.transcript/>.

the fear be otherwise an aim of the violence or that it be celebrated in the way shown in bin Laden's remarks. The remarks suggest that the fear had a special significance for the 9/11 attacks, a significance beyond that of being a sign of success, whether of the violence itself or of its delivery of the message of fear. In this case, the remarks suggest that the fear is taken as a further sign of weakness and suffering. Such a view, while perhaps questionable, is not, in any case, an essential part of the basic rhetorical structure of violent terrorism. In its basic rhetorical structure, the occurrence of fear is the point of the violence in that it is a sign of the success of the violence and its message of fear. That bin Laden takes the fear as having a further significance is a matter of the additional meaning that he places on the attacks, a meaning that gives these attacks an additional, or secondary rhetorical structure.

## II. Secondary Rhetorical Structures of Terrorism

Threats and acts of violence can have any of assorted aims. One may do or threaten violence as a way of seeking attention, either to oneself or to one's cause; as a way of seeking revenge, retribution, or the administration of punishment; as a way of seeking to bargain, manipulate or coerce; as a way of seeking to harm or even to destroy. One may do or threaten violence for still further reasons. Furthermore, there are many reasons for the choice of violent terrorism as a way of pursuing such aims. The choice may arise from desperation or rage, it may express cool calculation, or it may express some other consideration. Whatever the aim and whatever the reason, the act of violent terrorism will have the basic rhetorical structure described above: its violence will serve as a way of affirming a threat of violence, the willingness to commit such violence, and the vulnerability of the target to such violence. The further aims of the terrorism, and the reasons for the choice of terrorism, will determine the secondary rhetorical structure of the act, a structure that gives the act a meaning beyond that of a vehicle for delivering a message of future violence.

The remarks from bin Laden suggest such a further secondary rhetorical structure of the 9/11 attacks.

And what America is facing today is something very little of what we have tasted for decades. Our nation, since nearly 80 years is tasting this humility.

According to bin Laden, the success of the attacks means that America is thereby compelled to face *humiliation* and this suggests that compelling such humiliation may have been an aim of the attacks. Here bin Laden may mean that the attacks "humiliate" in the sense of compelling a *suffering of victimization*—the violence of terrorism makes its targets suffer *being the victim* of the violence. Terrorism victimizes its target in that, when it is successful, it compels its victims to suffer abusive harm. Its targets are victims, persons who are made to suffer, persons who are subjected to abuse. That such victimization is called "humiliation" suggests that it is something demeaning, that it treats persons in a way that is degrading. The direct target of the violence will be those who are immediately victimized, while those who are the indirect, primary target will be victimized both indirectly and directly—indirectly, in their sympathetic witnessing of the

victimization of those who are the direct target, and directly, both in their being the prospective victim of the gestured violence and in their being subjected to the receipt of just such a threat. Such victimization is a natural consequence of a successful attack.

However, the remarks from bin Laden suggest that what mattered in the 9/11 attacks is not just that the attacks victimized its targets, but that they subjected its targets to the *experience* of being victimized. Thus, he says not that they were humiliated, but that they *tasted* “humility” (humiliation). This suggests that it was the rhetorical purpose of the attacks to deliver an *experience* of victimization, that the violence carried a *message of humiliation* whose point was to convey what it is *like* to be victimized. This point is underscored by bin Laden’s suggestion that in this way, the attacks were meant to make America experience what others have been made to experience.

... those people have defended and retaliated to what their brothers and sisters have suffered in Palestine and Lebanon ... so God has given them back what they deserve.

Thus, the terrorist attacks have given something back both to the terrorists and to their victims. The victims have been given back what it is that they have allegedly given to others: the experience of being victims, of being humiliated. The agents of the violence, on the other hand, have been given back what they have lost: a status of dignity and self-respect. Apart from causing harm and destruction, then, the violence sent not only a message of further violence, but also a message of humiliation; and it is this humiliation—this experience of victimization—that is “America’s punishment.” To this extent, then, beyond being a way of sending the message of further violence, the attacks were also acts of retaliation, retribution or punishment. Thus, this message of humiliation was an element of the secondary rhetorical structure of the attacks, a structure involving not just a message of threatened violence, but also a message of retributive humiliation.

Consider, now, a third sense of “humiliation.” Imagine terrorist attacks that aim at causing the target not just to experience being a victim, but to become a “victim” in the further sense of taking on an enduring, degraded status of victimhood, the status of one who by nature is *suitied* or *condemned* to be victimized. Such a status of humiliation may involve a persistent treatment of victimization or subjugation at the hands of others, as well as an understanding oneself as being by nature such a victim. Presumably, the aim of imposing a humiliated status of this sort would be much more ambitious than bin Laden’s aim of imposing an experience of humiliation, and it would require an act, or acts, of terrorism that would have a more devastating and manipulative effect on its indirect, primary target. Such an act would need a rhetorical structure that would enable it, among other things, to convey to its primary target such a diminished self-conception. Here, too, an aim of this sort would belong to some, but not all, acts of terrorism, and such an aim would involve the secondary rhetorical structure of the terrorism. As with aiming at causing

the experience of being victimized, aiming at causing a reduced status of victimization would involve a rhetorical structure beyond that of simply sending a message of violence.

While causing humiliation in the first sense (being a victim of violence) is a natural consequence of the basic rhetorical structure of terrorism, this is not true of causing humiliation either in the second sense (being made to experience being a victim) or in the third sense (being made to have the status of one “properly” victimized). Similarly, while causing fear is a natural consequence of the basic rhetorical structure of terrorism, other uses of fear will concern its secondary rhetorical structure. Just as bin Laden finds a special significance in victimization, so do some acts of terrorism find in fear a significance that goes beyond that of being a sign of terrorist success. Similarly, just as there could be a further aim of causing a manipulative form of humiliation, so too there can be a further aim of causing a manipulative form of fearing. To see how this might be so we will turn to a further examination of the role of fear in the rhetorical structure of terrorism.

### **III. Fear in the Secondary Rhetorical Structure of Terrorism**

As we have seen, it is part of its basic rhetorical structure that an act of violent terrorism aims at what would naturally cause such fear. Beyond its being a sign of success, whether and how fear matters to an act of terrorism will depend on aims that constitute the secondary rhetorical structure of the terrorism.

Some commentators have suggested that terrorism necessarily uses fear to manipulate its primary target. For example, Harte conceives of terrorism just as the use of fear to affect conduct.

...an agent terrorizes some given individual or group (the *target*) when the agent tries to produce fear in the target in order to affect the target’s conduct in some way that the terrorist finds desirable. So, under my analysis, a terrorist must have both a proximate end (i.e., producing fear in the target) and an ultimate one (i.e., changing the target’s conduct).<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, Baur defines terrorism as involving the use of violence

so as to cause fear among members of the terrorist’s indirect target group, thus creating a generalized climate of fear, distrust, or instability within certain sectors of society or within society at large, the ultimate aim of which is to influence popular opinion or governmental policy in a manner that serves the terrorist’s objectives.

According to Scheffler, in what he calls “the standard cases,” terrorists do violence in order to use fear to degrade a social order.

In the standard cases, then, terrorists use violence against some people to create fear in others, with the aim of degrading the social order and reducing its capacity to support a flourishing social life—or at least with the aim of credibly

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<sup>12</sup> Liam Harte, “A Taxonomy of Terrorism,” in Timothy Shanahan, ed., *Philosophy 9/11: Thinking about the War on Terrorism* (Peru, IL: Open Court, 2005), 23-50.

threatening to produce such effects.<sup>13</sup>

On these views, terrorism not only causes fear, it uses fear as a way of manipulating. For Harte, fear's use is to manipulate conduct, for Baur, it is to influence popular opinion or public policy, and for Scheffler, it is to degrade the social order. While Harte and Baur take such a use of fear to characterize terrorism as such, Scheffler restricts such a use to what he calls "the standard cases." I have suggested that terrorism as such has a basic rhetorical structure by virtue of which fearing matters insofar as it is a natural reaction to the violence and to its message of violence. Terrorism that further aims at using fear to manipulate is a special case of terrorism as such, a case in which the special aims of the terrorism give it a secondary rhetorical structure by virtue of which fear is used to manipulate. Not all violent terrorism uses fear to manipulate. Nor is it clear how or in what way those that do use fear to manipulate are somehow the norm or are "standard" cases of terrorism.

To avoid such misleading characterizations of terrorism, then, call those cases of violent terrorism that do use fear to manipulate cases of "*fear-inducing*" terrorism. Fear-inducing terrorism, then, is terrorism in which violence is done to a direct target in order to cause fearing in an indirect, primary target, where the fearing is used to manipulate the primary target in some way. The aim of fear-inducing terrorism is not just to cause fear as a response to its message of violence, nor does it simply use its *violence* or its threat of violence to manipulate its target. Fear-inducing terrorism uses its victim's *fear* as a means of manipulation. It manipulates how it causes and how it uses fear. Thus, the secondary rhetorical structure of fear-inducing terrorism will be such that the message of fear that is delivered by its violence will be a message that serves to induce, or manipulatively cause, a manipulative form of fearing. In order to see more clearly how this is so, we will turn to a detailed look at the kinds of fear involved in fear-inducing terrorism and how such fear can serve a manipulative rhetorical function.

#### **IV. Experiential Fear and The Rhetorical Structure of Fear-Inducing Terrorism**

Fear-inducing terrorism uses violence to send a message of fear that will produce a fear that will serve to manipulate the primary target. Through its violence such terrorism seeks to manipulate the fear that it causes such that it will in turn be a manipulative fear. In this way fear-inducing terrorism is doubly manipulative: it manipulates the fear caused in the primary target and it uses this fear to manipulate the target group. Such terrorism is fear *inducing* in that it is doubly manipulative in this way. Its causing of fear is an inducing of fearing, a manipulative causing that seeks to produce a kind of fear that suits its aims of manipulation.

There are various ways that terrorism of this sort can aim to be manipulative, including by coercion, inducement, influence, or indirect modification of the social order, such as in shaping or undermining social arrangements. Similarly, what might be manipulated is various, including conduct, public opinion or public policy, and personal or social stability or wellbeing. The

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<sup>13</sup> Samuel Scheffler, "Is Terrorism Morally Distinctive?" *The Journal of Political Philosophy*: 14, no. 1 (2006), 6.

terrorism will seek to induce a kind of fear, then, that will enable it to use the fear for its intended form of manipulation.

Terrorism causes fear both by its violence and by its message of fear. Fearing can be a response to various aspects of the violence, including to the occurrence of the violence itself and to the resulting harm to and suffering of those who are the direct targets. Such fear may be that felt by the direct targets of the violence or by the indirect targets who witness the violence. Those who are the primary, indirect target of the violence may fear also in response to the message of fear. As we have seen, among the aspects of the message of fear that can cause fearing is the issuance of a threat of future violence, the declaration of a willingness to cause such violence, and the assertion of a vulnerability of those who are the primary target to such violence. Fear-inducing terrorism will endeavor to induce such fearing so as render it fearing that will be manipulative.

What kinds of manipulative fear, then, can terrorism induce? Before we turn to this question it will be helpful to consider four elements of fear that apply in general to the kinds of fearing that will be involved in violent terrorism generally. First, fearing takes an *object* in that when we fear there is always something that we fear. When confronted by the snarling dog, I am afraid of the dog and I fear that the dog will bite me. Because of her plans for tomorrow, Joan fears that it will rain. The object of my fear is *the dog*—specifically *the dog's biting me*. The object of Joan's fear is *the raining*.

If we consider the fear had by the direct victims of terrorist violence we are apt to think of the fear in a certain form. When fear is a reaction to a sudden and violent occurrence, it takes the form of an *experience* of fear or a *state* of fear. Philip Fisher describes such fear as a “single, experiential moment.”

Grief and fear are examples...of passions that we think of first by single, experiential moments. When you hear the word, you think of an occasioned event of grief or fear.<sup>14</sup>

Wayne Davis describes such fearing as “the experience of fear.”

The experience of fear is an occurrent emotional state, which involves involuntary arousal: rapid heart beat sweat, and so on.<sup>15</sup>

However, not all fearing is of this episodic and experiential nature.

We need to notice first the difference between the eruptive momentary impassioned state and the more enduring underlying states of which we speak when thinking of the passions, the difference between occasioned, one time events and the passions as we experience them in settled, persistent, temperamental facts (or, in Kant's terms, inclinations)... We always distinguish between a general disposition, like the fear of heights, from a moment of fear

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<sup>14</sup> Philip Fisher, *The Vehement Passions*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 19.

<sup>15</sup> Wayne Davis, “The Varieties of Fear,” *Philosophical Studies*, 51 (1987), 287.

when we see a large snake in front of us on the path.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, a “moment of fear,” as in the sight of the snake or the realization of being under attack, is but one kind of fearing. Similarly, Robert Gordon, who restricts the term “state” to the momentary “eruption” of fear, argues that not all fearing involves such a “state of fear.”

But it is simply not true that whenever someone fears or is afraid that something is so, he is *afraid*, or in a *state of fear*. Fears range wider than fear. It is not true that whenever someone has a fear—e.g., fears or is afraid that something is so—he is afraid, or in a state of fear. Someone who is afraid that it is going to rain or who fears that his rose bush was killed by the frost is unlikely to be in such a state that we can say of him truly, “He is afraid,” or “He is in a state of fear.”<sup>17</sup>

Thus, as Davis indicates, we must distinguish between “being afraid (experiential fear)” and “being afraid that something will happen (propositional fear).”

The experience of fear (experiential fear) is an occurrent emotional state, which involves involuntary arousal: rapid heart beat, sweat, and so on. Fearing that something is the case is a propositional attitude; it need not be occurrent, and may have no physiological effect.<sup>18</sup>

Whereas experiential fear is occurrent and involves “involuntary arousal,” neither is necessarily so in the case of propositional fear. While peering down from a skyscraper I am struck with experiential fear. My fear is something I experience, it occurs at that moment, and it involves such physiologically based reactions as increased pulse, sweating and dizziness. Joan’s fear that it will rain is propositional. Joan will have her fear, in contrast, even when the fear does not occur to her—when, for example, she is reading her book and not thinking of the possible rain. Nor does Joan’s fear involve any special “involuntary arousal.”

A victim’s immediate response to being subjected to an attack of terrorist violence is almost certainly experiential fear: the fear is consciously experienced and so is occurrent, and it involves involuntary arousal. It is likely that immediate witnesses to the attack will also have such an experience of fear. Later responses to the attack, and the response on the part of those who are targets of the message of violence, are apt to involve propositional fear: a fear that “I may subject to such an attack.” While this fear may be consciously experienced, it need not be so. Nor will it be occurrent or involve involuntary physiological arousal.

Davis describes “the experience of fear” as “nonrelational in the sense that it has no particular object.”<sup>19</sup> By this he means not that the fear is “objectless.” In general, he argues that so-called “objectless fear” or “free-floating anxiety” does in fact have an object, but not a *definite* object. In experiential fear, as in “objectless fear,”

the subject experiences fear, even intense fear, but cannot specify what he is

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<sup>16</sup> Fisher, 18.

<sup>17</sup> Robert M. Gordon, “Fear,” *The Philosophical Review*, 89, no.4 (1980), 564-565.

<sup>18</sup> Davis, 289.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 298.

afraid of. The subject does have indefinite propositional fears, however: he is undoubtedly afraid that *something bad will happen*, for example... The subject cannot identify what the “something bad” is... Nevertheless, the fear that something bad will happen is a propositional fear. So, “objectless” fear does have an object: “something bad happening.” All the fear lacks is a *definite* object.<sup>20</sup>

Robert Gordon makes a similar point.

The formula ‘S fears (is afraid) that p’ is comprehensive enough, or more precisely empty enough, to embrace the vaguest of so-called “objectless” fears, for even at that extreme one at least fears that there is something bad that one doesn’t yet know about—something bad that is (or was or will be) the case.<sup>21</sup>

Experiential fear may be indefinite in this way, as when the victims of the terrorist attack experience an indeterminate terror and panic. However, its object may have greater degrees of determinateness, as when what is feared is “the attack,” “the destruction,” or “the confusion.” What is distinctive about experiential fear is not that it has an indeterminate object, but that it is occurrent, consciously felt, and involves involuntary arousal.

Second, when we fear, we *anticipate*, in the sense of entertaining or considering, the occurrence of that which we fear. We do so in the sense that, at least momentarily, we regard it as if it were a real possibility. In some cases, the thought of it as possible may be forced on us by a sudden turn of events, as when, while out for a walk, we are suddenly confronted by a snarling dog or are caught in a terrorist attack. Here we fear being bit, and in so fearing we imagine our being bit as a real possibility, as something that could very well happen. At other times, the thought may be latent, one persisting over a period of time, as with someone who fears that it will rain and is disposed thereby to imagine its doing so, or who has a fear of heights that involves a disposition to imagine the experience of falling. While one must entertain what one fears as if it were a real possibility, this does not mean that it is in fact is a real possibility, or that one even thinks that it is so. Thus, to fear the crashing of one’s airplane is to entertain the prospect of one’s airplane’s crashing as if it were a real possibility. It may be that such a thought occurs only rarely, such as in a moment of weakness. It may be also that in one’s sober moments one acknowledges that such a prospect is so unlikely as to be not worth considering. Still, if one fears one’s airplane’s crashing, then one must, at least at certain moments, entertain such a prospect in a way that takes it as a real possibility.

Third, in fearing we satisfy both of what Gordon calls “attitudinal” and “cognitive” conditions.

First, if S fears or is afraid or is terrified that p, then S *cares* whether or not p: more specifically, S wishes it not to be the case that p (‘wishes that not-p’, for short). And second, if S fears (is afraid) that p, then S is neither certain that p nor certain that not-p.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 298-99

<sup>21</sup> Gordon, 560.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 561.

In this way, fearing involves realizing an attitudinal condition of *aversion* and a cognitive condition of *uncertainty*—we will be adverse to that which we fear and uncertain of its occurrence.<sup>23</sup> On the one hand, what we fear will be something that we want not to occur. Fearing a cold involves not wanting to have the cold, and fearing the dog involves not want to be bitten by the dog. Fearing thus involves an *attitude of aversion* toward that which is feared. It may be that the fearing involves regarding what is feared as being a danger or a harm. However, this is not necessarily so. I may fear that I am late for my appointment, but I do not regard my being late as a danger or a harm (in any straightforward sense). In the case of terrorism, most fearing no doubt will be a fear of harm. Nevertheless, while what is feared may indeed be a prospective harm, it is sufficient that it be something that one takes to be undesirable.

On the other hand, fearing involves *uncertainty* in that in fearing X one will be uncertain that X will or will not occur. If I fear that I have a cold, I will suspect that I may have a cold (that is, I will entertain my having a cold as a real possibility), but I will not be certain that I do or do not have a cold. If I come to know with certainty that I have a cold, I will no longer fear that I have a cold. I might have another fear, such as that the illness is serious, or that it will interfere with my plans, but then in those cases I will be uncertain, not of having the cold, but of the occurrence of those consequences of my having the cold. Similarly, if I fear the snarling dog that I suddenly encounter on my walk, then I will anticipate, but with aversion and uncertainty, the prospect of my being bit by the dog. Fisher illustrates this point with an example from David Hume.

Hume's example is perverse but brilliant: a man learns that one of his sons has been killed in a battle, but he does not learn which son. We can see that he would fall into profound grief if he knew that John had been killed, or that Will had been killed, but not knowing which one, his mind jumps back and forth between two possible losses and falls into a state of fear.<sup>24</sup>

Facing the prospect of death from a terrorist attack, one's mind races back and forth among the possibilities of dying, surviving, and surviving with serious injury. When one realizes the immanence of death, one no longer fears that one will die (although one may still fear dying in a way that involves uncertainty of what dying entails). One's central passion will then turn elsewhere, to anger, sadness, or something else. Thus, fearing something involves anticipating with aversion and uncertainty the real possibility of its occurrence. The two conditions of aversion and uncertainty provide reasons for one's fearing. For, when we fear we do so both for the attitudinal reason that we are averse to that which we fear and for the cognitive reason that we are uncertain whether what we fear will occur.

Finally, fearing involves an inclination to avoid or escape vulnerability. To fear the snarling dog is to seek to avoid the dog or escape from the threat posed. As Gordon points out, avoiding vulnerability typically involves acting to remove the reason for the undesirability of that which

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<sup>23</sup> Davis, 289.

<sup>24</sup> Fisher, 112.

one fears. Thus, when one fears the snarling dog because of the harm it threatens, one can remove the threat (and thereby the fear) by bringing it about that even if the dog snarls, it will not cause harm.

Afraid that it will rain, one takes an umbrella, not to prevent it from raining but to bring about conditions in which it is false that *if it rains one will get wet*. Afraid that Sarah will be at the party, Tom decides, not to dissuade her from going, but not to go himself, so that it will be false that *if she will be at the party then they will have an embarrassing confrontation*.<sup>25</sup>

In fearing an act of violent terrorism, then, we will be moved thereby to escape the vulnerability: either by preventing or avoiding the occurrence of that which is feared itself, or by preventing or avoiding the harm that is threatened by that which is feared.

If preventative or avoidance strategies of this sort are commonly motivated by fear, terrorism presents a problematic case. For victims of a violent terrorist attack typically have little opportunity to escape harm, and so will be in little position to prevent vulnerability. Our helplessness in such a case can serve to intensify the fear. Davis describes various forms of such incapacitating fear.

The state of fear takes many forms ... Thus *fright* results from the sudden fear that one is about to be injured or killed. The subject typically has a disposition to flee, but occasionally freezes. *Terror* involves the intense fear that one may be killed or seriously injured at any time, accompanied by a sense of helplessness. *Dread* is caused by a wider category of often long lasting fears, such as the fear that one will fail an exam. There is no disposition to flee, though there may be an urge to avoid the feared situation.<sup>26</sup>

Where fright and terror will mark the direct victims of attack, dread may afflict the indirect victims facing the prospect of a future attack who find no means to flee. Because fearing involves the motivation to act to avoid vulnerability, when no course of action seems available, fear will take the form of panic.

To those who are the direct target of terrorist violence, harm may seem (and in fact may be) immanent. They will fear being harmed, something that they want not to happen, but something that they are forced to envision as a real possibility. They wish not to be harmed, but they are as yet uncertain either of being harmed at all, or of the extent or nature of the harm. Nor will they have recourse of escape. As such, they will be in fright or terror. Once they are certain of being gravely harmed—or even of dying (recall those who jumped from the burning Twin Towers)—fear turns to sorrow or grief.

As noted by Davis, the fear felt by the immediate victims of the violence is likely to be so intense as to constitute terror. As Fisher puts it,

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<sup>25</sup> Gordon., 567

<sup>26</sup> Davis, 287.

Extreme fear is the very state that makes plausible the division ... between everyday emotions and violent, primary, or strong emotions. Sometimes we use the word “terror” for this extreme, all-pervading fear ...

When fearing takes the form of intensely felt experiential fear of this kind it can constitute a kind of suffering. In such a case one suffers not only the threat of that which one fears, but also the fearing itself. It is perhaps such an understanding of fear the lies behind bin Laden's characterization of the fear from the 9/11 attacks as constituting a form of humiliation in the sense of one's being forced to experience fear and thereby to suffer. In turn, to the extent that escape from or avoidance of such fear becomes a social concern, the fear can be a source of social humiliation. In this way, certain terrorist programs might be rhetorically structured to aim at the inducing of this form of intense experiential fear.

Intense experiential fear might enable another form of manipulation. In terror we focus our attention on the danger and its uncertain threat to our wellbeing. The intensity of terror makes it an all-pervading, dominating, and all-consuming passion. The focus of attention in such fearing is such that “an absorbing concentration on one present-time object in the outer world exists at the expense of any and all other possible attention.”<sup>27</sup> It is as if nothing else exists but the feared object of attention. Furthermore, such fearing involves a focusing of the self in which “the self is completely given and brought to a peak of concentration.” Such a concentrated focusing removes all other considerations from our mind and threatens our capacity for agency. Fisher has in mind intense experiential fear or terror of this sort in describing a fear that undermines our capacity for agency.

In fear we are overwhelmed by something outside ourselves or by something we believe may damage or destroy us. What is feared defines for us the very opposite of all that we will or choose to desire, and for that reason it is the negation of our self-understanding. With fear we are the victim or the potential victim of something toward us in the world, something that undermines, for at least the moment, our capacity to think of ourselves as agents.<sup>28</sup>

Fearing of this kind both absorbs our attention and focuses it on something that we do not will or desire. In this way, at least for the moment, it renders us unable to act from will or desire, and so it undermines our capacity to act as a moral agent. Fisher adds, “It is a very small step from wishing that what threatens us did not exist to wishing that our own impassioned state did not exist, and that we would never in the future would feel anything similar.”

In that the fearing by the immediate victims of terrorist violence is terror or extreme fear of this sort, we can see both how the fearing itself is “humiliating” in a sense that may have been meant by bin Laden, and how such fearing can be used for manipulation. “No passion,” Burke noted,

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<sup>27</sup> Fisher, 54.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 15.

“so effectively robs the mind of all its powers or acting and reasoning as fear.”<sup>29</sup> In robbing us of our capacity for human agency, such fearing “humiliates” or de-humanizes us as mere victims. Such fearing can be manipulating, then, both in that it has compromised our capacity for agency, and because we will want to be freed from such fear. Such fearing is as a disease, a disorder forced onto the soul, one from which we seek to be cured. The victim’s fears are as “disturbances of the self, rather than internal material of the self. No one ever wished to have been more often or more thoroughly terrified than he actually was in his life.”<sup>30</sup> Manipulative forms of terrorism, then, will aim to make use of the terror that its immediate victims will naturally feel. However, since it is the indirect target that is the primary target, the fearing it causes in the direct target will matter to fear-inducing terrorism only to the extent that it serves to induce manipulative fearing in the indirect target as well.

Those who are members of the group that is the indirect, primary target of the violence may fear both in response to the immediate violence itself, and in response to the message of fear delivered by the violence. Consider the fearing by those who are the indirect target in response to the immediate violence done to the direct target. How, if at all, will any such fear be connected to the fear felt by those who are the direct target? Aristotle suggests that what would cause fear if it happened to oneself will instead cause pity if it happens to a stranger.<sup>31</sup> Thus, while those in the indirect group would have felt fear had the violence been directly visited on them, they will feel pity instead of fear if the direct victims are strangers. Fisher describes Aristotle’s point.

We feel pity, he claimed, when some evil happens to another that if it were about to happen to ourselves would cause us to feel fear. But if the evil is about to happen to someone we love, someone close to us, we feel fear, just as we would if it were happening to ourselves.<sup>32</sup>

Aristotle’s point is based on what may be a further element of fear, its personal, first person, nature. To fear something is to take it to be an evil to *oneself*. If we fear the violence we must take the violence to be a threat to ourselves. In addition, we will fear if the evil befalls someone else who is close to us, since if someone matters to us, then evil done to them will be as evil done to ourselves. When evil befalls someone other than ourselves or those we love, we cannot take the occurrence to be an evil to ourselves, and so we cannot fear. But since the occurrence *would* be an evil to ourselves had it happened to us, we will instead *pity* the victim.

If we accept Aristotle’s point, what are we to say about fear felt in witnessing the evil that befalls victims of terrorism who are not close to us? Is it that what we feel is not really fear, but something like pity instead? Or is it that we are not really responding to the evil done to the victims, but rather to some other evil that threatens ourselves? Or is there another alternative?

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<sup>29</sup> Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Sources of Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1990), 57; quoted in Fisher, 115.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 2.8.1386a15-20.

<sup>32</sup> Fisher, 37.

Scheffler points out that fear has an “infectiousness” wherein “it can be so easily transmitted from one person to another, even when the second person is unaware of the reasons for the first person’s fear.”<sup>33</sup> Hobbes calls such fearing “panic terror” and holds that it is “fear without the apprehension of why or what.”<sup>34</sup> Perhaps, then, those who are the witnesses are “infected” by the victim’s fear, so that they have the same fear of the violence, which they feel for themselves, but “without the apprehension of why or what?” The problem with this solution is that the fear of the violence felt by those who are the indirect target is a knowledgeable fear. They are witnesses of the violence and know what is to be feared and why it is to be feared. Thus, the fearing cannot be merely “infected.”

Aristotle suggests a solution: the crime is worse “when the recital of it inspires terror rather than pity.”<sup>35</sup> Thus, if the crime against strangers is bad enough, then where we otherwise would feel pity we will instead feel terror or extreme fear. Fisher remarks

This distinction implies that we normally think of a victim when we hear of a robbery, a beating, a neighbor murdered, and as a result we feel pity. But with crimes of shocking brutality and horror we no longer think primarily of the victim but of the crime itself ... Now we feel terror.<sup>36</sup>

When the violence in terrorism is an act of shocking brutality, then, we no longer think of the victim and feel pity, but think of the crime itself and feel terror. Fisher takes this to be a case in which we “shudder” at the thought that such an occurrence is even possible, that we wonder about “nature, or what it is in human nature that makes such acts possible.” However, the case of terrorism would seem to be more personal. While the brutality of the violence might make one as a witness think primarily of the act rather than the victim, the thought will be of how that act applies to oneself. The terror in this case is a fear for oneself, not only a fear for the victims or an abstract shudder of fear about how such things are possible.

The connection, of course, is that the violence that is witnessed is a particular instance of the kind of violence that is promised against those who are the primary targets. These witnesses take the violence against the direct victims as a demonstration of what is in store for them. This is so both because such violence is promised in the message of fear, and because the immediate victims are a more or less random sample of those who constitute the primary target. The message they receive is “this is what you can expect,” and so the harm witnessed against the immediate victims is a concrete and vivid anticipation of what the witnesses are to anticipate or entertain in their own fearing. Thus, the witnesses who are the primary target will fear for themselves in response to the spectacle of the violence. Insofar, then, that the witnesses fear as the direct victims do, the manipulative features of the victim’s fearing will apply as well to the

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<sup>33</sup> Scheffler, 9.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Ch. 6, para. 37, 45; quoted in Scheffler, 7.

<sup>35</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.14.1375a5-10; quoted in Fisher, 135.

<sup>36</sup> Fisher, 110.

witnesses' fearing. Thus, the fearing will compromise the agency of the witnesses and it will be an "affliction" that the primary target will want to have removed.

These manipulative features of this fearing will be dramatically enhanced by the degree of brutality of the violence. Manipulative forms of terrorism—that is, fear-inducing terrorism—might seek to further manipulate such fearing by the nature of the violence and the manner in which it is delivered. The violence will be more horrific to the extent that it is viciously brutal and to the extent that it is delivered in ways that are terrifying. In this connection, the brutality and its delivery are typically characterized by an apparent lack of limitation, constraint, or convention. The brutality will seem inhuman in unlimited ways, and the delivery will seem utterly random. The randomness will include the choice of immediate victims, the venue (including place and time), the agents, and the means of causing violence. As Baur puts it

[F]or the terrorist there are in principle no contexts, no conditions, no times or places, and no persons that fall under the basic rules of armed conflict. Accordingly, the terrorist may target anyone at any time (in bus stations, shopping malls, office buildings, or even hospitals), and may do so under the guise of being anyone at all (an ambulance driver, a security guard, a police officer, or simply a nondescript stranger).<sup>37</sup>

In part, the randomness of the violence serves to make vigorous the delivery of the message that even those in the primary group should fear such violence.

This is because such violence conveys to observers (i.e., to the terrorist's indirect target group) that there is nothing in principle preventing such violence being visited on them as well.<sup>38</sup>

In addition, the randomness of the violence will serve as well to heighten the horrific appearance of the violence. Not only is harm threatened, it can come at any time, in any place, to anyone, from anyone, and by any means. In this way, the random and unlimited nature of the terrorist's *modus operandi* will serve to further induce a fear that will be all consuming and intolerable.

## **V. Propositional Fear and The Rhetoric of General Anticipatory Fear**

We have examined fearing that fear-inducing terrorism might seek to induce in the direct targets of its violence, and thereby, through identification and sympathy, indirectly in the primary target of its message of violence. As we have seen, intense, experiential fear, or terror, can be a source of manipulation in two ways, in its being a form of intense suffering from which the indirect would seek to escape, and its being an all-consuming concern that tends to undermine the capacity for agency in the target group. The kind of fearing that could enable such forms of manipulation has the form of a "state of fear," the eruptive, episodic, experiential fear that would characterize the direct target group. For the direct target group, the fear is an eruptive, all-consuming response to its directly experiencing the immediate violence. For the indirect target

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<sup>37</sup> Baur, 16. Baur further points out that "the terrorist's refusal to accept any rules of armed conflict is an implicit commitment to a state of perpetual conflict or war."

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

group, the fear is an eruptive, all-consuming response to its witnessing the violence done to the direct target group, but where the fearing concerns the threat of harm to members of the primary, indirect target group themselves. Members of the primary group will feel such fear to the extent that they take seriously the harm threatened to them in the message of violence, and to the extent that take the harm threatened to them to be of a kind with the harm done to the members of the direct target group. The inducement of such fear in the indirect target group will then be further enhanced by the random and unlimited *modus operandi* practiced by the terrorist.

However they may share the experiential fear felt by the direct target group in response to the immediate violence, the primary target group is also presented with the threat of future violence. And while the gesture of future violence could induce a similar terror, or intense experiential fear, more likely it will produce a propositional fear that such violence will occur. Such a fear may, but need not be consciously felt, will not be occurrent, and will not involve involuntary physiological arousal. The lack of immediacy of such fear permits a more reflective response to both the threat and the fearing itself.

Indeed, some forms of propositional fear can be a rational response to conditions of threat. For such fearing involves the recognition of the threat and the motivation to act to escape a vulnerability to the threat. Such fearing can prompt courses of action that represent both rational means for removing the vulnerability and for preserving other interests. Those who fear terrorist violence will be motivated thereby to act to lessen their vulnerability to harm. In the face of the randomness of such attacks, a rational response is suspicion and care in one's interaction with others. But with an increasing incidence of random attacks will go a tendency toward a widespread suspicion that will undermine trust in others and in social institutions generally.

In this way, this kind of rational, calculating propositional fear on the part of the primary target group can become a source of manipulation and social harm. As Scheffler puts it,

The fear that terrorism produces may, for example, erode confidence in the government, depress the economy, distort the political process, reduce associational activity and provoke destructive changes in the legal system.<sup>39</sup>

Scheffler has in mind the fear had by the primary target group toward the prospective violence threatened in the message of violence. The aversion involved in fearing such prospective violence is different in nature from that involved in the experiential fear of the direct victims. Fisher describes important features of this kind of fear using an interesting thought experiment given by Robert Nozick as described by Fisher.

Why not, he asked, permit all actions, even violence to others, if compensation be paid later? If someone breaks my arm he must pay compensation: not just my medical costs, of course, but full restitution for my suffering, loss of work, and so on. Why have laws for anything if we could establish, so to speak, a market for

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<sup>39</sup> Scheffler, 5.

damage?<sup>40</sup>

In such a system, anyone damaged by violence would be fully compensated. However, Nozick points out that there is a further damage that would not be compensated, a consequence of such a practice that damages all.

If we knew ourselves to be living in a world where our arms might be broken by anyone willing to pay the price, there would be what Nozick calls “general anticipatory fear,” a fear that would damage every life but could not be compensated.<sup>41</sup>

In the arrangement imagined by Nozick, we would suffer a “general anticipatory fear” of others. For anyone could be a potential threat and will be viewed as a threat. Even when no one has made an explicit threat we will be compelled to fear everyone as a threat. Such a fear will have no specific focus and no particular reason. It will be a general condition of fear that extends to everyone at all times.

It is important to notice what Nozick is not concerned with in his example. He does not ask us to picture the moment when, on a street alone at night, I see coming toward me a man who will in the next few moments break my arm... Instead, Nozick lets us imagine [a kind of fearing] where the state of fear of those in no imminent danger at all is placed at the center. This fear is general rather than individual, and its object is any possible other person, not one specific man facing me on the street at night. It is also any possible time, not any now moment, which after all is an exceptional moment, one that will come to an end. This fear never ends, never starts, is always present like gravity... General anticipatory fear is fear of everyone, at every minute, and across the full range of imaginable damaging acts.<sup>42</sup>

Such fear, then, does not take the form of an episodic experience of eruptive fear, nor a fearing that is of a concrete present danger and that leads to flight. Rather it is the fearing of a nebulous future harm, fearing that involves taking precautions, seeking protection, and avoiding possible dangers. The threatened violence that is the concern of such fear is not imminent, but distant, its object is anyone and everyone, it can occur at any time and in any place, and it can be any damaging act—it involves the kind of threat for which the randomness of fear-inducing terrorism seems designed. If anyone could be an agent of attack, we must fear everyone.

It is such general anticipatory fear that Hobbes has in mind when speaks of fear as something that characterizes human life in a “state of nature,” a condition devoid of social trust and cooperation.

I comprehend in the word *fear*, a certain foresight of future evil; neither do I conceive flight the sole property of fear, but to distrust, suspect, take heed, provide so that they may not fear, is also incident to the fearful. They who go to

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<sup>40</sup> Fisher, 109. The example appears in Robert Nozick, “Prohibition, Compensation, and Risk” in *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974) 54-87.

<sup>41</sup> Fisher, 109.

<sup>42</sup> Fisher, 109-110.

sleep, shut their doors; they who travel, carry their swords with them, because they fear thieves. Kingdoms guard their coasts and frontiers with forts and castles; cities are compact with walls; and all for fear of neighboring kingdoms and towns.<sup>43</sup>

In turn, the mutual mistrust that such fear engenders undermines social order and the advantages that come from an ordered social life.

In such condition, there is no place for industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain; and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving and removing such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; *and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death.* And the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.”<sup>44</sup>

In such a state, fear undermines social trust and with it the prospect of an harmonious social life. In turn, the loss of social harmony and trust further aggravates the very general anticipatory fear that undermines social trust. Scheffler summarizes the harms of such fearing, as Hobbes has shown.

First, there is his insistence on how bad a thing fear is. Continual fear—not momentary anxiety but the grinding, unrelenting fear of imminent death—is unspeakably awful. It is, he suggests, worse than ignorance. It is worse than the absence of arts, letters and social life. It is worse than being materially or culturally or intellectually impoverished. Fear dominates and reduces a person. A life of continual fear is scarcely a life at all. Someone who is in the grip of chronic terror is in a state of constant distress; he “hath his heart all the day long gnawed on by fear of death, poverty, or other calamity and has no repose, nor pause of his anxiety, but in sleep.”<sup>45</sup>

Such a continual fear of death or debilitating harm is itself “unspeakably awful” in that it reduces one’s life to one of constant distress to the point that it is “scarcely a life at all.” Furthermore, such fearing precludes social life.

The second point is that fear is incompatible with social life. On the one hand, sustained fear undermines social relations, so that in addition to being worse than various forms of poverty and deprivation it also contributes to them, by destroying the conditions that make wealth and “commodious living” possible. Fearful people live “solitary” lives. Alone with their fears, trusting no one, they cannot sustain rewarding forms of interpersonal exchange.<sup>46</sup>

Such general anticipatory fearing breeds distrust and in this it tends to destroy the conditions the make social relations possible. Without trust there will be no “commodious living” and life will be isolated and impoverished.

On the other hand, the establishment of society offers relief from fear and, in

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<sup>43</sup> Quoted in Fisher, 114.

<sup>44</sup> Hobbes, ch. 13, para. 9, 95-96, emphasis added. Quoted in Scheffler, 4.

<sup>45</sup> Scheffler, 4; Hobbes, ch. 12, para. 5, 82.

<sup>46</sup> Scheffler, 4.

Hobbes' view, it is to escape from fear that people form societies. The fear of death, he says, is the first of "the passions that incline men to peace." Indeed, and this is the third point, it is only within a stable political society that the miserable condition of unremitting fear can be kept at bay. In addition to being incompatible with social life, sustained fear is the inevitable fate of pre-social human beings.<sup>47</sup>

Social living makes possible the relief from the unremitting, general anticipatory fearing, and it is only in social living that one can find such relief. Social trust and cooperation make it possible to live without a constant, general anticipatory fearing, and it is only with such trust and cooperation that it will be possible to live without such fear. However, when the trust that social living requires is undermined by systematically random acts of terrorist violence, the general anticipatory fear that such acts induce will undermine the social cooperation that otherwise would be a protection against such fear.

These points show fear-inducing terrorism can seek to use fear with the aim of destabilizing or otherwise harming the social order. Scheffler describes such a secondary rhetorical structure for this form of fear-inducing terrorism (which he calls "the standard cases" of terrorism).

In "the standard cases," terrorists undertake to kill or injure a more or less random group of civilians or noncombatants; in doing so, they aim to produce fear within a much larger group of people, and they hope that this fear will in turn erode or threaten to erode the quality or stability of an existing social order. I do not mean that they aim to reduce the social order to a Hobbesian state of nature, but only that they seek to degrade or destabilize it, or to provide a credible threat of its degradation or destabilization, by using fear to compromise the institutional structures and disrupt the patterns of social activity that help to constitute and sustain that order.<sup>48</sup>

Fear-inducing terrorism of this kind seeks to induce a general anticipatory fearing of further, prospective harm, a fearing that will then serve to destabilize a social order. As Scheffler points it, it is this destabilizing nature of general anticipatory fearing of this sort that makes possible this kind of fear-inducing terrorism.

What makes terrorism of the [fear-inducing] kind possible is the corrosive power of [general anticipatory] fear. As Hobbes suggests, sustained or continual fear is a regressive force both individually and socially. It can induce the unraveling of an individual's personality and, as we have already seen, its cumulative effects on large numbers of people can degrade the social order and diminish the quality of social life.<sup>49</sup>

For, apart from the disturbing and incapacitating fear caused by the terrorist violence, the general anticipatory fearing that it can also induce will produce a distrust that undermines social living. In this way, the manipulative features of fear-inducing terrorism can serve to undermine social stability.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 6.

Its ability to achieve these effects derives in part from the fact that, in addition to being intrinsically unpleasant to experience, the fear that terrorism produces may inhibit individuals' participation in a wide range of mundane activities on which a polity's social and economic health depends. In some cases people may become mistrustful of the other participants in the activity (one of the passengers may be a hijacker or suicide bomber), while in other cases they may fear that the activity will be targeted by terrorists who are not participants (someone may toss a hand grenade into the night club or movie theater)... [T]he fear that is generated by terrorism can lead to significant changes in the character of society and the quality of daily life, and at the extremes these changes can destabilize a government or even the social order as a whole.<sup>50</sup>

Thus, "terrorism undermines trust on two levels," as Baur points out. "(a) It undermines the citizens' trust in their government's will or ability to protect them, and (b) it undermines the citizens' trust in one another as individuals." And so, fear-inducing "terrorism tends to undermine trust and lawfulness and replace it [sic] with fear."<sup>51</sup>

Fear-inducing terrorism, then, can degrade the social order by making use of the very self-preserving motivation that the fear of such terrorism entails. By using an increased incidence and randomness of its violence, such terrorism can provoke a general anticipatory fear that will undercut the trust in others that social cooperation requires. In this way, fear-inducing terrorism can produce a kind of fear that enables it, ironically, to use fear's natural self-interest to undermine the very conditions on which self-interest depends. Such terrorism uses the natural protectiveness of fearing to weaken the protection.

### **Summary**

In its basic rhetorical structure, violent terrorism uses violence to send a message or threat of future violence, and when it succeeds as such, the terrorist act of violence tends to instill both an experience of fear or terror at the violence itself, and a propositional fear that further violence will occur. Whether and how the terrorism endeavors to make use of such fear will depend on the aims and intentions of the terrorism, and so any such use of fear will be a matter of the secondary rhetorical structure of the terrorism. Fear-inducing terrorism, which will have a secondary rhetorical structure meant to induce fear to manipulate or destabilize the primary target of the threat of violence, will seek to make use of either an intense experience of fear, or terror, of the immediate violence, or a self-preserving propositional fear of future violence. In that the experience of fear is such that it is itself a form of suffering or takes an all-consuming form that compromises the target's capacity for agency, the fearing will be a means of manipulation or social degradation. Insofar as the propositional fear that there will be violence is developed, such as through a program of random and unconstrained attacks, into a general anticipatory fear of

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 5-6.

<sup>51</sup> Baur, 20.

others, the self-preservative nature of fear will be used by the terrorism to undermine, by mistrust and suspicion, the social cooperation needed for a stable social order and self-protection. Given will on the part of the terrorists, their success in such endeavors will depend as much on the vitality of the attacked social order as on the skill and resources of the attackers.

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