



The Lessons of Terror: The History of Warfare Against Civilians: Why it has Always Failed and Why It Will Fail Again

By Caleb Carr

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Although terrorism seems a relatively modern phenomenon, novelist and military historian Caleb Carr illustrates that it has been a constant of military history. In ancient times, warring armies raped and slaughtered civilians and gratuitously destroyed homes and cities; in the Middle Ages, evangelical Muslims and Christian crusaders spread their faiths by the sword; and in the early modern era, such celebrated kings as Louis XIV victimized noncombatants for political purposes.

During the Civil War Americans first engaged in "Total war," the most egregious of the many euphemisms for the tactics of terror. The forces of the South tried to systematize this horrifying practice; but it fell to a Union general, William Tecumseh Sherman, to achieve that dubious goal. Carr recounts Sherman's declaration of war on every man, woman, and child in the South -- a policy that brought long-term unrest to the American South by giving birth to the Ku Klux Klan.

Carr's exploration of terror reveals its consistently self-defeating nature. Far from prompting submission, Carr argues, terrorism stiffens enemy resolve: for this reason above all, terrorism has never achieved -- not will it ever achieve -- long-term success, however physically destructive and psychologically debilitating it may become. With commanding authority and the storyteller's gift for which he is renowned, Caleb Carr provides a critical historical context for understanding terrorist acts today, arguing that terrorism will be eradicated only when it is perceived as a tactic that brings nothing save defeat to its agents.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Caleb Carr is a contributing editor of *MHQ: The Quarterly Journal of Military History* and the series editor of the *Modern Library War Series*. His military and political writing have appeared in numerous magazines and periodicals, among them *The World Policy Journal*, *The New York Times*, and *Time*. He currently lives in upstate New York.

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