

1 A Thorn by any other Name: Definitions, Typologies, and 2 Various Explanations for Terrorism

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6

7 **Abstract**

8 An ancient Chinese parable tells of a poor young farmer who lost his only possession: The
9 horse that he had inherited from his father. The members of the village visited the poor
10 farmer and expressed their condolences for his loss. "How do you know that losing my horse
11 was a misfortune?" Sure enough, about a week later the horse returned with a healthy young
12 mare as its wife. The citizens of the village were shocked, and they all went to visit the farmer
13 to congratulate him on his good fortune. "How do you know that gaining the mare is good
14 fortune?" Again, the young farmer's words rang true. About two weeks later, as he was
15 breaking the mare, she threw him and he broke his leg. All the people of the village gathered
16 around his bed to console him for his tragedy. "How do you know that breaking my leg was a
17 tragedy?.Later that month, the Japanese invaded. The emperor sent emissaries to every
18 village to find healthy young men. All the young men of the village were sent to the front
19 except the young farmer whose leg had not yet healed. None of the young men returned?all
20 were killed in battle.

21

22 *Index terms—*

23 **1 Introduction**

24 his article addresses the many challenges faced by academics and policymakers alike when attempting to define
25 terrorism, categorize it, and identify its causes. The article begins with a brief discussion of the problem. Next it
26 evaluates Alex Schmid's attempt to arrive at a consensus on the various elements included in various definitions
27 of terrorism. From there, the article examines the four main approaches to defining terrorism. While it is not
28 possible to explicitly discuss every definition, typology and suggested cause of terrorism within the space allotted,
29 the main theoretical constructs are represented. The article concludes that a great majority of the various efforts
30 to define terrorism all largely share a common shortcoming—namely that they approach the definition of terrorism
31 deductively rather than inductively. This approach creates several definitional problems because T the lion's
32 share of the suspected causes of terrorism focus on the actor, the ideology of the actor or the deed itself. As such,
33 the definition of terrorism often becomes politicized.

34 In fact, Silke (2014) suggests that the concept of terrorism is so difficult to define precisely because the term is
35 so politically charged. Thus, if terrorism is defined as violence committed by non-state actors, state terrorism is
36 excluded by definition. Likewise, if terrorism is defined as violence committed against innocent noncombatants,
37 who decides whether one is innocent and whether he or she is a noncombatant? Finally, when terrorism is
38 associated with certain ideologies, such blatant politicization creates the opportunity for actors to justify their
39 own violence as necessary (perhaps even heroic) while condemning their enemies as "terrorists."

40 Given the political climate created by the U.S.led Global War on Terror (GWOT), some basic international
41 consensus concerning what constitutes terrorism versus other forms of violence would be extremely beneficial
42 (Richards 2014). This sentiment is particularly true regarding the effort to distinguish between terrorism and
43 the various categories of unconventional warfare.

2 A) WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE

44 By relegating irregular warfare to the ungoverned spaces outside the civilized realm of interstate warfare,
45 strategic theorists have clung to antiquated battle plans and outdated realities (Sitaraman 2009;Honig 2015).
46 Meanwhile, terrorism scholars and policymakers alike have been busy creating a preserve for the irrational, the
47 unpredictable and the inhuman?a jungle where only the most marginalized, debased and immoral creatures dwell.
48 In the following section, I will examine this concept further.

49 2 a) Welcome to the Jungle

50 The title of this section refers to Upton Sinclair's classic 1906 novel depicting the harsh economic, cultural and
51 institutional realities of life for immigrants in Chicago at the turn of the century. These same realities still exist on
52 a global scale, and more often than not (particularly with the growing migrant crisis), they are cited as potential
53 root causes of terrorism. The explosion of multidisciplinary literature in terrorism studies, while positive in many
54 respects, has also ??ear 2018 contributed to what appears at face value to be a very disjointed and chaotic body
55 of literature-what Ramsay (2015, p. 212) calls a "cacophony of competing definitions." For example, there are
56 over 200 definitions of terrorism currently in existence in the broader terrorism literature (Jackson 2010).

57 A bit of etymology is in order. First of all, the word "terrorist" is not a noun. It is an adjective, but it does
58 not describe any particular person or organization. Nor does it describe a certain type of violence. Any violence
59 can constitute an act of terrorism. What defines terrorism is not the type of violence employed, but the strategic
60 objective behind the violence. By strategic objective, I do not mean motive. A strategic goal is what an actor
61 hopes to accomplish. Motive is why the actor wishes to accomplish it. It may seem like I am splitting hairs,
62 but the distinction is an important one. It can be very difficult to establish motive with any degree of certainty.
63 However, most violent actors tend to publicize their strategic goals. Finally, because terrorism is defined by the
64 strategic objective of the actor (and not the actor, the actor's ideology or the violence itself), it can be employed
65 by virtually anyone as well as against a variety of actors. This distinction makes it much harder to politicize the
66 concept.

67 As a terrorism scholar, I employ strategic theory to better understand the goal(s) of those I study. Strategic
68 theory, in turn, requires an in-depth understanding of the individuals or groups under examination. One side of
69 this coin is comprised of objective fact such as the historical and political context in which the violence occurs
70 as well as the perpetrator's socio-economic position within that context. Objective fact only paints half of the
71 picture, however.

72 Often we can glean enough information from the historical and political context to determine what an actor's
73 strategic goal is, but we're still left guessing as to other important considerations. The opposite side of the coin
74 is subjective in nature, requiring insight concerning how an actor views itself and those around it. For example,
75 al Qaeda and Islamic State share the same strategic goal of establishing an Islamic caliphate yet they employ
76 very different tactics in pursuit of this goal. They also target different victims. Why?

77 To answer this question we require more subjective information to shed light in the shadows. It is only by
78 attempting to view these actors and the world through their eyes rather than through our own that we can begin
79 to see a more complete picture.

80 A component of this analysis is the theory of perception of the other. Strategy is the use of one's resources
81 towards the attainment of one's goals. Therefore, how an actor perceives its own resources visa-vis the resources
82 of another plays as large a role as the strategic goal itself. Perception also plays a huge role in both the decision
83 to engage in violence and in the way targets and victims respond.

84 When defining terrorism, it is absolutely crucial to keep in mind that terrorism is a strategy to be countered,
85 and not an enemy to be defeated (Crocker 2005;Neumann and Smith 2005). Terrorism is just one of several
86 means employed to obtain a desired political end. As such, it can be carried out in a wide variety of ways and by
87 a wide variety of actors-including states (Rummel 1998). 1 Silke ??2008) estimates that in the English language
88 alone, a new book is published with terrorism As Neumann and Smith (2005) aptly contest, terrorism is not
89 always a weapon of the weak, nor is it always employed by illegitimate actors.

90 However, Washington's GWOT and the aid it offers those who join it has greatly exacerbated the misuse of the
91 term to denounce one's political opponents. The obvious cure for this malady is to remove the stigma associated
92 with the label "terrorist." This articles suggests that the best way to accomplish this goal is to eliminate those
93 subjective elements of the definition that lend to the politicization of the termnamely those that focus on the
94 actor, the ideology of the actor and the deed itself. This article also argues that it is imperative that we arrive
95 at a uniform and objective definition of terrorism.

96 As Smith (2005 p.29) so aptly states, "if one cannot define and articulate precisely the object of one's inquiry,
97 then plainly the effort to describe the essence of a particular kind of strategic practice is likely to be flawed."
98 Speaking of terrorism, ??tern (2000, pp. 12-13) states that the "definition inevitably determines the kind of
99 data we collect and analyze, which in turn influences our understanding of trends and our prediction about
100 the future?How we define it profoundly influences how we respond to it." Therefore, it behooves us, whenever
101 possible, to distinguish between terrorism and other types of violence.

102 Sánchez-Cuenca (2014) laments that scholars have collected more concrete knowledge about interstate war, civil
103 war, genocide and ethnic conflict than they have about terrorism and blames this shortcoming on the ambiguity
104 of the concept. Similarly, Wilkinson (1974) contends that there is not even a theory of political instability or civil
105 violence, much less a theory of terrorism. ??queur (1977a) goes even further to suggest that there is no reason

106 to assume a connection between instability, civil violence and terrorism. Levitt (1986) compares the endeavor to
107 arrive at a common definition of terrorism to the quest for the Holy Grail. The past four or five decades have
108 witnessed an explosion of multidisciplinary literature in terrorism studies, spanning the fields of political science,
109 criminology, sociology, media studies, history, psychology and many others.

110 in the title every six hours. Likewise, Neumann and Smith (2005, p. 571) observe that, particularly since
111 ??eptember 11, 2001 (9/11), there has been a "flood of (often forgettable) books" on the subject. In the following
112 section, I will evaluate one particular response to this dilemma.

113 **3 b) Consensus or Coincidence?**

114 In 1983, Alex Schmid attempted to make sense of the deluge of data that, even back then, was inundating the
115 field. He compiled 109 different definitions of terrorism employed by leading academics in the field between
116 1936 and 1980. From this survey data, Schmid (1983) identified 22 separate definitional elements of terrorism
117 and observed that definitions vary regarding which of these 22 elements are incorporated and which are left out
118 (see Table 1). Schmid's seminal work inspired a number of subsequent studies which attempted to arrive at a
119 consensus (which of the 22 elements are most commonly included in various definitions of terrorism). One such
120 study examined 73 definitions of terrorism extrapolated from 55 articles appearing in three major journals in
121 the field of terrorism studies: Terrorism, Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, and Terrorism and Political Violence
122 ??Weinburg, et. al., 2004). The authors found that the main difference between Schmid' s original survey and their
123 own study was the comparative lack of the psychological element among the definitions appearing in the journals
124 (5.5%) as opposed to Schmid's original 1985 survey (45.5%) even though a similar percentage of psychologists
125 were represented in both samples.

126 Volume XVIII Issue IV Version I For example, what is the definition of "noncombatant?" How does one
127 determine "innocence?" Other elements are interrelated, and therefore difficult to parse out. The subjective nature
128 of Schmid's elements combined with the fact that they are not mutually exclusive has gained almost as much
129 scholarly attention as his study has. Finally, the consensus approach to defining terrorism is very general and
130 vague-calling to mind Sartori's (1970) now classic observation that the more general and abstract a concept, the
131 less clear its attributes and properties.

132 Therefore, while it is true that Schmid identified 22 elements that are commonly included in the definition of
133 terrorism, one has to question the usefulness of such information. The simple fact of the matter is that we are
134 still left with a diverse assortment of definitions-an example par excellence of the blind men's elephant (Silke,
135 1996). All contain elements of truth, however, they have not brought us any closer to a true consensus on the
136 phenomenon. Definitions of terrorism range from the minimalist, but highly-regarded characterization, "terrorism
137 is theater," offered by Jenkins (1985) to the convoluted amalgamation of the 109 definitions referred to above.

138 From just these two extreme examples, one can see how arduous the effort to define terrorism has become.
139 The United States, for example, faced tremendous opposition from several European states for its labeling of
140 Hezbollah as a terrorist organization primarily because they insist on a more precise definition (Norton 2007a).
141 Clearly, a more uniform definition is desirable. However, to date such a definition remains beyond our reach.

142 Interestingly, Ramsay (2015) argues that the scholarly debate over a lack of consensus on the definition of
143 terrorism is largely exaggerated. According to Ramsay, the debate is "premised on unrealistic assumptions about
144 what level of scholarly agreement can be expected on any key social or political concept."

145 Ramsay's point is certainly nothing new, however. Acknowledging that "a comprehensive definition of terrorism
146 . . . does not exist nor will it be found in the foreseeable future," Laqueur (1977b,p. 5) went on to insist that
147 "To argue that terrorism cannot be studied without such a definition is manifestly absurd." Senechalde Roche
148 disagrees. "Without a useful definition of terrorism, a theory of the subject is not even possible" (Senechalde
149 Roche, 2004. p. 1). While conceding that any simple definition of terrorism is inconsistent with human nature
150 itself, Gibbs nevertheless also insists that a comprehensive definition is necessary if we are to understand the
151 phenomenon. "A definition of terrorism must promise empirical applicability and facilitate recognition of logical
152 connections and possible empirical associations" ??Gibbs, 1989, p. 339). To make his point, Gibbs asks whether
153 JFK's assassination should be defined as an act of terrorism. Widespread disagreement over the answer to this
154 question is enlightening.

155 Inconsistencies in the definition of terrorism continue to plague global governance. For example, the European
156 Union (EU) has established a rather comprehensive definition of terrorism while the United Nations (UN) has
157 not (Tiefenbrun 2002;Rosand 2003;Keohane 2005;Saul 2005). 3

158 **4 Sampson and Onuoha 2011**

159 Furthermore, while terrorism is not explicitly listed as an offence under International Criminal Court (ICC)
160 statutes, Title 22 of the U.S. Code Section 2656f(d)very specifically defines terrorism as premeditated, politically
161 motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by sub national groups or clandestine agents(

162). The lack of consensus over what constitutes terrorism also causes discrepancies regarding data collection
163 and contradictions in the actual number of terrorist incidents that have occurred. A quick look at the Global
164 Terrorism Database, for instance, lists Burkina Faso as having had five separate incidents of terrorism since
165 independence with a total of three fatalities and two injuries (GTD 2016a), and Ghana as having 25 separate

166 incidents of terrorism since independence with a total of 31 fatalities and 25 injuries (GTD 2016b). Meanwhile,
167 Rand's Database of Worldwide Terrorism Incidents and Maplecroft's Terrorism Index both record zero incidents
168 for either country (RDWTI 2016; Maplecroft 2011). We cannot contribute this disparity to a simple distinction
169 between global and domestic terrorism as the indices above report both.

170 Finally, this ambiguity leaves room for discrepancies when prosecuting acts of terrorism. Amnesty International
171 (AI) has criticized the United Kingdom's Terrorism Act 2000; Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001;
172 Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005; 3 A 20-year-old draft of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism
173 defines terrorism but has not been adopted (Hmoud 2006).

174 Criticism of the consensus approach is rather extensive (Sederberg, 1991; Badey, 1998; Ramsay, 2015). Schmid's
175 basic reasoning supposes that consensus regarding the definition of terrorism can be reached by including as
176 many of the 22 elements as possible. But there are some real problems with this approach. Of the 22 elements
177 Schmid identified, only six appeared in more than 30% of the definitions and only three appeared in 50% or more.
178 The remaining 14 elements appeared substantially less often. These numbers hardly comprise a consensus. The
179 question that should concern any serious scholar is why? Were they simply neglected to be added, or were they
180 deliberately left out of the definition. If the answer is the latter, then simply combining all 22 elements into
181 a single definition is problematic at best. Terrorism Act 2006; and Counter-Terrorism Act 2008 on the basis
182 that all allow for potential human rights violations. For instance, AI claims that the definition of terrorism in
183 the Terrorism Act 2000 is too broad and potentially allows for the prosecution of individuals who are merely
184 exercising their rights as protected under international law (AI 2010).

185 One response to these issues has been growing interest in the field of critical terrorism studies (e.g. ??homsky
186 CTS also challenges the epistemological and ontological assumptions made by orthodox terrorism scholars.
187 Namely CTS opposes the state-centric perspective of most mainstream approaches to terrorism studies and
188 instead advocates the emancipation of people from both physical and social constraints.

189 Maintaining that terrorism is as much a social construct as it is a physical act, critical terrorism studies (CTS)
190 embraces terrorism from a much broader sociological and historical perspective than most mainstream orthodox
191 approaches. Focusing on the unequal distribution of power and resources and the hegemony of the West, CTS
192 explores the multi-causality of terrorism in all its complexity (Hocking 1984; Jackson 2007; Walklate and Mythen
193 2014; Solomon 2015). 5 McDonald (2007) argues that by focusing on emancipation, CTS invites dialogue that
194 has the potential to both minimize non-state actor violence as well as violent state responses. 6 Furthermore,
195 CTS generally insists that any discussion of terrorism must be interdisciplinary in scope, considering specific
196 relevant social, political, historical and ideological power structures in order to truly understand why actors
197 choose violence over the status quo ??Gunning 2007a; Booth 2008). CTS also acknowledges the subjective nature
198 of knowledge and Lutz (2011) offers a balanced discussion regarding the claims made by critical terrorism scholars
199 concerning the narrow, ethnocentric, nonstate actor focus of traditional terrorism studies. See also Jones and
200 Smith (2009) who conclude that the critical approach is obscure and pedantic. 5 See for example, Toros and
201 Gunning (2009) who advocate a shift from focusing on the security of the state to the security of individuals,
202 families and communities. See also Herring (2008) who in addition to advocating for a more emancipatory
203 practice, calls for minimizing the use of knowledge to maintain the hegemony of powerful elites and therefore,
204 the status quo. 6 Buzan (2006) criticizes the Bush administration for its zero-sum approach to counterterrorism
205 because it leaves no room for dialogue or positive-sum alternatives.

206 rejects the default to superficial quick fixes in lieu of more lasting solutions. Africa offers a classic example.
207 As Solomon (2015, p. 224) observes, "the legitimacy of the political elites in Abuja, Bamako or Mogadishu never
208 comes under scrutiny in traditional terrorism studies-rather the focus is on Boko Haram, Ansar Dine and Al
209 Shabab entirely." However quick fixes do not address the underlying issues, which often times have as much to
210 do with the regime as they do the actors opposing it.

211 As ??unning (2007b) puts it, "a critical turn within terrorism studies is necessary" because the orthodox
212 approach often produces an "a-historical, de-politicized, state-centric account of 'terrorism' that relies heavily on
213 secondary sources and replicates knowledge that by and large reinforces the status quo." In other words, CTS
214 scrutinizes orthodox terrorism literature, the discourse it generates and the institutions that produce it (Joseph
215 2009). On the other hand, Gunning (2007b, p.237) also insists that CTS needs to acknowledge the expertise of
216 many traditional terrorism scholars and, to be inclusive, it needs to converge with the "more rigorous traditional,
217 problem-solving perspectives."

218 Richard Jackson (2010) is highly critical of the current state of terrorism studies, and he advocates (among other
219 things) a less subjective definition. Observing that many common definitions of terrorism include components
220 such as illegitimate violence committed against innocent civilians intended to terrify a group of people toward the
221 advancement of a political goal, Jackson argues that the subjective nature of terms such as illegitimate, innocent,
222 intended, and political perpetuate the conceptual incoherence so common among definitions of terrorism.

223 For example, Rapoport and Alexander (1982) define terrorism as the threat or use of violence intended to
224 coerce a group toward a political, religious or ideological end. This definition is one of the more objective
225 descriptions of terrorism, but still it possesses ambiguous terminology.

226 The problem, as Jackson sees it, lays not in the definitions of terrorism but in the very nature of terrorism itself.
227 Jackson argues that terrorism cannot be objectively defined as it is a socially constructed concept. To bolster

228 his position, Jackson points to Nobel Peace Prize winners Nelson Mandela, Menachim Begin, Yassir Arafat, and
229 Sean McBride-all once denounced as terrorists-as examples of the ontological instability of the phenomenon.

230 Finally, CTS opposes any definition of terrorism that empowers elites, marginalizes women and other
231 vulnerable populations, neglects key areas of study (such as states) and perpetuates Eurocentric or masculinized
232 constructions of knowledge. For instance, Jackson (2005a) notes that the term, 'war on terror' is value-laden
233 and frames war as something desirable. A similar point can be made concerning the Afghan mujahidin, who
234 were widely described as freedom fighters in the 1980s, but later became known as Islamic terrorists (Livingston
235 1994). 7 2011 Clearly, no group considers itself a terrorist organization, which is perhaps the best example of the
236 subjectivity of the term. In the words of Eqbal Ahmad (, pp. 12-13), "The terrorist of yesterday is the hero of
237 today, and the hero of yesterday becomes the terrorist of today." Of course, it is entirely possible to be both at
238 the same time (Smith 2011).

239 **5 c) Four Common Approaches to Defining Terrorism**

240 Jackson (2010) identifies four common approaches used by scholars and policymakers when dealing with the
241 conceptual quagmire known as terrorism. First, due to the negative connotation of the term, a growing number
242 of scholars simply choose not to define terrorism at all. Second, it is popular among politicians and security
243 professionals to refer to terrorism as an ideology. Third, terrorism is defined according to the parties that engage
244 in it. And finally, a majority of scholars define terrorism by the deed itself. In the pages that follow, I will explore
245 these concepts more fully.

246 **6 d) To Define or Not to Define?**

247 One issue that has emerged is whether to define terrorism or not. On the one hand, as noted earlier, a universal
248 definition would aid in more accurate data collection, more consistent reporting and a more unified body of
249 scholarship (Schmid and Jongman 1988;Coady 2004;Meisels 2006). More importantly, it would require more
250 accountability on the part of those engaged in it as well as their supporters (Ganor 2005).

251 On the other hand, no actor views the violence that it commits as terrorism, but most actors are quick to label
252 the violence committed by their enemies as terrorism (Jackson et. al. 2011;Bryan 2012;Ramsay 2015). Due to
253 the subjectivity and political misuse of the term as well as close organizational and ideological ties between state
254 institutions and prominent researcherswhat Burnett and Whyte (2003) label 'embedded expertise'-others have
255 elected not to seek a common definition. 8 A classic example is the deliberate decision not to define terrorism
256 by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in order to obtain consensus on Resolution 1373. Rather the
257 UNSC opted to allow each member state to arrive at its own definition (Rosand 2003;Saul 2005).

258 Interestingly, arriving at a common definition has not been the main obstacle for the EU. What has proven
259 to be insurmountable are various other challenges such as vastly different threat perceptions among EU member
260 states, a resistance to true integration of national counterterrorism efforts in favor of cooperation between them,
261 and ineffective implementation of policies (Monar 2007, Coolsaet 2010).

262 Finally, Ramsay (2015) suggests that terrorism should not be defined because such a definition could not be
263 correctly applied to the many diverse instances of political violence which bear little, if any, resemblance to one
264 another. Thus, a common definition would serve to blur rather than sharpen our understanding of the term.
265 Furthermore, Ramsay insists that the opposite is also true. When states engage in tactical violence that is covert
266 and non-conventional, it is called special operations. However, when non-state actors engage in the very same
267 type of activity, it is called terrorism.

268 **7 e) Terrorism as an Ideology**

269 Terrorism has been around since antiquity. The Jewish Zealots employed terrorism against the Romans, the
270 Thuggees engaged in acts of terrorism against the British in India, and it is a tactic that is still in use today.

271 In this respect, one could say that terrorism changes little over time. However, scholars have noted an
272 ideological cleavage in recent decades between what many refer to as "old terrorism" and "new terrorism." As
273 with any definition of terrorism, however, this categorization is also debated ??Lesser et Old terrorism has taken
274 several forms throughout history (anti-imperial, anti-colonial, etc...); however, it has typically been perpetrated
275 toward the liberation of some group. Even between 1960 and 1980, transnational terrorism (which was primarily
276 driven by Marxist ideology, nationalism, separatism, and nihilism) attempted to liberate oppressed peoples.
277 Right-wing terrorism, on the other hand, is usually waged against ethnic minorities rather than on their behalf
278 (Heitmeyer 2005). However with the emergence of religious extremist groups, some scholars contend that a "new
279 face of terrorism" was born ??Sampson and Onuoha 2011, p. 36). What is this new face, and what makes it so
280 different from the terrorism that came before it?

281 A major facet of new terrorism is that it is fundamentally religious in nature (Roy 1994). Hoffman (2013)
282 defines a religious terrorist group as one that has religiously motivated goals (as opposed to politically motivated
283 ones). Hoffman (1997) also points out that by 1995, religious terrorism had increased from two out of Moreover,
284 Hoffman (1999) draws our attention to the connection between religious terrorism and increased lethality. For
285 example, between 1982 and 1989 Shia Islamic terrorist groups perpetrated a mere eight percent of all international
286 terrorist incidents. However, in that same period they accounted for 30 percent of the casualties. White (2003)

287 agrees that violence has substantially increased with religious terrorism. This marked increase in casualties
 288 associated with the rise of religious terrorism is evident in the fact that prior to 9/11 no single terrorist incident
 289 resulted in the death of more than 500 people.

290 How to explain this increase in casualties associated with the rise of religious terrorism? Hoffman (1995)
 291 argues that the apocalyptic conviction of religious terrorists makes them more focused on the life to come and,
 292 therefore, inclined to view human life in this world with relatively less importance. Wilkinson (2014) argues that
 293 terrorists in the Marxist/nationalist/separatist vein maintained a constituency and hence, had a vested interest
 294 in keeping casualties to an acceptable level. However, religiously motivated terrorist groups such as al Qaeda
 295 view violence against apostates as a duty, and therefore they are motivated to increase casualties rather than to
 296 limit them. Wilkinson supports this line of reasoning with examples such as al Qaeda's Second Fatwa, issued on
 297 February 23, 1998, encouraging all Muslims to kill Americans wherever they can be found.

298 Wilkinson differs with Hoffman however, in that; in Wilkinson's view American lives can be sacrificed with
 299 little or no account while Hoffman suggests that the apocalyptic vision of religious terrorists casts all human life
 300 as expendable given the impending doom of the human race itself.

301 One problem with Hoffman's explanation is that not all so-called religious terrorists subscribe to an apocalyptic
 302 vision. Of those who do, many are more nationalist than apocalyptic which leads to contention over whether
 303 they are indeed fundamentally religious or secular (Juergensmeyer 1993).

304 A similar problem presents itself regarding Wilkinson's argument: not all scholars agree that groups such as
 305 al Qaeda are fundamentally religious in nature (Rapoport 1984; Benjamin and Simon 2002; Bergen 2002; Kepel
 306 2006). 9 9 A second problem with Wilkinson's explanation is the substantial popular support al Qaeda enjoyed
 307 as a result of the sheer unpopularity of U.S. foreign policy in the Arab world. Furthermore, groups such as al
 308 Qaeda clearly engaged in a propaganda war in an effort to win popular support (Norton 2007b; Leuprecht et al.
 309 2010). This suggests that the group is concerned with a constituency of sorts, even if it is not an electorate in
 310 the traditional sense of the word.

311 For instance, Wilkinson conflates al Qaeda's religious motivation with the duty to kill Americans. But, of
 312 course, the two have nothing to do with one another. Bin Laden's justification for killing Americans is not
 313 the fatwa he issued, but the fact that the United States government has killed so many Muslims. The fatwa
 314 just represents the authority behind the proclamation (much like Bush put the authority of the United States'
 315 government behind the military's mandate in the war on terror). To say that al Qaeda kills Americans because
 316 it is religiously motivated to do so is comparable to claiming that America kills "terrorists" because they are
 317 Muslim.

318 Likewise, Hoffman conflates apocalyptic vision with the fact that all life is expendable. However, a quick
 319 comparison of al Qaeda and Islamic State reveals otherwise. While both groups share the same religion and
 320 apocalyptic vision, al Qaeda demonstrates a basic concern for all Muslim lives (as demonstrated in bin Laden's
 321 concern over Zarqawi's slaughtering of them), and IS only demonstrates disdain for apostate Muslims. Neither
 322 group considers all life expendable. If they did, who would populate the Islamic caliphate that both groups share
 323 as a strategic objective?

324 Others, such as Kurtulus (2011) and Brown and Rassler(2013), argue that religion is just one of several factors
 325 to consider regarding new terrorism (e.g. horizontal organizational structure, the desire to use weapons of mass
 326 destruction, indiscriminate killing of civilians, etc.). Sedgwick (2004) contends that the confusion over whether a
 327 group is fundamentally religious or secular derives from the fact that religious terrorists employ political tactics
 328 toward the attainment of a more far-reaching religious goal. While Sedgwick's approach purports to distinguish
 329 between a group's strategic objectives and its behavior, it still does not explain why some individuals and groups
 330 who subscribe to a particular ideology resort to violence to achieve their ends while others do not.

331 So is new terrorism new? Duyvesteyn (2004) argues that it is not. After discussing the supposedly new
 332 aspects of terrorism such as its transnational nature, religious ideology and indiscriminate targeting of victims,
 333 Duyvesteyn maintains that there are more similarities than differences between the old terrorism and the new.

334 Similarly, Juergensmeyer (2003) suggests that rather than representing something new, religious terrorism is
 335 just old terrorism wrapped in a new package. Furthermore, Juergensmeyer views religious terrorism as a public
 336 act performed out of desperation.

337 A Thorn by any other Name: Definitions, Typologies, and Various Explanations for Terrorism However, the
 338 main problem as I see it, is the descriptive nature of the theories themselves. While both theories essentially
 339 describe the terrorism that they identify, each of them also ignores the strategic objective of the actors involved
 340 and focuses entirely on motive.

341 8 (H)

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343 Religion simply offers a framework that justifies such violence, and it provides the symbols that communities
 344 can rally around. Juergensmeyer offers a compelling argument that accounts for the rise of religious terrorism in
 345 predominantly desperate communities.

346 However, Juergensmeyer does not explain religious terrorism of the 9/11 variety. If religious terrorism is
 347 essentially a public outcry engaged in by the politically marginalized and disadvantaged poor, how does one
 348 explain the 19 educated, financially well-off young men who perpetrated the 9/11 attacks? Even more importantly,

349 what explanation accounts for the numerous (and equally religious) desperate communities around the globe that
350 do not engage in religious terrorism? Furthermore, Juergensmeyer's explanation does not consider the religious
351 violence perpetrated by groups such as Islamic State, al Shabaab and Boko Haram that are clearly motivated by
352 the takfiri doctrine, not inequality.

353 The debate surrounding old and new terrorism is largely symptomatic of the lack of cohesion in the field of
354 terrorism studies as a whole, as well as the inclination to lump disparate groups together under a common label.

355 As becomes evident, the current lack of consensus within the field of terrorism studies makes the task of defining
356 terrorism by ideology difficult. Even more difficult is the challenge of distinguishing between secular terrorism and
357 religious terrorism, if such a distinction can in fact be made at all. The complex network of terrorist organizations
358 with its diverse membership and cobwebs of alliances makes such an undertaking problematic (Arquilla et al.
359 1999).

360 **9 f) Terrorism Defined by the Actor**

361 This definition of terrorism is usually applied to national separatist groups and other non-state actors (Reinares
362 2005). The main justification for this approach is that focus on the actor results in less focus on the behavior-which
363 tends to produce normative analyses (Lizardo 2015).

364 The most well-known defender of this definition is the U.S. State Department. Title 22 of the United
365 States Code defines domestic terrorism as "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against
366 non-combatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience."
367 Alternatively, the U.S. State Department defines international terrorism as "terrorism involving citizens or the
368 territory of more than one country" (U.S. Department of State 2006). As is evident, both definitions exclude
369 states.

370 One main problem with this approach is that it has led to considerable selection bias. The actor-based definition
371 largely singles out non-state actors and ignores state terrorism altogether (Blakeley 2007; Jackson 2008). As
372 Richardson (2005) argues, those who adhere to the actor-based definition (such as various U.S. administrations)
373 largely only consider rogue states as culpable of acts of terrorism and even then, usually only through their
374 terrorist clients such as with Iran and Hezbollah. Of course, this is completely absurd as many of the actions of
375 the United States during the Cold War alone plainly demonstrate (Gareau 2004). In fact, the concept of nuclear
376 deterrence was based entirely on the threat to annihilate mass numbers of noncombatant civilians in order to
377 restrain the actions of the two superpowers.

378 While the exclusion of state terrorism from the definition naturally leads to the exclusion of states from the
379 study of terrorism, other scholars (who recognize that states can and do commit acts of terrorism) still choose
380 not to focus on states in their research. This decision may be for financial reasons as states may or may not be
381 willing to finance research on their own atrocities (Hayner 2001), for theoretical reasons as states have considerably
382 greater resources at their disposal (as well as greater accountability) and thus are difficult to compare with most
383 non-state actors (Pape 2003), or for reasons of preference or academic interest ??Laqueur 1977b; Ganor 1998; Carr
384 2003; Black 2004; Bergesen and Lizardo 2004).

385 Perhaps the most obvious reason for excluding states from the study of terrorism is the subjective nature
386 of the term itself. No actor considers itself a "terrorist" or a "terrorist organization," nor do their supporters.
387 For instance, a significant number of Palestinians do not consider attacks against Israeli citizens to be terrorism
388 because they perceive Israel as their enemy (Saad-Ghorayeb 2002).

389 Given that terrorism is often defined by one's enemies, Hüsse and Spencer (2008) suggest a discourse-centered
390 perspective rather than an actorcentered approach. Zulaika and Douglass (1996), on the other hand, claim that
391 society actually empowers those who engage in terrorism by its discourse. Similarly, Stokes (2009) argues that
392 CTS actually places too much emphasis on discourse and tends to ignore other geopolitical factors such as the
393 world's economic dependence on oil, the strategic value of military bases and the West's desire to maintain
394 hegemony by controlling resource-rich areas of the planet. Hence actors are important. Dalacoura (2009) takes
395 a third path, suggesting that much of what is called state-terrorism is actually an emotive or polemic distortion
396 of the facts. She advises us to build stronger links between area studies and terrorism studies to take advantage
397 of the former's areaspecific expertise and the latter's theoretical capacity. Likewise, English (2010) distinguishes
398 between analytical shortcomings and real practical problems involving terrorism and observes that the latter
399 are usually related to the former. Noting that our analytical shortcomings involve shortsightedness and an even
400 shorter historical memory, English recommends that the West re-think its policies of ill-conceived legislative
401 measures and overwhelming but counterproductive military solutions.

402 Finally, the perception of Western duplicity (condemning others for the very acts it does itself) and
403 ethnocentrism shared by much of the rest of world is a credibility problem for those who would attempt to
404 deny, ignore or otherwise downplay state terrorism in the current political climate of the Global War on Terror
405 (Lewis 1990; Kagan 2004; Byman 2005; Kohut 2005; Carothers 2006). Grosscup (2006) maintains that a problem
406 with the actor-based definition is the perceived hypocrisy in labeling incidents such as the 9/11 attacks acts of
407 terrorism while calling the intentional bombing of entire cities acts of war when the strategic objectives in both
408 are clearly to coerce political concessions from a target government. Similar criticism has been raised against
409 counterterrorism measures that fail to differentiate between the innocent and the guilty and are, in fact, intended

9 F) TERRORISM DEFINED BY THE ACTOR

410 to terrorize an entire population into submission (Goodin 2013). This is particularly relevant in Africa "where
411 counter-terrorism policies would have us defend the predatory African state" ??Solomon 2015, p. 221).

412 Still others criticize the tendency to ignore acts of terrorism committed by groups supported by Western
413 states such as anti-Castro groups, the Contras, certain Afghan and Iraqi groups, and factions in Mozambique and
414 Angola while focusing on acts of terrorism committed by groups that have not secured such support (Krasner
415 1999; ??charya 2007).

416 Of course, not all terrorism research ignores state actors. For instance, Stohl (2004) concludes that states
417 resort to acts of terrorist violence when it is the most efficient and cost-effective means of governance at their
418 disposal. Likewise, Neumann and Smith (2005) clearly contend that states have historically relied upon the tactic
419 of terrorism when it served their purposes.

420 To sum it up, the main difficulty involved in defining terrorism by the actor is the fact that no group considers
421 itself to be a terrorist organization, while most groups are quick to label their opponents as terrorists. States
422 can be especially culpable in this regard. Because of this reality, definitions of terrorism based on the actor
423 tend to lead to selection bias, discrepancies in data collection and controversies over whether a given event
424 was an act of terrorism or a legitimate act of war. For instance, Dishman(2001) has taken an interesting look
425 at the relationship between terrorist organizations and criminal organizations. Dishman concludes that while
426 terrorists engage in illegal activities and may even collaborate with criminal organizations, terrorists are driven
427 by a particular objective, not just the pursuit of profit. Ruby (2002) asserts a similar point when he distinguishes
428 between criminal acts that are aimed at the achievement of a personal objective and acts of terrorism intended
429 to induce a government to make political concessions.

430 Jamieson (2005) observes a somewhat clearer distinction between terrorism and organized crime. She argues
431 that terrorists are revolutionaries bent on the overthrow of the existing political order, while organized crime
432 tends to be conservative and seeks to maintain the status quo. However, Jamieson's definition flies in the face
433 of Neumann and Smith's (2005) terrorism/insurgency dichotomy that suggests insurgents want to overthrow the
434 existing regime whereas acts of terrorism are intended to coerce the regime into making certain concessions.

435 Beyond the academic interest in determining between criminal acts and acts of terrorism, there are practical
436 advantages as well. Clearly distinguishing one from the other affords policy makers a more accurate perspective
437 of the severity of the problem and allows them to properly prioritize security initiatives. For instance, between
438 1965 and 2001, 64,246 Americans were murdered by other Americans in New York alone (Disaster Center 2010).
439 This constitutes an annual average of 2,471 deaths for the 26 year period leading up to and including 2001. When
440 one compares this to the 3,031 people killed in the 9/11 attacks, it doesn't minimize the attacks; but it does
441 demonstrate that crime is a statistically more persistent challenge than terrorism.

442 In addition to the body of scholarship attempting to differentiate between terrorism and crime, there is also
443 an abundance of literature that focuses on the similarities between terrorism and war (Hyams 1975 actors as
444 fundamentally part of a larger political/military struggle. Likewise, Silke(1996) defines terrorism as nothing
445 more than a subset of guerrilla war, while Wilkinson (1974) categorizes terrorism as a tactic used by guerrillas.
446 Bergen (2006) argues that the 1993 attack on the World Trade Center cost only a few thousand dollars while
447 the 9/11 attacks cost roughly \$200,000, making terrorism a very inexpensive class of warfare. Morag (2006)
448 agrees that, from a purely economic standpoint, terrorism is an extremely costeffective variety of warfare for the
449 terrorists. Morag adds that, in addition to fear, chaos and loss of human life, terrorism can also cause substantial
450 economic damage to the target community. For example, WWII cost the United States roughly \$296 billion (in
451 1941-1945 dollars). The attacks of September 11, however, cost the U.S. approximately \$27.2 billion in direct
452 losses and nearly \$500 billion in indirect losses (lost income, increased insurance premiums, increased defense
453 budgets, etc.). Even considering the difference between the value of money in 1941 and 2011, the fact that an
454 organization could cause that much damage with such a minimal investment of resources (19 men and \$200,000)
455 is truly staggering.

456 Finally, Scharf (2004) defines terrorism as the peacetime equivalent of war crimes. Still, these perspectives
457 offer no more of a consensus on the difference between terrorism and war than exists on the difference between
458 terrorism and crime. Given the rapidly changing face of warfare today and the increasing number of non-state
459 actors involved in warfare, it will only become increasingly more difficult to parse out acts of terrorism from acts
460 of war. Neumann and Smith (2005, p. 572) make this very point, and they insist that any credible theoretical
461 framework must address terrorism "as a bona fide method for distributing military means to fulfill the ends of
462 policy."

463 Still others distinguish between terrorism as an incident and terrorism as a process. For instance, Rapoport
464 (1971) defines assassination as an incident but terrorism as a process as it requires a lifetime of dedication and
465 discipline. Of course, one could make the opposing argument that it takes a great deal more discipline to become
466 a skilled marksman than it does to strap on some explosives and push a plunger.

467 Terrorism as a tool, on the other hand, views terrorism as a strategic means to a desired outcome. Kruglanski
468 and Fishman suggest that approaching terrorism from this perspective allows experts to focus on countering the
469 strategy of terrorism without having to necessarily understand the mindset of the terrorist. However, as Harris
470 (2006) makes clear, the strategic approach requires an understanding of an actor's preferences and therefore, an
471 understanding of their mindset.

472 **10 II.**

473 **11 Conclusion**

474 This article has addressed the many challenges faced by academics and policymakers alike when attempting to
475 define terrorism, categorize it, and identify its causes. When defining terrorism, it is absolutely crucial to keep
476 in mind that terrorism is a strategy to be countered, and not an enemy to be defeated. Terrorism is just one
477 of several means employed to obtain a desired political end. As such, it can be carried out in a wide variety
478 of ways and by a wide variety of actors including states (Rummel 1998). As Neumann and Smith (2005) aptly
479 contest, terrorism is not always a weapon of the weak, nor is it always employed by illegitimate actors. However,
480 Washington's GWOT and the aid it offers those who join it has greatly exacerbated the misuse of the term to
481 denounce one's political opponents. The obvious cure for this malady is to remove the stigma associated with
482 the label "terrorist" and to arrive at a common, objective definition. This article has argued that the best way
483 to achieve this goal is to eliminate those subjective elements of the definition that lend to the politicization of
484 the term—namely those that focus on the actor, the ideology of the actor and the deed itself. A Thorn by any
485 other Name: Definitions, Typologies, and Various Explanations for Terrorism

486 In addition to the difficulties associated with defining terrorism by the deed and distinguishing it from other
487 phenomena such as acts of war and crime, there are also challenges involved in analyzing acts of terrorism. For
488 example, Kruglanski and Fishman (2006) contrast terrorism as a syndrome with terrorism as a tool. According
489 to Kruglanski and Fishman, terrorism as a syndrome suggests that terrorists can be identified apart from non-
490 terrorists. It views terrorism as the product of certain personality traits or predispositions of character. To
491 be useful, however, this understanding of terrorism presupposes the ability to psychologically profile terrorists;
which as stated above, is dubious. ^{1 2 3 4}



Figure 1:

492

¹ A Thorn by any other Name: Definitions, Typologies, and Various Explanations for Terrorism © 2018 Global Journals

² A Thorn by any other Name: Definitions, Typologies, and Various Explanations for Terrorism

³ © 2018 Global Journals

⁴ Mujahidin (sometimes transliterated as mujahideen) is plural for mujahid, meaning one who struggles (Bassiouni 2007).8 Representative of Burnett and Whyte's (2003) concept of 'embedded expertise' is Huntington's clash of civilization theory. The phrase was originally coined by Bernard Lewis (1990), and the theory resonated so well among various high ranking officials within the Bush administration that Lewis became quite influential in Washington (Frum 2003). In a 2002 article entitled, Time for Toppling, Lewis advocates regime change in Iraq. His advice was obviously taken seriously.

11 CONCLUSION

1

Element	22: Definitional Elements of Terrorism	% of responses
Violence, force		83.5
Political		65
Fear, terror emphasized		51
Threat		47
Psychological effects and (anticipated) reactions		41.5
Victim-target differentiation		37.5
Purposive, planned, systematic, organized action		32
Method of combat		30.5
Extra-normality, breach of accepted rules, without humanitarian constraints		
Coercion, extortion, induction of compliance		28
Publicity aspect		21.5
Arbitrariness		21
Civilians, non-combatants, neutrals, outsiders as victims		17.5
Intimidation		17
Innocence of victims emphasized		15.5
Group, movement, organization as perpetrator		14
Symbolic aspect, demonstration to others		13.5
Incalculability, unpredictability, unexpectedness of occurrence of violence	9	
Clandestine, covert nature		9
Repetitiveness, serial or campaign character of violence		7
Criminal		6
Demands made on third parties		4
Schmid and Jongman (1988).		
Based upon the results of this survey, Schmid		intimidation, coercion or propaganda is primarily sought (Schmid and Jongman 1988, p. 28). 2
proposed the following definition which incorporates 16		

of the 22 elements identified above:

Terrorism is an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi-) clandestine individual group or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons, whereby-in contrast to assassination-the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. The immediate human targets of violence are generally chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative or symbolic targets) from a target population, and

10

g) Terrorism Defined by the Deed

Jenkins (1974) points out that most terrorist activity involves six basic tactical operations: kidnappings; hostage-takings; bombings; hijackings;

[Note: 10]

Figure 3:

”The dropping of bombs on people-isn’t that terrorism?”

-Alice Walker The
Poor Young Farmer
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Figure 4:

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