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DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON THE OKLAHOMA CITY BOMBING

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Introduction

A number of the contributors who lived in Oklahoma know where they were on April 19, 1995. Their personal perspectives on what took place are largely the result of the sum of their own emotional and intellectual life experiences. After the initial shock, each of the contributors probably sought to frame what they witnessed as a means of adjusting and seeking to understand an act of violence that resulted in the death of 169 victims. The common question—why did it happen here in

Oklahoma City?—resonated the desire to bring analytical order out of the

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chaos that surrounded the event.¹

This publication understandably focuses on the legal perspectives of the bombing. In contrast, I will address different perspectives, as an academic, based on my desire to understand the causes, dynamics, and outcomes of terrorism over the last fifty years. These perspectives will frame and therefore provide a context to a tragic event that is as redolent today as it was over thirty years ago.

Academic Perspective: Barriers to Terrorism Research

At the outset it is important to recognize that the evolution of the study of terrorism was a slow process. The foundations of researching terrorism as a field of inquiry often lagged behind the innovation of terrorists, who effectively commanded global attention through their acts of violence. Through their skyjackings, hostage takings, and bombings, the terrorists seized the initiative by effectively employing mass media, particularly television, that enabled them to attack the international order. The response in academia was essentially reactive and often took place at a glacial pace. In part, this was because terrorism was not viewed as a legitimate field of inquiry. Within political science for example, studies on conflict, violence, and warfare were recognized as valid research areas, but terrorism did not have a distinct place in the corpus of the discipline. It did not have its own intellectual home.

When I started my specific work on terrorism, it took over two years before my college course, the first on international terrorism in the United States, was accepted as part of the curriculum in my department and included in the university catalogue. Unfortunately, the subject of terrorism was an outlier in the study of politics. Recognized “authorities,” who based their reputation on their past and present research and publications, were reluctant to be challenged by a new generation of scholars who were developing a new area of academic expertise. But the slow recognition of the subject’s legitimacy also reflected the political environment beyond the university. While acts of civil disorder and terrorism had taken place as a result of the United States’s involvement in Vietnam, the bombings, robberies, and assassinations were primarily domestic in scope. Consequently, they were not perceived to be direct threats to national security. Terrorism is what happened to other people in

1. Stephen Sloan, *Placing Terrorism in an Academic and Personal Context: A Case Study of the Oklahoma City Bombing*, 97 Soc. Sci. Q. 65, 65 (2016).

other countries. This insularity to international terrorism would start to break down as a result of the Iran hostage crisis in 1979–1980 when a news show, aptly titled *America Held Hostage*, became required viewing of a nightly audience.²

As a result of this lack of concern, there were few scholars who specialized in terrorism. On a professional, intellectual, and personal level, there was a sense of isolation due to the lack of community of those who were committed to the study of terrorism or responsible within the government to counter a growing threat. Fortunately, this isolation would be lessened as result of a program titled *Terrorism and Beyond: An International Conference on Terrorism and Low-Level Conflict*, with Brian Michael as the conference director, that was held from September 8–12, 1980.³ The conference, which was sponsored by the U.S. Department of State and the Rand Corporation, brought together international participants from various governments, academics, and others who provided a foundation for addressing an emerging and growing danger, both to the national and international community.⁴ It is interesting to note that out of 140 attendees less than ten had an affiliation with an academic institution.⁵ These individuals would become the core of leading figures in the study of terrorism. The conference was a watershed event in the history of terrorism research and application. This small group supported each other in the effort to break through the orthodoxy of “authorities” within the social-science disciplines. Terrorism was no longer quarantined. It would ultimately be recognized as a legitimate specialization, particularly in the corpus of political science.

A related factor that hampered the willingness to promote understanding and the ability to counter terrorism was the concern that those academics, who advised governments and developed measures to actively address terrorism, were often unfairly tarnished as they sought to apply their research. The problem of application was further heightened by concerns over whether the methods used to counter terrorism could also be employed to strengthen the regimes that engaged in state terrorism and regime repression.⁶ In addition, there were continuing debates on whether

2. See THE IRAN CRISIS: AMERICA HELD HOSTAGE (ABC television broadcast, aired Nov. 8, 1979, to Mar. 23, 1980) (later retitled as “Nightline” beginning Mar. 24, 1980).

3. See BRIAN M. JENKINS, THE RAND CORPORATION, *TERRORISM AND BEYOND: AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON TERRORISM AND LOW-LEVEL CONFLICT*, at iii, v-vi, 3-4 (1982).

4. *Id.*

5. *Id.* at 3-4, 277-87.

6. I faced this conundrum when a senior official from South Africa asked if I would

the development of counterterrorism measures could be applied to thwart legitimate liberation movements which sought to replace repressive regimes. Nevertheless, the slow breakdown of academic barriers to understand, counter, and respond were manifested before the Oklahoma City Bombing. However, government and public awareness of increased terrorism remained relatively low on the public agenda. It would take the bombing of the Murrah Building and the horrors of 9/11 to force the recognition of the central role of terrorism in both domestic and international affairs.

Academic Perspective: The Oklahoma Institute for the Study of Terrorism: A Cautionary Tale of Lost Potential

There are several physical legacies of the Oklahoma City Bombing. The Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum (“Memorial”) provides an outstanding collection of objects taken from the bomb site; creates an excellent narrative with accompanying powerful videos of the event; and develops educational programs and other services, including those assisting individuals and groups that have experienced terrorism.⁷ In addition, the Memorial has a library that contains numerous documents related to the bombing.⁸ As the author, I have a special request: when the Oklahoma National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (“MIPT”) was dissolved, except for my books and some general documents, my personal documents were lost. They were in four file cabinets that included letters and other material that is invaluable in tracing the evolution of terrorism studies. If any reader can help find the lost files, **please let me know.**

The outside-physical elements of the Memorial are most impressive and moving. The Gates of Time, the Reflecting Pool, the Children’s Area, and the Rescuers’ Orchard are very fitting monuments to the victims of

conduct a simulation in South Africa when apartheid was still in force. The offer did not come through, so I did not have to decide. I am still not sure what decision I would have made given the opportunity to visit the country, the financial considerations and the chance to continue my research on conducting simulations. I have conducted twenty-four simulations in the U.S. and overseas in Germany, Korea, New Zealand, etc. For two books on simulations, see STEPHEN SLOAN, *SIMULATING TERRORISM* (1st ed. 1981) and STEPHEN SLOAN ET AL., *RED TEAMS AND COUNTERTERRORISM TRAINING* (2011).

7. See OKLA. CITY NAT’L MEM’L & MUSEUM, <https://memorialmuseum.com/> [https://perma.cc/DA9K-DJRP] (last visited Sep. 27, 2025).

8. *Id.*

April 19.⁹ The Field of Empty Chairs and the Survivor Tree are particularly moving. The 168 chairs stand “as a poignant reminder” of each life lost.¹⁰ The smaller chairs represent the children who were in the nursery when the explosion took place.¹¹ The Survivor Tree “stands as a profound symbol of human resilience.”¹² It has special meaning to me. I remember when I swam at the old YMCA, which was demolished. I could see a very small and sad-looking tree that was in the parking lot across the street. Through tender care it has now grown magnificently and has morphed into a symbol of the Memorial.¹³

I was on the founding committee of the MIPT. I chose to be a representative at large rather than a representative of the University of Oklahoma, so I would not have to promote a particular organization. I wished to employ my knowledge of terrorism without having to deal with lobbying for my university. But there were turf battles as members often tried to maximize the interest of the organization they represented.

The members of the committee represented different interests but sought a consensus that would guide the future of the MIPT. All were dedicated to the committee’s goals and, in most instances, had direct experience related to the bombing. Admittedly, I had a bias in regard to developing and seeking funds to advance research and educational programs on the study of terrorism. Others emphasized the need for training to deal with the threats and incidents of terrorism. An emphasis was often placed on seeking governmental funding, which at the time was plentiful for various training regimens. I was concerned that such a focus would lessen the ability of the MIPT to meet the key research objective of preventing terrorism. I was also concerned that too much emphasis was placed on seeking governmental funds and not on foundations that traditionally supported research. I must candidly note that with exception, several members favored training over research, in part because they thought that training was more concrete and less theoretical than academic research and programs.

9. *The Memorial*, OKLA. CITY NAT’L MEM’L & MUSEUM, <https://memorialmuseum.com/experience/the-memorial/> [https://perma.cc/QML8-NL54] (last visited Sep. 27, 2025).

10. Emma Wing, *From the Archives | 168 Chairs [sic] Honoring Lives Lost in Tragedy for 2002 Remembrance*, KOCO-TV (Apr. 13, 2025), <https://www.koco.com/article/okc-remembrance-168-chairs-2002/64469236> [https://perma.cc/PCT6-46QP].

11. See OKLA. CITY NAT’L MEM’L & MUSEUM, *supra* note 9.

12. See OKLA. CITY NAT’L MEM’L & MUSEUM, VISITOR GUIDE (Okla. City Nat’l Mem’l Found. ed., 2025) (on file with the Oklahoma City University Law Review).

13. *Id.*

Ultimately, the MIPT did conduct excellent programs to train law enforcement and other agencies to effectively counter terrorism. But the programs were discontinued when the federal-funding stream was canceled. I can only surmise what could have happened if more funding came from non-governmental sources and addressed terrorism research. I cannot help but think that the MIPT could have become a leading center for terrorism research. It was a lost opportunity.

To its credit the MIPT conducted several conferences. One of the most outstanding was titled *Terrorism and Beyond: The 21st Century*, which was a conference addressing terrorist threats, motivations, concerns, and predictions for the 21st century.¹⁴ The funding was provided by the Oklahoma Department of Civil Emergency Management and the American Red Cross.¹⁵ Unlike the earlier Rand Corporation meeting, it brought together an old and a new generation of academics and officials who addressed the threats and trends in terrorism.

Since the event took place in 2000, it is interesting to note that the program addressed terrorist financing, mass destruction, technological responses, emerging threats, proactive intervention overseas, right-wing extremism, and other topics; the crystal ball was somewhat clouded to topics such as cyber-terrorism and artificial intelligence that were not a center of concern. Perhaps the terrorists had again out-invented the authorities in recognizing and utilizing these new forms of terrorism.

Academic Perspective: Issues of Definition Are Not an Exercise in Rhetoric

While it is now obvious that the bombing of the Murrah Building was an act of political terrorism, it was not clear how to describe the event at its inception. Was it a natural disaster? the result of a technical failure? an intentional attack? The answer would come relatively quickly once Timothy McVeigh was apprehended and tried to justify his actions. But one should consider, as noted previously, that there were earlier potential explanations ranging from the view that either the destruction was the result of a gas leak or a man-made incident. The latter initially evolved

14. See Foreword of 6 *TERRORISM AND BEYOND: A 21ST CENTURY PERSPECTIVE* 319-20 (Bruce Hoffman & Anders Strindberg eds., Routledge Libra. Editions: Terrorism & Insurgency ed. 2015) (2001).

15. General Dennis Reimer, *Director's Report June 2000*, MIPT <https://web.archive.org/web/20010409071725/http://www.mipt.org/dirprt062000.html> (on file with the Oklahoma City University Law Review) (last visited Oct. 15, 2025).

into the rumor that religious extremists from the Middle East were responsible for the carnage. This was based both on the remarks of a congressman who said he had knowledge from official sources and reinforced by a public perception that such violence could not have been inflicted by an American or a domestic group.¹⁶ Undoubtedly and unfortunately, the interpretation of foreign involvement was in part fed by prejudice and a concurrent wish to rush to judgment.

The ambiguity around the reasons for the bombing were manifested by the complex challenge of defining terrorism. In my first class on terrorism, the students raised a fundamental issue, in response to the admittedly challenging task of forecasting future acts of terrorism, because I did not provide a definition. Instead, they were required to provide a chronology of international terrorism, based on open-source material ranging from newspapers to periodicals, and make their own definitions of what constituted an act of terrorism. The following week the completed summaries varied regarding the number of incidents. This was not because of different degrees of diligence by the students but because their own definitions varied from being very broad to very narrow; therefore, delineating the scope of their respective chronologies.

This was not unexpected; an early classic study of terrorism addressed the major elements that were identified in 109 definitions.¹⁷ There will never be a universal definition. So the semantic and obvious legal interpretations of what constitutes an act will continue to promote an enduring definitional battle. However, the bombing certainly meets the following criteria that constitute terrorism: (1) terrorism is not mindless violence: it is an instrumental act (*it is vital to understand the goals of the terrorist however repugnant or culturally alien and esoteric*); (2) terrorism is a tactic or strategy (*do these two elements apply to acts of terrorism that are not part of an ongoing war?*); (3) terrorism is a form of individual and collective psychological operations (*as a dictum ascribed to the ancient sage of warfare, Sun Tzu noted, "Kill one, frighten ten thousand."*); (4) terrorism is a political weapon (*this is a central characteristic in most acts*

16. *Witnesses Say Congressman Knew of Bombing*, CNN: ALLPOLITICS (Jan. 15, 1998), <https://extras.denverpost.com/bomb/bomb370.htm> [<https://perma.cc/UML8-X7PB>].

17. See ALEX P. SCHMID & ALBERT J. JONGMAN, *POLITICAL TERRORISM: A NEW GUIDE TO ACTORS, AUTHORS, CONCEPTS, DATA BASES, THEORIES, AND LITERATURE* (Rev., expanded and updated ed., Transaction Publishers 2005) (1984); see generally SEAN K. ANDERSON, *HISTORICAL DICTIONARY OF TERRORISM* (Stephen Sloan ed., 3d ed. 2009) (providing an additional source on the elements of terrorism and a detailed guide to terrorist groups).

of terrorism); (5) terrorism is a form of warfare (*one must ask when do acts or campaigns of terrorism become a form of warfare? when and how do governments initiate and wage a war of terrorism?*); (6) terrorism is a crime; and (7) terrorism is an evolutionary process.¹⁸ One can contend that all the characteristics of terrorism apply to the events of April 19, 1995. But there are now increasingly disturbing trends in response to the threat of terrorism: the militarization of the police and the expanded law enforcement role of the military that are dangerous to a democratic society. I defer to the legal scholars in reference to this issue on the interpretation's role of *posse comitatus*.¹⁹

Ultimately it should be recognized that while the definition of terrorism—as well as the act itself—is fraught with ambiguity, to the victim and his or her family it is an event of tragic clarity and often a finality.

Academic Perspective: Forecasting: The Failure of Intelligence

One can always use the benefit of hindsight to contend that there were warnings that the bombing could have been predicted and therefore possibly prevented. While there was “a failure of imagination,” that failure could in part have led to any number of past failures in intelligence.²⁰ But one must recognize that the Murrah Building was a very attractive and vulnerable potential target of opportunity. Indeed, this recognition was readily apparent in the following monograph, *Terrorism Preparedness on the State and Local Level: An Oklahoma Perspective*.²¹ The study was

18. See STEPHEN SLOAN, TERRORISM: THE PRESENT THREAT IN CONTEXT 1-5 (English ed. 2006).

19. *Posse Comitatus*, CORNELL L. SCH.: LEGAL INFO. INST. (July 2020), https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/posse_comitatus [https://perma.cc/4GN9-G8RG], (“describ[ing] a group of citizens who are called upon to assist a sheriff in keeping the peace, to conduct a rescue, or to apprehend a criminal.”); Joseph Nunn, *The Posse Comitatus Act Explained*, BRENNAN CTR. FOR JUST., (Sep. 29, 2025) <https://brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/posse-comitatus-act-explained> [https://perma.cc/6PD3-S4C5] (This theory was used to enact the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878, which practically applied today, prohibits the military from “participat[ing] in civilian law enforcement unless doing so is expressly authorized by a statute or the Constitution.”).

20. NAT’L COMM’N ON TERRORIST ATTACKS UPON THE U.S., THE 9/11 COMMISSION REPORT: FINAL REPORT OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON TERRORIST ATTACKS UPON THE UNITED STATES 339 (2004), <https://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/report/911Report.pdf> [https://perma.cc/A5D5-CBZV].

21. See generally MICHAEL T. MCEWEN & STEPHEN SLOAN, INT’L ASS’N OF CHIEFS OF POLICE, TERRORISM PREPAREDNESS ON THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVEL: AN OKLAHOMA

based on the collection of information by my students in one of my seminars on terrorism. They were required to individually do threat assessments of potential targets of terrorism in Oklahoma. This included, when possible, visits to various sites to test the security gaps concerning access to facilities. I developed a criterion for identifying crucial targets. The criteria included but was not limited to the following: (1) the location of the target (what type of damages could take place in and around the targets, for example a rural or suburban center city location); (2) the level of physical and personal security (such considerations as fencing, barriers, cameras, as well as the degree of control over access to the target); (3) the degree of vulnerability based on the type of building (an open environment including a plaza or parking lot, the extent of glass windows, etc.); (4) if the target was a part of critical infrastructure whose destruction could create serious disruptions and harm to the public; and (5) its symbolic value (did it house federal and state offices, especially offices associated with law enforcement and the military that symbolized governmental institutions?).

Based on our analysis, we listed in order of priority the most “attractive” targets for potential terrorist operations.²² Given the sensitive nature of the study, distribution was limited. We certainly did not want to give a “laundry list” of targets to an adversary. But it should be quite evident to the reader that based on the criterion, the Murrah Building was high on the target list.

A crucial issue always associated with this study is raised regarding counterterrorism intelligence and intelligence in general. Facing both domestic and international threats, how should the intelligence

community reconcile often sensitive or secret collection, analysis, and dissemination with the values of an open and democratic order?

Academic Perspective: The Role of the Media at Ground Zero. A Personal Account

There are two observations that are very salient to understanding terrorism: “terrorism is aimed at the people watching,”²³ and the fuel of

PERSPECTIVE (1981) (discussing a method to evaluate potential targets of acts of terrorism).

22. *Id.* at 2.

23. BRIAN M. JENKINS, INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM: A NEW KIND OF WARFARE 4 (1974), <https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/papers/2008/P5261.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/H2KS-V9BY>].

terrorism “is the oxygen of publicity.”²⁴ The key role of publicity raises issues about the role of the media covering terrorism. This role has always been a topic for debate. This debate is particularly sensitive given the complex task of reconciling an open press with the need for secrecy for national security. This issue was central in a conference organized by Michael C. McEwen and me in a special issue of *Terrorism and the Media*.²⁵

The conference was sponsored by *The Daily Oklahoman* and *The Times*. These newspapers brought together members of the Oklahoma media, state and national members of the law enforcement community, and political leaders to discuss a topic that often generated as much heat as light.²⁶ Nevertheless, it did provide awareness and the recognition that cooperation is required to respond to and cover incidents of terrorism. While this Article does not deal with the substance of the conference, it was a very useful meeting and provided basic guidelines for covering terrorism.

The image of the Murrah Building became the center of the media universe as print and electronic journalists gathered around the impacted area. It is not the Author's purpose to systematically address media/press interaction. Rather, it is a brief and personal account of the media exposure minutes after the bombing and during the next weeks that followed.

I arrived at the chaotic scene about ten minutes after the explosion. About thirty minutes later, a reporter from a local station, on which I often appeared when there was an act of terrorism in the United States and overseas, found me. He had first stopped at my house and then went downtown. My interview was one of the first that took place before the media deluge that followed. In the following days, print and television reporters from all over the world would cover the bombing. Since I was the only known specialist of terrorism on site, I was bombarded with interviews throughout the subsequent days and nights. From my own notes, I was interviewed over 250 times.

Most of the reporters asked meaningful and responsible questions. There were a few exceptions when individuals sought to use me to sensationalize the tragedy. I would either refuse to reply or give a very short and intentionally non-committal and boring answer. On the other

24. R.W. Apple, Jr., *Thatcher Urges the Press to Help 'Starve' Terrorists*, N.Y. TIMES, July 16, 1985, at A3.

25. See *Terrorism: Police and Press Problems*, 2 TERRORISM: AN INT'L J. (SPECIAL ISSUE) 1 (1976) (transcript).

26. *Id.* at 3.

hand, there were several special reporters and moments. The first interview involved an experienced Voice of America reporter who asked very insightful questions. He kept in touch over the years and called on each anniversary date of the bombing to see how I was doing. The second interview was with a reporter from Northern Ireland. She had covered and experienced acts of terrorism in what were called “The Troubles,” when acts of terrorism were a daily occurrence.²⁷ Her remarks were most informative. There was one interview that was particularly emotional. It took place in the early morning the day after the bombing. The illuminated Murrah Building was in the background where rescue operations were still taking place. I spoke with a doctor who had earlier helped to amputate the leg of one of the victims. There was little I could say.

In addition, I temporarily became a foreign correspondent. When I was denied access to a media meeting at a local print shop, a member of the BBC copied his press credentials with my name instead of his, which gave me access to all future media gatherings. My sister, who lives in England, was shocked when she saw the interview on Good Morning Britain. Several students also saw my interviews. It was quite a change from a seminar room. I was also on the desk of a local network station whose coverage went national. On a personal level, one of my best former students, Mike Boettcher, stayed at my house when he covered the bombing for CNN. He would become a premier war reporter and win numerous Emmys for his reporting in various areas, where he often put his life on the line.

While the events of April 19 were a crucible to address the role of the media in regard to terrorism, we have now entered an era that will pose a new set of opportunities for terrorists and challenge the coverage of media. One can only imagine the media scenario if the Murrah Building Bombing had happened today.

My temporary role as a reporter at the bomb site will be an experience that I will always remember with very mixed feelings. I deeply regret the bombing that caused so much suffering near where I lived, but I also recognize that I had an opportunity to publicly witness and enable the viewer to understand the reality of terrorism.

27. See Martin Melaugh, Brendan Lynn (& F. McKenna, 1996-2000), *Table NI-SEC-06: Security Related Incidents (number) in Northern Ireland (only), Shootings, Bombings, and Incendiaries, 1969-2003*, CAIN ARCHIVE (Sep. 3, 2025), [cain.ulster.ac.uk/ni/security.htm#06](https://perma.cc/8VYX-QYZT) [https://perma.cc/8VYX-QYZT] (16,209 explosive devices either exploded or were neutralized between 1969 to 2003, according to the Police Service of Northern Ireland).

One must ask the question: what would have been the impact of the bombing now that we have witnessed the emergence of cyber-terrorism, net-warfare, the global internet, artificial intelligence, and other innovative technologies that can be used by terrorists? These innovations are, and will pose, uncertain and new challenges to academics who specialize in terrorism studies and to the counterterrorism authorities who must meet new threats to personal, national, and international security. We now see the beginning of a transformation in terrorism and a new generation of terrorists creating increasingly complex and innovative acts of more sensational and lethal terrorism.²⁸ Terrorists now have the capacity to generate and edit highly realistic incidents. The line between what is real and what is technologically staged is being blurred.

Conclusion: Technology and Terrorism, the Impact of the World Wide Web, Networks and Artificial Intelligence, and the Evolution of the Age of New Terrorism

It is not my purpose to summarize the future trends in terrorism. That endeavor is very complex and must be continually addressed by scholars, government officials, and policy makers. Rather, I will discuss how selective technological developments will have a major impact on future events. At the outset, we now face the development of what is now recognized and called “netwar.” It refers to “an emerging mode of conflict . . . at societal levels, short of military warfare, “in which the protagonists use . . . network forms of organization [and related] doctrine[s], strateg[ies],” and technologies attuned to the information age.²⁹ Terrorists, through the internet, the web, especially the dark web, and other innovative modes of communication, can coordinate their attacks on the civil order and can do so in a decentralized manner. Terrorist organizations and cells will be very difficult to identify, infiltrate, and apprehend through the existing counterterror techniques of intelligence and law enforcement. Imagine if Timothy McVeigh and his conspirators were in a cell of a large clandestine network. The members of the respective cells could have planned, coordinated, and executed a campaign of terrorism directed against a wide number of federal buildings, where in addition to the loss of life, very sensitive computer systems could have been manipulated or

28. NETWORKS AND NETWARS: THE FUTURE OF TERROR, CRIME, AND MILITANCY 6 (John Arquilla & David Ronfeldt eds., 2006).

29. *Id.*

destroyed by “techno-terrorists.”³⁰ How would responders deal with the situation if the bombing also included an attack on critical infrastructure that is essential for the smooth functioning of an increasingly complex social, political, and technical order? To further complicate the challenge is the trend for non-governmental organizations, either operating on their own or with state sponsorship to either combat terrorism or to practice it. Force is no longer solely the monopoly held by a state.

What is of particular concern to me, since I started to conduct highly realistic simulations in 1975, is the possibility that future terrorist incidents would not actually take place but could be staged by adversaries, who could disseminate their attacks through the internet, the World Wide Web, other innovative means of communication, and now through artificial intelligence. At a time when political cynicism has led to the concept of “alternative” reality, one wonders how the public might react if the incident was created particularly by the evolving capabilities and techniques of artificial intelligence. The line between terrorism reality and “alternative” facts cannot be understated. If I gave future simulations, I would “create” a highly realistic incident. We are entering a new age where the events of April 1995 will always be remembered by the victims, the survivors, and the public, but the bombing of the Murrah Building may recede as new, highly innovative acts of terrorism take place. The tragic event in downtown Oklahoma City and the 9/11 attack in New York City serve as a warning for future acts of mass terrorism. How the civil order will deal with and respond to these threats and acts of terrorism will be a central question that must be addressed and acted upon. Unfortunately, the current polarization in the United States and internationally, coupled with technological innovation, will enhance the terrorists’ ability to declare war against us all.³¹

30. I first heard the term “techno-terrorism” when I attended a conference on a most upsetting topic: processes on how to identify and repatriate bodies from an aircraft accident. One of the participants authored a most prescient book, whose plot became a reality, see generally RICHARD COX, *SAM 7* (1977) (depicting an aircraft being downed by a surface-to-air (“SAM”) missile and crashing into Victoria Station in London, with the destruction and emergency response bearing unsettling similarities to the events of 9/11 and the World Trade Center attacks).

31. See Stephen Sloan, *Technology and Terrorism: Privatizing Public Violence*, 10 *IEEE TECH. & SOC’Y MAG.* 8 (1991) (noting the further complications the impact of technology has on terrorism).