

History of Terrorism

Terrorism is not new; it has been around for thousands of years. Religion driven terrorism is not new either. Some of the earliest terrorists were the Zealots. The Zealots would target Romans and Greeks and kill them in front of witnesses in order to send a message, which is one of the cornerstones of modern terrorism. Before the 19th century there was little terrorism that was not religiously based. Then the French Revolution occurred, and the new government used the “regime de la terreur”, which gave us the word terrorism. The regime killed about 40,000 people, in an attempt to snuff out any subversion towards the new government, and to prevent anyone else from getting any subversive thoughts. The French considered this concept of terrorism to be a positive thing, as it allowed them to deal out “justice” quickly and efficiently. However as the killings went on the word began to gain a negative connotation. The writings of Edmund Burke made the term “terrorism” popular in English for use in demonizing the French. As time went on the world environment began to lend itself more towards terrorism, and it became more and more about sending a message. Carlo Pisane called this the “propaganda of the deed”, the ability of terrorism to deliver a message to a group other than the target. By the beginning of the 20th century nearly the entire world had seen some form of terrorism. After WWII colonies of the French and British began to use terrorism to attempt to halt colonial activities by the French and British. These new organizations learned to organize their activities to play to audiences across the world, using new forms of mass media. At this point state-sponsored terrorism began to grow as governments realized that open war was not an option, but that terrorist groups could, with funding and support, help to achieve the goals of individual states. Today there are many different forms of terrorism, acting with all manner of goals, from religious domination to freedom, to governmental policy change; and on all different scales from acting in one city to all across the globe.