

FATAL FUTURE?

TRANSNATIONAL
TERRORISM AND THE
NEW GLOBAL DISORDER

Richard M. Pearlstein



UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS PRESS, AUSTIN

CONTENTS

Preface ix

Acknowledgments xiii

One. *What Is Terrorism?* 1

Two. *The Rise of the New Global Disorder* 7

Three. *Transnational Terrorism and the New Global Disorder* 15

Four. *Ethnoterrorism: Menace from Within and Without* 25

Five. *Holy Rage* 41

Six. *Superterrorism: What's in It for You?* 65

Seven. *After September 11: Responding to Transnational
Terrorism* 95

Notes 101

Bibliography 129

Index 187

CHAPTER ONE

What is Terrorism?

A great people has been moved to defend a great nation. Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America. These acts shattered steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve.

U.S. PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH, SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

IN HIS FIRST FORMAL RESPONSE to the events of September 11, 2001, U.S. President George W. Bush sought to reassure a nation abruptly and harshly confronted by one of the most horrifying and formidable threats of our age: terrorism. What is terrorism? Common understanding of this term is far too vague, broad, and simplistic. Terrorism is widely characterized, for example, as the “weapon of the weak,” as “violence for effect,” or as “violence for political purposes.” Terrorism may be all of these things, but so are many other forms of violence. Further obscuring the issue is that far too many people use two very different terms, *terrorism* and *terror*, interchangeably. Heated debates over how to define terrorism are a staple at any conference on terrorism. Even various agencies within the same government are unable to agree on a common definition of terrorism. Some students of terrorism despair that a common definition is even possible.¹

In order to counter a threat, it is essential to understand precisely what that threat is. The controversial and highly emotional threat of terrorism is no exception. It is certainly true that the same act of terrorism may be condemned by one observer and glorified by another. For example, although the destruction of the World Trade Center is vilified by most Westerners, that same event is celebrated by many non-Westerners. Whether acts of terrorism are condemned or extolled, however, is of no definitional relevance whatsoever.

The definition of terrorism is a technical issue, not an emotional one. Terrorism may be defined as a specific form of civil rebellion in which the use or threatened use of violence is imposed from below the governmental level against certain symbolic victims or objects. Terrorism is actual or threatened violence intended to indirectly coerce a primary target (typically, a government or a people) to accept a demanded outcome through the fomenting of intense fear or anxiety. Acts of terrorism have generally included, for example, means such as kidnappings for propa-

ganda effect, hostage-takings, shootings, bombings, hijackings, sabotage, chemical and biological attacks, and threats of any of the above.²

Terror, on the other hand, may be defined as a specific form of official, governmental intimidation in which the use or threatened use of violence is inflicted from above, from the governmental level, against certain symbolic victims or objects. Like terrorism, terror is intended to indirectly coerce a primary target (typically, all or part of some population) to accept a demanded outcome due to the fomenting of intense fear or anxiety. Terror, however, differs from terrorism in that terror is the official act of a governmental body, whereas terrorism is the rebellious act of a discontented nongovernmental organization. Acts of terror have included, for example, means such as shootings, bombings, “disappearances,” arrests, torture, amputation, imprisonment, execution, exile, and threats of any of the above.

It is certainly true that there have been all-too-frequent partnerships between certain governments and terrorist organizations. Not surprisingly, those same governments also frequently practice terror against their own populations. Governments and their official agencies also occasionally support, sponsor, or even control terrorist organizations. However, as long as those terrorist organizations maintain a clear degree of separate identity and independence from their official patrons, then those organizations are in fact practicing terrorism, rather than terror.

Terrorism is easily distinguished from direct violence, which takes place for personal, financial, or even political reasons. Common acts of direct violence include, for example, robbery, rape, and murder. When not meant as a means to convey a threat to some third party, the simple assassination of any prominent figure also constitutes an act of direct violence.

An act of direct violence involves only two distinct parties. One is the perpetrator, and the other is the victim, whose harm is the direct and sole aim of the perpetrator. It may also be noted that perpetrators of direct violence typically shun news media coverage of their actions and their actual identities.

An act of terrorism, on the other hand, involves at least three, and in almost every case four, distinct parties. These parties are the perpetrator, the victim, the primary target of the terrorist act, and, in almost every case, the messenger. Indeed, the role of the messenger is a crucial one. To ensure that a primary target may be made aware that it has been targeted, a messenger, most typically the news media, must somehow re-

port an act of terrorism. For this as well as other reasons, perpetrators of terrorist violence typically crave news media coverage of their actions, if not of their identities.

Terrorist Generations

What are the major motivations, and types, of terrorist organizations? In terms of overall motivations, terrorist organizations may be classified as: (1) left-wing, (2) ethnonationalist, (3) right-wing, or (4) religious. It is far more useful, however, to classify terrorist organizations from the old global order period through the new global disorder period on a “generational” basis. From the early 1970s through the present, there have been three major generations of terrorist organizations. Each generation is characterized by whether or not a terrorist organization is financed or otherwise actively supported by a government, and whether or not its operations cross nation-state borders. These terrorist generations may be classified as

- (1) *first generation*: intranational terrorist organizations
- (2) *second generation*: international terrorist organizations
- (3) *third generation*: transnational terrorist organizations (TTOs)³

There are important functional and organizational differences between these three generations of terrorist organizations. First-generation, intranational terrorist organizations confine their attacks within the boundaries of a single nation-state. They are funded and actively supported exclusively through private means; they thus neither require nor receive financial or other support from any nation-state. Equally significant is that this private funding or support is derived solely from within the organization’s own nation-state borders.⁴

Both second-generation, international terrorist organizations and third-generation, transnational terrorist organizations routinely conduct their activities across nation-state borders. Yet international and transnational terrorist organizations also differ in certain important respects. Although international terrorist organizations typically require, and always receive, funding or other active support from nation-state sponsors, transnational terrorist organizations neither require nor receive nation-state sponsorship.

The issue of nongovernmental funding or other support is also significant. All three types of terrorist organizations may receive funding or

other active support from private organizations or individuals. Unlike intranational terrorist organizations, however, international and transnational terrorist organizations may receive such funding or support from anywhere in the world.⁵

Each of these three generations of terrorist organizations may be further classified on the basis of underlying motivations. Left-wing terrorist organizations, for example, plagued many Western nation-states during much of the old global order period which existed prior to the disintegration of the former Soviet Union. The following is a partial list of those organizations, followed by the nation-states within which they operated:

- Weather Underground (United States)
- Symbionese Liberation Army (United States)
- Sam Melville–Jonathan Jackson Unit (United States)
- Red Army Faction (West Germany)
- Revolutionary Cells (West Germany)
- Red Brigades (Italy)
- Front Line (Italy)
- Armed Revolutionary Nuclei (Italy)
- Direct Action (France)
- Angry Brigade (Britain)
- Fighting Communist Cells (Belgium)
- November 17 (Greece)

The Weather Underground, Symbionese Liberation Army, Sam Melville–Jonathan Jackson Unit, Angry Brigade, and November 17 organizations serve as pure illustrations of the intranational generation. These organizations thus neither received financial or other active support from any nation-states nor pursued their activities outside of their own nation-state borders. Of the scores of left-wing terrorist organizations to plague the democracies of Western Europe and the United States, few remain in existence. November 17 operated as a major left-wing terrorist organization from the mid-1970s until at least the summer of 2002, when the Greek government declared the group defunct.⁶

The Red Army Faction, Red Brigades, Revolutionary Cells, Front Line, Armed Revolutionary Nuclei, Direct Action, and Fighting Communist Cells appear to have originated as intranational terrorist organizations. Due to their eventual acceptance of financial and other active support from nation-states such as the Soviet Union, East Germany, and

Czechoslovakia, however, these organizations gradually evolved into examples of the second, international generation.

Left-wing terrorist organizations generally subscribe to some form of anticapitalist ideology. During the old global order period, they attacked capitalism and extolled the interests and virtues of the working class. Left-wing terrorist organizations tended to engage in small-scale bombings of symbolic capitalist targets (e.g., business, military, or police interests) and in the kidnappings of certain high-profile business, military, or political figures (e.g., corporate executives, heiresses, NATO generals, political party leaders, or mayors). The supposed goal of these acts was to compel democratic nation-states to overreact in such a repressive manner that the latter's "democratic façades" would be exposed as fraudulent or hypocritical and would be so stripped away as to enable the working class to view its government as the repressive and autocratic force that it supposedly was. This realization would presumably lead to some form of popular uprising or revolt and, eventually, to some sort of "workers' revolution."

Perhaps the most enduring type is the ethnoterrorist organization, the basic purpose of which is to utilize terrorist tactics in order to ultimately foster new nation-states for stateless ethnic groups. Examples of ethnoterrorist organizations include the Corsican National Liberation Front, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the Puerto Rican Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN), the Puerto Rican Los Macheteros, and the Puerto Rican Armed Revolutionary Movement.

Given the fact that the Corsican National Liberation Front has neither received state sponsorship nor attacked targets outside of France, that terrorist organization is a fine example of the pure intranational generation. The FALN, Los Macheteros, and the Armed Revolutionary Movement are organizations which have restricted their attacks within the borders of the United States (including Puerto Rico); however, they must be classed as second-generation, international terrorist organizations in that each has received financial and other active support from the government of Cuba. The PLO, which accepted financial and other active support from any number of Arab nation-states, and conducted its attacks across national boundaries, is another example of an international terrorist organization.⁷

Right-wing terrorist organizations have become an increasingly serious problem in the United States and Europe. Members are obsessed with an imagined "new world order," within which certain intergovernmental organizations (such as the United Nations and the World Bank),

as well as certain minority groups, have supposedly “colonized” powerful nation-states. These organizations and groups are thus obvious targets for right-wing terrorists.

There is no evidence that any contemporary right-wing terrorist organization receives nation-state support. Moreover, these organizations are not known to have conducted actual operations across national borders. There is evidence, nonetheless, that the advent and growth of the Internet is leading to increased transnational communication between such organizations. For example, a shared sense of transnational racial identity, rather than specific national identity, is becoming an ideological link between right-wing terrorist organizations in the United States and Europe. Thus, such organizations may well evolve from almost purely intranational to more distinctly transnational. Examples of right-wing terrorist organizations and the nation-states within which they operate include the Aryan Nations and the Order (United States), Black Order and New Order (Italy), and S O S France (France).⁸

Religious, or “theoterrorist,” organizations are motivated by religious, cultural, and ultimately political issues. Theoterrorist organizations are exemplified by groups as diverse as the radical Christian fundamentalist Army of God, the radical Islamic fundamentalist al-Qaeda, and the radical Jewish Gush Emunim (“Bloc of the Faithful”). The Army of God and Gush Emunim are fairly clear examples of intranational terrorist organizations. Al-Qaeda, on the other hand, is perhaps the premier example of a transnational terrorist organization.

The third generation of terrorist organization is the transnational. As one of the two primary subjects of this book, transnational terrorist organizations merit special attention. Before turning to that topic, however, the global stage upon which transnational terrorist organizations thrive—the other major theme of this book—needs to be set. That global stage, the new global disorder, is the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

The Rise of the New Global Disorder

The old order changeth, yielding place to new.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON, "THE PASSING OF ARTHUR"

A NUMBER OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS in global politics have helped shape an entirely new type of global system. These developments have led to the replacement of the old global order by a new global disorder, the emergence of which illustrates the important principle of change in global systems. In order to grasp the nature of that change, it is first necessary to understand: (1) the basic types of global systems, and (2) the basic types of global actors which populate those systems.

Global Polarity

Global systems have traditionally been classified according to the number of system "poles," or power centers, which exist within them. Most scholars of global politics, such as John T. Rourke, believe that three such polar systems have been present at one historical moment or another. The first is the bipolar system, in which two nation-states, or alliances of nation-states, dominate global politics. The second is the tri-polar system, or "triangular" relationship, in which three nation-states, or alliances of nation-states, dominate the global system. The third is the multipolar, or "balance-of-power" system, in which as few as four to as many as perhaps ten nation-states, or alliances of nation-states, dominate global politics.¹

According to Rourke and other scholars of global politics, one of the best ways to understand the nature of any global system is to grasp the most important "rules of the game" for that system. For bipolar systems, the rules of the game are:

- (1) Eliminate the other bloc by techniques including war, if it is necessary and the risks are acceptable.
- (2) Increase power relative to the other bloc by such techniques as bringing new members into your bloc and preventing others from joining the rival bloc.

For tripolar systems, the rules of the game are:

- (1) Optimally, try to have good relations with both other players or, minimally, try to avoid having hostile relations with both other players.
- (2) Try to prevent close cooperation between the other two players.

For multipolar systems, the rules of the game are:

- (1) Oppose any actor or alliance that threatens to become hegemonic [i.e., overly dominant]. This is also the central principle of balance-of-power politics.
- (2) Increase power or, at least, preserve your power. Do so by negotiating if possible but by fighting if necessary.
- (3) Even if fighting, do not destabilize the system by destroying another major actor.²

Bipolar, tripolar, and multipolar global systems have been present during various periods during the pre-1991, old global order era.

A bipolar system dominated global politics from 1945 to 1972. During this period, the democratic nation-states of the West, led by the United States, and the communist nation-states of the East, led by the Soviet Union, fought what is customarily referred to as the cold war, which generally involved nonviolent conflict between the two sides. For example, the West sought to contain the East primarily through the stationing of defensive military forces in western Europe in order to counter the positioning of offensive military forces in eastern Europe.³

Cold war conflict also involved nonviolent skirmishes between East and West. Particularly dramatic examples included crisis “brinkmanship,” such as the Berlin blockade of 1948, the Berlin Wall crisis of 1961, and the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. By going to the very brink of nuclear war, the two blocs demonstrated their desire, if not total dedication, to observe the first rule of bipolarity: eliminate the other bloc by whatever means possible.⁴

Cold war rivalry occasionally turned, however, into a “hot” or shoot-out war, as during the Korean and Vietnam conflicts. Throughout these primarily civil wars, the United States and her allies lent massive military and economic assistance to noncommunist South Korea and South Vietnam; the Soviet bloc states provided similar aid to communist North Korea and North Vietnam. In providing that aid, the two blocs observed,

however roughly, Rourke's second rule of bipolarity: "Increase power relative to the other bloc by bringing new members into your bloc and preventing others from joining the rival bloc."⁵

From roughly 1972 to 1991, a triangular, or tripolar, system dominated the global stage. The poles of this relationship consisted of the two cold war adversaries, the United States and the Soviet Union, and the People's Republic of China, which had aligned herself with the Soviet Union from 1949 until the late 1950s. From 1972 to 1991, both the United States and the Soviet Union attempted to foster a more positive relationship with China. Each of the two superpowers also sought to discourage China from establishing a similar relationship with the other actor. This "playing of the China card" thus observed the major rules of tripolarity, which caution against both having hostile relations with the two other players and allowing close cooperation between them.⁶

Although the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 spelled the official end of this era of tripolarity, the United States, Soviet successor-state Russia, and China continue to pursue friendly relations with each other whenever possible. Moreover, each of these three nation-states attempts to prevent the remaining two actors from forming an alliance against itself.

The nation-states of Europe shared relations within an essentially multipolar, or balance-of-power, system from the mid-seventeenth century until 1945. During this roughly three-hundred-year period, four to as many as perhaps nine powers dominated the European regional system at any one time. As colonial powers, many of these European nation-states also served as masters of the global system as a whole. Spain, Sweden, Britain, France, Prussia (later Germany), the Austrian Empire (later Austria-Hungary), the Ottoman Empire, Italy, and Russia (later the Soviet Union) were the most notable such power centers during the long history of European, and global, multipolarity. During the waning years of multipolarity (1905–1945), two non-European nation-states, the United States and Japan, became major power centers, and colonial powers, in their own right.⁷

Nevertheless, none of these nation-states, or any alliance comprising these nation-states, was able to dominate either the European continent or the global system for any extended period of time. This was due largely to the commitment of Britain, and later the United States, to maintaining a balance-of-power system in which no single actor or combination of actors could dominate Europe. When first France during the Napoleonic Wars, and then Germany during the two world wars, threat-

ened to destroy this balance-of-power system, Britain, and later the United States, successfully intervened in order to preserve a European balance of power. Hence, Rourke's first rule for multipolar systems, to "oppose any actor or alliance that threatens to become hegemonic," was successfully observed. Moreover, this was generally accomplished without the permanent destruction of any major actor (thus observing Rourke's third rule of multipolarity), a measure which might have permanently upset the European balance of power.⁸

A Nonpolar Moment

The advent of a new type of global system forces a thorough rethinking of the entire concept of polarity. Key trends forcing this reexamination include:

- (1) the disintegration, deterioration, or extremely short lifespan of major military alliances
- (2) the rise of scores of new small- and medium-size powers
- (3) increasing permeability, and irrelevance, of nation-state borders
- (4) the increasing influence of new types of global actors

These trends have all contributed in a major way to the dawning of what may be termed *the new global disorder*.⁹

The deterioration or disintegration of a number of major military alliances has also helped lead to the decline of the once-stable bipolar and tripolar global systems of 1945–1991. For example, the collapse of the Soviet Union led directly to the demise of the Soviet-imposed Warsaw Pact military alliance. These developments also doomed the once-thriving military and economic relationship between Eastern bloc patron-states such as the Soviet Union, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia and client-states such as Egypt, Syria, Iraq, North Korea, and Cuba. Another major standing military alliance, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), is now plagued both by a seeming lack of clear purpose and by members who frequently refuse to suggest, advance, or even observe alliance policy. Other, once-major standing military alliances, such as the U.S.-led Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), have in recent years become subjects for diplomatic history rather than global politics textbooks. Ad hoc, or special, temporary military alliances, such as the anti-Iraq "Gulf Coalition," have had, and should continue to have,

a fairly short shelf life. The new global system thus richly illustrates former French president Charles de Gaulle's shrewd observation that "nation-states have no allies, only mutual interests."

Although the population of major military alliances has clearly dwindled, the number of influential nation-states has risen sharply. Many new small- and medium-size powers, such as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, the Czech Republic, a unified Germany, and Serbia, have emerged from the ranks of the former Soviet Union, her former Warsaw Pact members, other former Soviet bloc allies, and the former Yugoslavia. More such powers have risen from the likes of "rogue states" (i.e., nation-states which violate global norms of behavior), such as North Korea, Iraq, Iran, Libya, and Sudan. Many of these rogue states, such as North Korea and Iraq, are former client states of the now-defunct Soviet bloc.

The increasing permeability, and irrelevance, of nation-state borders is another factor contributing to the crumbling of the old global order. Factors spurring this trend include the creation of intergovernmental organizations such as the European Union (EU), within which travelers may freely cross once-restricted nation-state borders. Critical, too, is the development of the Internet and satellite technology, and the overall growth of global communications empires which serve to shrink the global village.

Finally, the increasing prominence of independent nonstate actors, such as intergovernmental and transnational organizations, has made the whole notion of polarity obsolete. Many international organizations, such as the United Nations, are by their very nature actors whose mission precludes gravitation around any particular pole. Transnational organizations, such as transnational terrorist organizations, corporations, or syndicates, are by their very nature independent actors whose formal presence around any fixed pole would be both inconvenient and undesirable.

The Polyplex Global System

These developments have culminated in a far more congested, complex, and disorganized global system in which the whole notion of polarity has lost a good deal of its past relevance. Indeed, the traditional concept of a polar global system may be discarded in place of an entirely new notion—that of a "polyplex" global system. The term *polyplex* combines the notions of *poly*, or many, and *plex*, from the word *complex*, to suggest extreme complication and disorder. The suffix *-plex* also suggests a

tight interweaving of various “plaits” or “strands”—in this case, global actors. The term *polyplex* thus describes a global system in which many global actors, and many types of global actors, interact tightly in an exceedingly difficult, unruly, congested, shrinking, nonpolar, and swiftly evolving world.

Is this polyplex global system subject to any systemic rules? Nonpolar polyplex global systems, unlike polar global systems, are in all likelihood not governed by any particularly firm rules. Nonetheless, it is probably wise for both nation-state and nonstate actors within polyplex global systems to pay heed to certain flexible guidelines, if not outright rules:

- (1) Formulate pragmatic, flexible new “rules of the game” drawn from actual experience with polyplex global systems.
- (2) Try to create ad hoc—even if necessarily temporary—blocs, consisting of varying types of actors, to deal with threats posed by hostile actors or blocs.
- (3) Attempt to prevent or otherwise discourage alliances between hostile actors or blocs.

What major actors populate this polyplex global system? Nation-states, which govern territory and remain the principal users of coercive force (e.g., military and public security forces), certainly remain among the most significant actors in any type of global system, including the evolving polyplex system. It is certainly true that the permeability and increasing irrelevance of nation-state borders and the rise of other types of actors are factors which have diminished the central role that nation-states once played. Nevertheless, nation-states enjoy unique privileges—such as sovereignty over territory and the possession of vast military arsenals—which are naturally denied to other types of global actors. Yet nation-states, which during the heyday of polarity had held a virtual monopoly on global power, must now share power with other types of actors within a polyplex system.

Intergovernmental organizations, whose members are nation-states, and which require agreement among nation-states, have become important actors since the conclusion of the Second World War. Examples include the United Nations (U.N.), NATO, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and the EU. Intergovernmental organizations have enjoyed various levels of achievement. Despite the fact that many U.N. resolutions, or statements of policy, are routinely ignored by large numbers of nation-states, on many recent occasions, U.N.-

sponsored military actions (e.g., Operation Desert Storm) and economic sanctions (e.g., against South Africa, Iraq, and Libya) have enjoyed varying degrees of success. Although NATO has seemingly become less relevant since the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact, it has played a major role in helping to resolve ethnic conflicts in the Balkans. Indeed, the evolving relevance of NATO has been evidenced by the fact that many former Warsaw Pact nation-states have sought, and in certain cases received, membership within the ranks of their old adversaries. Despite complaints from some quarters of American society, the continued implementation of NAFTA reflects the increasing importance of international economic integration. And the European Union continues to unify much of Europe along not only economic but also political and military lines.

Even more critical, however, are transnational organizations—wholly nonstate actors. Transnational organizations are self-sufficient, privately supported organizations that transcend both nation-state borders and any need of nation-state sponsorship. Moreover, these organizations pursue their own transnational interests across the territorial borders of numerous nation-states.¹⁰

Intergovernmental organizations and transnational organizations are very different forms of global actors. One way to distinguish between them is that intergovernmental organizations require accord among nation-states in order to pursue their aims. Transnational organizations, which lack territory of their own, require access to nation-states in order to pursue their aims. Since only nation-states or military alliances may resort to overt military invasion, this particular type of access includes either invitation or infiltration.

There are at least eight types of transnational organizations. These include corporations; crime syndicates; professional, humanitarian, environmental, and religious organizations; religious cults; and terrorist organizations.

Transnational corporations are business firms which are based in one nation-state, yet do business in many nation-states. Significant examples (with their major products in parentheses) include General Motors and Toyota (motor vehicles), ExxonMobil (petroleum products), and Philip Morris (tobacco products). Transnational corporations have tremendous economic power—and, by extension, political power. For example, the gross revenues, or total earnings, of certain transnational corporations are consistently greater than the combined gross domestic product of several of the world's medium-size nation-states.

Transnational crime syndicates are organizations which produce and

distribute illegal drugs, arms, and other goods and services on a global basis. Contemporary examples include the Sicilian mafia, the Russian mafiya, and the Chinese triads. Other examples include the Medellín and Cali drug cartels, which, although based in Colombia, distributed their products through global networks. It might also be noted that the line between terrorism and drug trafficking sometimes becomes blurred. This dynamic, sometimes termed *narco-terrorism*, occurs when: (1) transnational crime syndicates resort to terrorist tactics, (2) terrorist organizations themselves resort to drug trafficking, or (3) terrorist organizations forge interorganizational alliances with transnational crime syndicates in order to help finance their activities.¹¹

Other examples of transnational organizations include transnational professional, humanitarian, environmental, and religious organizations, religious cults, and terrorist organizations. Transnational professional organizations represent and promote professional interests on a global basis. Examples include the International Olympic Committee, the International Political Science Association, and the International Studies Association. Transnational humanitarian organizations promote human rights concerns on a global basis. Examples include the International Red Cross and Amnesty International. Transnational environmental organizations are organizations which (for the most part legally and peacefully) promote ecological concerns on a global basis. Examples include the World Wide Fund for Nature and the International Wildlife Coalition. Transnational religious organizations seek to peacefully promote their religious beliefs and interests on a transnational basis. Examples include both mainstream religious organizations, such as the Presbyterian Church, and transnational religious cults. (It is interesting to note that one such mainstream organization, the Roman Catholic Church, is also a nation-state—Vatican City.) Transnational religious cults are tightly knit and united by total devotion to a leader who serves as the source of the organization's ideology. Examples include Aum Shinrikyo (which might also be considered as both a transnational corporation and a transnational terrorist organization), the People's Temple, and the Solar Temple.

Transnational terrorist organizations, which are among the most frightening illustrations of transnational organizations functioning within a polyplex global system, are the topic of the next chapter.