Part I:
Terrorism and Human Rights
Terrorism:
How Dangerous is the Threat?

General the Lord Guthrie of Craigiebank*

Terrorism has been around since the dawn of history. It has not just been invented. In the twentieth century, terrorism was a familiar phenomenon. Many countries suffered: France, Northern Ireland, the United Kingdom, Spain, India, Pakistan, the Middle and Near East and Russia. The list goes on and on. Some countries were more fortunate than others and have had less of a terrorist problem. Until recently, the United States could be numbered among them.

Although terrorism has always been with us, there is still no common agreement on how to define a terrorist. Politicians, the military and the United Nations cannot agree. There is a well-known saying, an unhelpful one but one that has some truth in it, that one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter. Palestinians who take their own lives when killing others are described by some as heroes going on martyrdom operations and by others as evil suicide bombers. It was only a short time ago that many US citizens advocated and funded the cause of the IRA, which was killing British soldiers and civilians. I am not going to attempt to give you a definition but have some sympathy with the judge who said he could not define pornography but knew what it was when he saw it. The paradox of terrorism and violence is that most of us both condemn it and condone it. Violence is widely abhorred, yet frequently employed.

Are we now, since 9/11 in New York, really living in a different world? Are the Russians really living in a different world because of Chechen terrorists? Is the world at war with terrorism? There is a serious divergence of opinion. Many do not accept the idea of a ‘war’. They believe good policing, good intelligence, justice, human rights and good governance solve terrorism.

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