How We Came to Think About Terrorism:
A Conceptual History

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With roots in the French Revolution and nineteenth-century radicalism, the modern idea of terrorism appeared suddenly in the West during the interwar era (1918–1939), shaped by the forces of revolution, war, law, and empire. Although postwar concerns about atomic weapons and genocide added to this basic conceptualization, only in the 1970s did the fully developed paradigm of terrorism emerge around the world, with important consequences for Japan. A central lesson of this conceptual history is that the real choice the world faces is not between state and non-state violence, but rather between violence and non-violence.