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...tiated by more than 130 delegations, it is impossible to avoid some imperfections. However, the Convention on Protection of Diplomats, together with the hijacking conventions, is a further small advance in the development of a body of international law devised to combat international terrorism.

The nature of terrorism and the effective response

By Jean Pierre Derriennic

In 1972 there was a controversy between Israeli and English journalists over the use of the word "terrorist". The Israelis protested against the fact that the English used the term "guerrillas" to describe the Palestinian commandos who had taken hostages in Munich, while they applied the word "terrorists" to members of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) who planted bombs. This dispute over words illustrates one of the major difficulties involved in an analysis of terrorism: in current usage, the word "terrorist" is not used to describe a specific, clearly-defined type of combat; the term is invariably pejorative, and is applied to any violent activity to which the writer is opposed. In simplified terms, terrorism is always the violence of others, and "legitimate violence" is that which defends a "just" social order or furthers a "good" revolution.

Types of terrorism

If we are to arrive at an accurate idea of the true nature and scope of terrorism, we have to try to get beyond such purely normative thinking. All existing authorities, who by definition consider themselves legitimate, tend to apply the word "terrorist" to all who oppose them by violent means. This is a propaganda device that is understandable and often effective. However, terrorist activities are not restricted exclusively to those who are seeking to overthrow an established regime. Ruling authorities have used the most typical methods of terrorism — such as the taking of hostages or the indiscriminate murder of civilians to impress the rest of the population — for purposes of repression much longer and on a much larger scale than revolutionaries or insurgents have ever done.

Besides insurrectional terrorism, which is used to overthrow or change an established power, and which too often is the only type considered in discussions of the subject, there is also repressive terrorism, which is used by those in power to strengthen their grip on the subject population. Historically, the word terrorism came into the French language during the Great Terror of 1794, which was a period of repressive terrorism used by the established regime against its political enemies. The word had no pejorative connotations at the time, and the revolutionaries took pride in calling themselves "vrais terroristes".

There is a third type of terrorism that has assumed particular importance in the twentieth century: terrorism by a state not against its own people as a means of maintaining order but against the people of another state in order to impose its will on the latter. From the bombing of London in 1917 to the bombing of Hanoi in 1972, air attacks have been the preferred in-

No pejorative connotations in original use of 'terrorism'

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