14.6: Conclusion

Terrorism, and terrorists, are transnational in three ways: their goals, their actions and their organisational form. However, we must be cautious before assuming that this is the new, and only, form of terrorism. Not all terrorism is transnational. Terrorist groups like the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) still operate at the national level, targeting just one state. States too have shown themselves capable of inflicting forms of terrorism. Furthermore, while examples of transnational terrorism since 2001 may appear to be mostly religiously inspired, one cannot conclude that there is anything inevitable about this, or that Islam specifically is the significant factor. Rather, it is in this instance that Islam provides a framework for some marginal groups to construct a convincing worldwide counter-narrative to that of a world dominated by Western political, social and economic models. For that reason, it is perhaps no surprise that Islamic terrorism, over and above other types of terrorism, has become a sustained issue of concern in international relations. An important note to conclude on is that countering terrorism does not fall exclusively to the state: civil society and everyday acts by ordinary people also have a role. These can include examples of popular culture, inter-faith dialogue and moments of solidarity that break down the oppositional and binary world view that dominates transnational terrorist ideology. Nevertheless, terrorist groups are products of their time and, just like us, live in a globalised world. They are both shaped by globalisation and contribute to it by their actions.