

The Emotive Context of Terrorism: Part II

Explaining “Terrorism” in the Context of “Political Violence”

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What Makes a Terrorist? Explaining Political Violence

*“One man’s terrorist is another man’s
freedom fighter”*

What does this statement suggest?

What does it suggest about defining
the concept of terrorism?

First, Terrorism is Old

- Definition in dispute: We focus in the class on violent attacks by nonstate actors for political purposes, outside of the context of war (more on state terror, insurgency, and civil warfare later in the course)
- Terrorism has long, millennial-long history

Second, Ample Examples of Zealots, Thugs, & Assassins as “Terrorists”

Zealot attacks (63-72 CE) – Radical Jewish assassins (*Sicarii* in Latin), known for their fervent commitment to the Torah, kill Roman soldiers and suspected Jewish collaborators in an attempt to drive Rome from ancient Palestine. Many public assassinations using concealed swords in full daylight.

Known for murdering Romans in broad daylight in Jerusalem

Thugs & Assassins as “Terrorists”

Hindu “Thugee” – (1200s) Thugs from a religious sect that strangled & robbed victims in ritual sacrifice to delay arrival of goddess Kali.

Muslim Assassins - Persian Shiites who targeted Sunni rulers with suicide attacks from the 1000s to 1200s.

- It is a myth that the word *assassin* comes from the Arabic word *haschishin* for hashish user.
- Assassin comes from Hassassin -- a follower of Hassan – Hassan was Persian not Arabic.

What Makes a Terrorist? Explaining Political Violence, cont'd

Defining Terrorism: A First Look

- Which of the following are terrorists?
 - Members of the African National Congress (ANC) who fought against the white South African government during the period of apartheid?
 - U.S. Revolutionaries fighting against British in late 1700s?
 - States that use weapons of mass destruction against civilian populations, whether intentionally or unintentionally?
 - Members of an “insurgency” in post-Hussein Iraq who attack both military and civilian targets?
 - Soldiers who murder and rape civilians?
 - Members of organizations, such as *al Qaeda*, who carry out attacks against civilian targets?

What Makes a Terrorist? Explaining Political Violence, cont'd

This definition tells us that there are many motivations for terrorism, from the purely individual, to the criminal, to the political: essentially, any group, or any state that commits "inspiring" violence is a terrorist.

This definition tells us that terrorism is necessarily "illegitimate" (which technically means "not authorized by law"): but, this creates a very broad definition of terrorism, since most (violent) force is not authorized by law. It also raises the question: whose law? If a state authorizes the use of force against civilians, does that make it legitimate?

De "Terrorism is an anxiety-inspiring (semi-)clandestine individual, group, or political reasons, whereby, in contrast to conventional violence, the direct targets of violence are not the main targets." (Ferdinand and Jongman, 1983)

"Terrorism constitutes the illegitimate use of force to achieve a political objective when innocent people are targeted." (Walter Laqueur)

"Terror is nothing other than justice, prompt, severe, inflexible; it is therefore an emanation of virtue; it is not so much a special principle as it is a consequence of the general principle of democracy applied to our country's most urgent needs." (Maximilien Robespierre, 1794)

The last two definitions provide a useful contrast: one argues that terrorism, by definition, is virtuous while the other argues that it is inherently evil: these are examples of ideologically-based and highly polemic definitions

"The deliberate, systematic use of violence to inspire fear in order to achieve political ends is necessarily evil, and wholly evil" (Paul Johnson)

Defining Terrorism: Key Points

There is little agreement on how to define terrorism: one study in the 1980s, noted that there were *109 separate definitions* in the literature

The difficulty of defining terrorism is compounded by the ideological, political and emotional "baggage" the term carries

Still, despite the extreme difficulty of defining terrorism, any study of terrorism **requires** a clear-cut definition, an **operational definition**

... as one scholar puts it, we need to transform the concept of terrorism "*into a useful analytical term rather than a polemical tool*" (Martha Crenshaw)

Here is one “analytical definition”

Key Elements of Definition: Terrorism is “design to create power where there is none.” What does this suggest or tell us?

there is none or to control
Through the publicity of
to obtain leverage, influence
effect political change on either a local or international scale.

Summing Up: Is this a reasonable definition of terrorism? Does it serve the purpose of **distinguishing** terrorism from other types of violence? Does it avoid emotionalism and polemics?

Key Elements of Definition: What does the statement that terrorism is premised on the “pursuit of political change” suggest? What does it tell us about the underlying basis or motivation of terrorist activities?

generate creation and exploitation of fear
great of violence in the pursuit of

power where
very little.
terrorists seek
se lack to

In addition, terrorists are subnational

Key Elements of Definition: In this definition, terrorists cannot be “states.” Is this a legitimate, non-ideological, analytically significant distinction?

~ Bruce Hoffman, *The Terrorist Next Door*

Further Caveats & Concerns

Defining Terrorism

- **One Last Caveat:** No matter how try to define the word “terrorism,” just the mere mention of it causes problems. For this reason, it might be preferable to come up with a new term altogether ...
- One set of scholars proposes this alternative:

“Violent sub-state activism”

This is a very useful term, but for our purposes, we will use the word “terrorism” in our discussion that concentrates on this level of analysis & which is closest to Hoffman.

Terrorism: Key Terms, Definitions

- Vision
- Power
- Strategy
- Tactic
- Duty
- Shame
- Freedom fighter
- Self-sacrifice
- Will to kill
- Skill to kill
- Ideology
- Indoctrination
- Radicalization
- Rationalization
- Emotions
- Moral Disengagement
- Communicative Acts
- Facilitators/Causes
- Learning Organization
- Counter vs. Anti
- Hard/Soft Power

Certain Aspects are Fundamental

- Political Acts, Action
 - Desire for political change
 - Terrorism is typically non-state in character
 - (Note the separate but related topic of state terrorism – typically antithetical to the desire for political change.)
 - States can terrorize, but they are not terrorists.
 - Terrorists do not abide by norms
 - They target innocents
 - They seek psychological trauma

What Do Terror Organizations Fight For?

- **Political autonomy/Separatism** (the Basques, the PKK, ETA, in Kashmir, the Bodo tribes in Assam, Uigher in China, Chechens in Russia, Sikhs in Khalistan).
- **Ideology** (left-wing groups such as as the Turkish Revolutionary People's Liberation Party - Front (DHKP-C), the Peruvian Sendero Luminoso, and the Naxalites of India). (17th November, Greece).
- **Religious differences** (Sunni and Shia Groups in Pakistan)
- **Spillover:** of the Algerian strife (France).
- **Creation of an Islamic state** (al-Qaeda of Iraq, the Shabab in Somali, **Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA)**).
- **Resistance of an occupation** (Hamas + the Palestine Islamic Jihad)

Defining Terrorism: Categories to Consider

Primary Types

- Ideological: Left-wing
- Ideological: Right Wing
- Ethno-nationalist (and/or separatist)
- Narco-terrorist groups
- Religious groups

Left Wing Terror Groups

- Driven by liberal or idealist political concepts
- Prefer revolutionary anti-authoritarian anti-materialist agendas
- Typically target elites that symbolize authority
- Examples?

Right Wing Terrorists

- Often target race and ethnicity
- Examples?

- Let's check some out on the web...

Ethnonationalists & Separatists

- Usually have clear territorial objectives
 - Liberation/separation
 - Popular support usually along ethnic/racial lines.
- Examples?

Religious Terrorists

- Believe involved in a struggle of good vs evil
- Acting along desires of a deity – audience is thus not necessarily human.
- Feel unconstrained by law – higher calling
- Complete alienation from existing socio/political order
- Support may be diffuse
- Ideologies are supremacist & absolutist
- Examples?

Historical Examples

- French Revolution: Modern Root of “Terrorism”
 - Use of revolutionary tribunals to prop up the French republic.
 - Rule by fear/terror – Robespierre’s “lists”
- Iraq
 - Hussein regime uses chemical weapons to subdue uprising among Kurdish villages
 - Rule by fear/terror
 - Recent historical & contemporary groups using terrorism include. . .

The Invention of “Terrorism” as a Concept & Term – The French Revolution

- The “Reign of Terror” (September 5, 1793 - July 28, 1794): struggles between rival factions led to mass executions by guillotine. About 40,000 executed: 8% aristocrats, 6% clergy, 14% middle class, and 70% workers or peasants accused of hoarding, evading the draft, desertion, rebellion, etc. “Terrorism” used to describe such methods in 1795.

Historical Examples

Irish Republican Army
Hizballah
ETA (Basque Separatists)
LEHI, Stern Gang and Zvi Irgun
(Jewish extremists)
Tamil Tigers (LTTE)
Sendero Luminoso
FARC
MRTA (Tupac Amaru movement)
Al Qaida
Jemaah Islamiya
Aum Shinrikyo
Moro Islamic Liberation Front
Egyptian Islamic Jihad

Algerian GIA and GSPC
Syrian Muslim Brotherhood
Hizb ut-Tahrir
Al Qaeda in Iraq
Lashkar-e Taiba (and other Kashmir groups)
Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
Italian Red Brigades
Red Army Faction (Baader Meinhof Gang)

U.S.-based militia groups
The Order, the Aryan Brotherhood, Christian Identity, The Sword, the Covenant & Arm of the Lord
Many, many others . . .

More on the Long History of Terrorism

- First VBIED (or “Car Bomb”) terrorist attack?
- VBIED: “Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device”

New York City, September 1920

- Terrorist: Italian anarchist Mario Buda
- Vehicle: Horse-drawn wagon
- Target: Corner of Wall and Broad streets (directly across from the J.P. Morgan Company)
- Attack: The wagon—packed with dynamite and iron slugs—exploded at precisely noon in a fireball of shrapnel, killing 40 and wounding more than 200.

More History, cont'd

- Second VBIED (or “Car Bomb”) terrorist attack?







Haifa, Palestine (now Israel) January, 1947

- Terrorists: Stern Gang (a pro-fascist splinter group led by Avraham Stern that broke away from the right-wing Zionist paramilitary *Irgun*)
- Vehicle: Truck
- Target: British police station in Haifa
- Attack: A truckload of explosives was driven into the station, killing 4 and injuring 140.
- The Stern Gang would soon use truck and car bombs to kill Palestinians as well, as part of their extremist political agenda.

VBIED: http://www.metacafe.com/watch/124933/us_convoy_hit_with_vbied/
and
<http://thetension.blogspot.com/2008/12/combat-camera-video-vbied-blast-in.html>

VBIED Technique History, cont'd

BATF Explosive Standards

ATF	Vehicle Description	Maximum Explosives Capacity	Lethal Air Blast Range	Minimum Evacuation Distance	Falling Glass Hazard
	Compact Sedan	500 pounds 227 Kilos (In Trunk)	100 Feet 30 Meters	1,500 Feet 457 Meters	1,250 Feet 381 Meters
	Full Size Sedan	1,000 Pounds 455 Kilos (In Trunk)	125 Feet 38 Meters	1,750 Feet 534 Meters	1,750 Feet 534 Meters
	Passenger Van or Cargo Van	4,000 Pounds 1,818 Kilos	200 Feet 61 Meters	2,750 Feet 838 Meters	2,750 Feet 838 Meters
	Small Box Van (14 Ft. box)	10,000 Pounds 4,545 Kilos	300 Feet 91 Meters	3,750 Feet 1,143 Meters	3,750 Feet 1,143 Meters
	Box Van or Water/Fuel Truck	30,000 Pounds 13,636 Kilos	450 Feet 137 Meters	6,500 Feet 1,982 Meters	6,500 Feet 1,982 Meters
	Semi-Trailer	60,000 Pounds 27,273 Kilos	600 Feet 183 Meters	7,000 Feet 2,134 Meters	7,000 Feet 2,134 Meters

Basic Trends in Modern Terrorism

- More violent attacks
(With increasing lethality)
- Increasing use of suicide bombers
(*The “ultimate smart bomb”*)
- Religious terrorist groups most common
(*Even insurgencies and ethnic separatist groups use religion to justify violence*)

Key Questions to Consider From Weeks 1, 2 & Our Future Readings

- What is a ‘terrorist?’
- Who is a ‘terrorist?’
- Terrorists do not want a “terrorist state” so, what do terrorists desire and what motivates terrorists?
- How do we define “terrorism?”
- Why do definitions matter?
- Is “terrorism rational?”
- Can terrorism be classified as a series of “directed networks?” As some other model or organizational decision-based hierarchy? More loose-knit?