

On Defining Terrorism: Text And Context – A Qualitative Approach

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Abstract

The present study reviews the definitions and classification of terrorism; with special reference to historical, ideological, sociological and psychological aspects as well as contexts. The meta-analysis and grounded theory are the analytical approaches of descriptive research which have been applied for reviewing and analyzing the variety of definitions and types of terrorism, used by different scholars, politicians, journalists, foreign policy makers, analysts, religious-scholars, historians, sociologists, psychologists. Different definitions and types of terrorism, having different perspectives and ideologies, have been analyzed and summarized in the light of grounded theory to establish a precise and comprehensive definition for the classificatory distribution of various types and perspectives of terrorism.

Keywords: Terrorism, Meta-Analysis, Grounded Theory, Qualitative approach

Introduction

The 21st century started with a novel epoch of terrorism, presenting the interweaved rudiments of globalization,¹ religious movement,² and the U.S.'s superpower eminence.³ 21st-century First terrorism is predicated on an effort to transmute the world,⁴ with an inspirational idea,⁵ a want for execution and answerability only to a divinity.⁶ Annals on terrorism point to the Muslims as particularly persuaded toward violent hostility with other ethnic communities,⁷ most remarkably the West.⁸

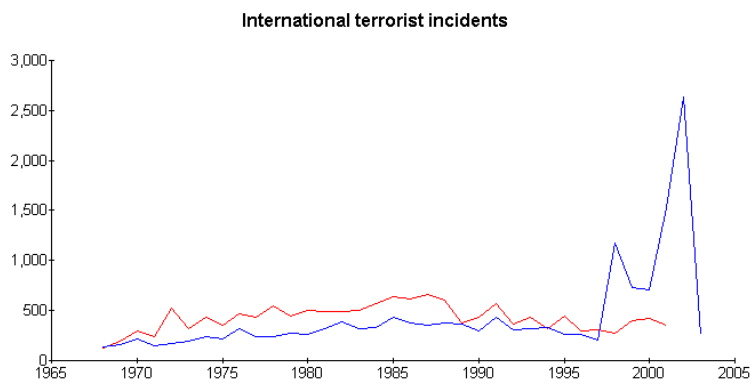
Even though terrorism as such is not an innovative phenomenon, the acts of 9/11 raised it on the list of topmost priority concerns of security in the West⁹ and simultaneously the revived research interest in the area of the area.¹⁰ Likewise, as the Euro barometer 75 public belief surveys done by the European

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Commission disclose, that EU nationals are also worried about terrorism and they recognize it as one of the foremost problems faced by the European Union.¹¹ The augmented concern over terrorism generally has also enhanced the concern about new means and forms of terrorism.¹²

The U.S. Department of State figures that there were 3000 incidences of terrorism; with 10000 injured; and 4500 fatalities by 2004, across the globe by international terrorists.¹³



Source: U.S. RAND/MIPT, RAND Terrorism Chronology Database and RAND-MIPT Terrorism Incident Database (updated 6 May 2013).



Source: U.S. Department of State data, blue indicates RAND/MIPT data (updated 6 May 2013).



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Before the 9/11 attacks on WTC and the Pentagon, peace psychology has been interested in international themes of peace, conflict and violence primarily focusing on conflicts outside the borders of the United States; Paying primary attention to Palestine and Israel, Bosnia, Kosovo and Serbia, Northern Ireland, South Africa, Rwanda, Angola, India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. However, September 11 attacks drove international terrorism to the fore. Psychologists initiated to focus on the cause and effects of terrorism and establish a comprehensive definition.¹⁴

Terrorism is used to be described differently by diverse theorists. As a label for acts of violence, it reflects negatively on those who are labeled as terrorists. In this sense, the term terrorist is comparable to other insulting terms in the political vocabulary like racist, fascist or imperialist.¹⁵

As of 1983, the US State Department (2000) has used United States Code Title 22, Section 2656f (d), to define terrorism. In the introduction of *Patterns of Global Terrorism*, by US State Department, it is defined “politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually to influence an audience”.¹⁶

The very definition embraces three key criteria that differentiate it from other forms of violence. First, terrorism ought to be politically motivated like the intentions of the New York City and Washington DC terrorist are to influence US government policy on Middle East. Secondly, terrorist violence is directed at noncombatants. This form identifies terrorism as violence directed

towards civilians who are not prepared to defend against political violence (for example the recent attack on Marriott Pakistan). The State Departments' definition's third criterion is sub-national groups or clandestine agents commit terrorist attacks (like the 1986 U.S. bombing of Libya).¹⁷

Though the use of a word like terrorism, as a means of political insult is now widespread practice, yet, it is highly unsatisfactory from both a moral and a legal point of view. Language ought to be a tool for careful thinking. Not an instrument of propaganda.¹⁸ It is important to arrive at a clear definition of terrorism. Only then can we be certain of what is meant by the word, and to design laws to punish the terrorist.¹⁹

By looking at the uses of the term terrorism and at the acts of violence attributed to individual terrorists, terrorist groups, and terrorist organizations, it should be possible to find a precise definition. It is useful to examine the historical origin of the word terrorism before moving on to a clarification of its modern meaning. And to place acts of terrorism in the broader context of political actions and legal practice.²⁰

The basic purpose of terrorism is to produce terror in a target audience. A civilian population at large may be targeted, or police officers or government officials may be targeted to deter them from carrying out their duties.²¹ It is important, therefore, to look at the psychological dimension of terror. However, remarkably little of the literature on terrorism has paid much attention to terror as a state of mind. Only the recent literature has received some attention which deals with hostages' experience of being terrorized.

Methodology

Meta-Analysis

Meta-analysis is a generic term for all types of formal research literature review.²² It is an approach for summarizing the results of many studies which have investigated basically the same problem.²³ In fact, terminological confusion is not eased by the fact that Hunter and Schmidt's methods were originally labeled validity generalization, which is now considered to be a special application of meta-analysis. In Meta-analysis, specific procedures are delineated for finding, describing, classifying, and coding the research studies to be included in a review, and for analyzing study findings.²⁴

All social researchers systematically collect and analyze empirical evidence to understand and explain social life. Qualitative and quantitative modes of research differ in several ways, but in other ways they are complementary. Qualitative researchers rarely use the tools of quantitative research; such as variables, reliability, statistics, hypotheses, replication, and scales.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is “a qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived theory about a phenomenon”²⁵ and it is a widely used approach in qualitative research. The purpose of grounded theory is to build a theory that is faithful to the evidence. It is a method for discovering new theory. In it the researcher compares unlike phenomena with a view towards learning similarities.

Application of Grounded Theory on Definitions

Definitions	Open Codes	Axial Codes	Selective Codes
1. “The use of violence against constitutional democracies considered as the only way to expose these regimes’ expressive nature”. ²⁶	Violence, constitutional, democracies repressive nature	Violence, constitutional democracies	Revolutionary terrorism
2. “The policy of using acts inspires terror as a method of ruling or of conducting political opposition.” ²⁷	Policy, inspire, terror, conduct, political opposition	Policy, inspire, political	General phenomenon of terror
3. “The extreme force or the use of force on the behalf of racism and militant nationalism” ²⁸	Force, extreme, racism, militant nationalism	Racism, extreme, militant nationalism	Far- Right extremism
4. “Terrorism is an intense, overpowering fear” ²⁹	Intense, overpowering fear	Overpowering fear	Terror
5. Terrorism is a tactic or technique by means of which a violent act or the threat thereof is used for the prime purpose of creating overwhelming fear for coercive purposes. ³⁰	Tactic, violent act, purpose	Tactic, prime purpose, coercive purpose	Terrorism is 9 technique
6. “A violence of the group to handle publicly aims, targeted	Violence, one issue, publicly aims,	Violence, one issue, publicly aims	Single issue group terrorism

technocrats and businessmen ³¹	technocrat, businessmen		
7. “ Terrorism is a form of political violence, directed at government but often involving ordinary citizens whose chief aim is to create a climate of fear as which the aims of terrorist will be granted by the country in question” ³²	Form, political, violence, ordinary, citizens, climate, fear	Political violence citizens.	Political terrorism
8. On October 25, 1984, George Shultz, the Secretary of State of USA while speaking at the New York Avenue gave the following points in his definitions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terrorism is the form of political violence. • Terrorism is a threat of modern western civilization. • iii) Terrorism is a menace to western moral values 	Political violence, threat western utilization manacle, values	Threat, western, civilization menial, values	Clash of civilization
9. “The use of affective power within state and concerned with sympathy in an other country for destructive purposes” ³³	Affective power, within state, sympathy, an other country	Affective power, within state, sympathy	Domestic vs. international terrorism
10. “There is no question about our ability to use force when and where it is needed to counter terrorism” ³⁴	No question, ability, force, counter, terrorism	No question, force, terrorism	Use force to counter terrorism
11. “Systematic violence in the furtherance of political aims, often by small guerilla group” ³⁵	Systematic, violence, political aims, small guerilla, groups	Violence, political, aims, small, group	Systematic violence is terrorism
12. “ A violence spread by both government and non- government has intimidated and terrorized civilian populations” ³⁶	Violence both, government non-government, against, population	Violence, both governments, against, population	State vs. non-state terrorism
13. “Peacetime	Peace time,	War crimes	Philosophy of

equivalents of war crimes ³⁷	equivalents, war, crimes	equitant peace time	terrorism
14. “Politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually to influence an audience”	Premeditated political, violence, against, non, combatant, targets	Premeditated, violence, non, combatant	Premeditated violence is terrorism
15. Terrorism is based on clashes on civilizations is the surest safeguard against World War. ³⁸	Clashes, civilizations, greatest threat, world peace, world war	Clashes, civilizations threat world peace	Clash of civilization is terrorism
16. “A slow war or attrition on insolated security forces unit by small squads, on the other hand urban organizations are more managerial and financial” ³⁹	Slow war, attrition, security forces, small squads, urban, organizations	War, attrition small squads, urban organization	Urban vs. rural terrorism
17. “We have always opposed terrorism. But terrorism is one thing and a national struggle against occupation is another. We are against terrorism. Nevertheless, we support the struggle against occupation waged by national liberation movements” ⁴⁰	Terrorism not, national, struggle, against occupation	National struggle	Nationalist terrorism
18. Contributes the illegitimate use of force to achieve a political objective when innocent people are targeted. ⁴¹	Contribution illegitimate, use political objective	Illegitimate, use, force, terrorism	Illegitimate force terrorism
19. A strategy of violence designed to promote desired outcomes by instilling fear in the public at large. ⁴²	Strategy, designed, promote, outcomes, fear, public	Designed, strategy, outcomes. Fear	Violence to achieve outcomes is terrorism
20. The use or threatened use of force designed to bring about political change. ⁴³	Use, threat, political, change	Threat use, political change	Revolutionary terrorism
21. The deliberate, systematic murder, maiming, and menacing of the innocent to inspire	Deliberate, murder, innocent, fear, Political,	Murder, innocent, fear, political, terrorism evil	Systematic murder is called terrorism

fear in order to gain political ends. Terrorism is intrinsically evil, necessarily evil, and wholly evil. ⁴⁴	terrorism evil		
22. “Strong desired of sweeping change and are prepared to inflict a high death toll to achieve it by religious activist” ⁴⁵	Strong, desire, sweeping change, inflict, high death, tool, religious activist	Desire, change, high death religious activists	Religious extremism
23. <i>International terrorism is the threat or use of violence for political purposes when;</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Such action is intended to influence the attitude and behavior of a target group wider than its immediate victim and</i> • <i>ii) Its ramifications transcend national boundaries.</i>⁴⁶ 	International, threat, use violating attitude, ramifications	International, threat use, attitude, ramification	Use of violence is called international terrorism

Conclusion

The definition proposes here states: “terrorism is the international use of or threat to use violence against civilians or against civilian targets, in order to attain political aims”. The definition is established on the following three important elements based upon grounded theory:

- The essence of the activity is the use of or threat to use, violence. According to this definition, an activity that does not involve violence or a threat of violence will not be defined as terrorism (including non-violent protest strikes, peaceful demonstration, tax revolts, etc.)
- The aim, of the activity is always political-namely, the goal is to attain political objectives; changing the regime, changing the people in power, changing social or economic policies, etc. In the absence of a political aim, the activity in quest will not be defined as terrorism. A violent activity against civilians that has no political aim is, at most, an act of criminal delinquency, a felony, or simply an act of insanity unrelated to terrorism. Some

scholars tend to add ideological or religious aims to the list of political aims. The advantage of this definition, however, is that it is short and exhaustive as possible. The concept of political aim is sufficiently broad to include these goals as well. The motivation-whether ideological, religious, or something else- behind the political objective is irrelevant for the purpose of defining terrorist.

- The targets of terrorism are civilians. Terrorism is thus distinguished from other types of political violence (guerrilla warfare, civil insurrection, etc.). Terrorism exploits the relative vulnerability of the civilian “underbelly” the tremendous anxiety, and the intense media reaction evoked by attacks against civilian targets. The proposed definition emphasizes that terrorism is not the result of an accidental injury inflicted on a civilian or a group of civilian who stumbled into an area of violent political activity, but stresses that this is an act purposely directed against civilian. Hence, the term “terrorism” should not be ascribed to collateral damage to civilians used as human shields or to cover military activity or installation, if such damage is incurred in an attack originally aimed against a military target, In this case, the responsibility for civilian casualties is incumbent upon whoever used them as shields.

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