

# **TERRORISM IN AMERICA**

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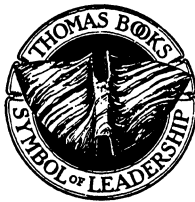
Professor Kushner's writings on terrorism have appeared in academic, professional, and trade publications such as *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, *Counterterrorism & Security International*, and *Security Management*. His most recent book is *The Future of Terrorism: Violence in the New Millennium* (1998). He also writes a monthly column on aviation security for *Airport Press*.

# TERRORISM IN AMERICA

*A Structured Approach to  
Understanding the Terrorist Threat*

*By*

HARVEY W. KUSHNER, PH.D.



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CIP

***FOR THE GIRLS IN MY LIFE***

***Sara  
Meredith Hope  
Patches  
Candy***



## PREFACE

Most books devoted to the study of terrorism avoid discussions that require the author to make a call about some event that has not been categorized by the authorities as a terrorist incident. Sometimes, social scientists are unwilling to interject their own opinions for fear of being labeled biased. They would rather let some federal agency tell them what is a terrorist event. At other times, these same social scientists hide behind a morass of minutia about, for example, some terrorist organization. Their admittedly interesting descriptive analyses do little to further the understanding of today's terrorism. At still other times, they undertake abstract quantitative analyses that wind up showcasing the method, rather than explaining terrorism. Besides, can data pertaining to the number of people killed or injured by a terrorist attack be added and subtracted in the same way demographers crunch numbers? And how does one compare the World Trade Center bombing that killed six and injured many more with the recorded act of a radical animal rights terrorist who scribbled some graffiti on the wall of a butcher shop? In both cases, the answer is you cannot.

In this work, I have intentionally avoided descriptions of some past terrorist incidents and opted instead to stress the present. This is not a sourcebook for looking up everything you ever wanted to know about terrorism but were afraid to ask. I have also purposely stayed away from using tables and graphs to compare terrorist incidents across different time periods. Of course, some might disagree with my omissions. With caveats in full display, I ask these critics to forgive these omissions and to consider my structured approach to understanding the current terrorist threat. In this way, the reader will come to know the evil within—terrorism in America.

H. W. K.





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To Meredith, my beautiful and talented daughter, may she always be Merry Hope. My significant other, Sara, was always there to listen to my explanation of why a certain event was an act of terrorism even though the politicians were saying something else. Her advice was always taken. Her support and love are most appreciated. My father, Albert, taught me to bring politics to the dinner table. As I grow older, I better understand his plan. Love ya, Pop. Last, but certainly not least, I thank my feline companions, Patches and Candy. Both gave up comfortable spots on the sofa to keep me company atop my computer keyboard. My thanks, Girls, for allowing the mouse to live long enough for me to finish this project.



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# **TERRORISM IN AMERICA**





## Chapter 1

# TERRORISM: THE CONCEPT

### THE SEARCH FOR THE PERFECT DEFINITION

Many authors would agree that it is difficult to define terrorism (see, e.g., Atkins, 1992; Combs, 1997; Kidder, 1993; Sadler & Winters, 1996; Sederberg, 1993; Vetter & Perlstein, 1991; White, 1991). So did Alex Schmid, who in a comprehensive review of the literature identified 22 elements that appeared in more than 100 competing definitions of terrorism provided by writers between 1936 and 1983. In an effort to summarize, if not synthesize, Schmid developed a definition of terrorism that incorporated 16 of these elements:

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 victims of violence are generally chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative or symbolic targets) from a target population, and serve as message generators. Threat- and violence-based communication processes between terrorist (organization), (imperiled) victims, and main target (audience(s)), turning it into a target of terror, a target of demands, or a target of attention, depending on whether intimidation, coercion, or propaganda is primarily sought. (1983, p. 28)

One glimpse at this lengthy definition indicates that Schmid's Herculean effort neither solved the definitional problem nor ended the proliferation of definitions. Actually, by the time Schmid published a second edition of *Political Terrorism: A Research Guide to Concepts, Theories, Data Bases, and Literature* in 1988, more definitions had been proffered, ironically, in part in response to a survey on the definitional problem he conducted.<sup>1</sup>

Brian Jenkins (1985) best represents all those authors who could easily obfuscate a concept with a morass of verbiage but who instead choose to define terrorism in the most simplistic of terms. Terrorism,

wrote this erudite terrorism expert, is the threatened use of force designed to bring about political change. Walter Laqueur, in his widely read and extraordinarily detailed *Age of Terrorism* (1987), offers a similar definition. Laqueur writes that terrorism constitutes the illegitimate use of force against innocent people in order to achieve a political objective. These two well-respected terrorism experts are certainly aware of the problems with simple definitions. They would argue, however, that to move beyond them would not prove fruitful because the concept itself is so controversial.

Schmid's definition given above is a perfect example of a complex definition of terrorism. The definition's length, as well as complexity, makes it exceedingly hard to follow. Other authors as diverse as U.S. Department of State analyst Thomas P. Thornton (1964), social scientist Martha Crenshaw (1983), and senior criminologist with the Australian Institute of Criminology in Canberra, Australia, Grant Wardlaw (1989) are also partial to detailed definitions. Consider, for example, Wardlaw's definition:

Political terrorism is the use, or threat of use, of violence by an individual or a group, whether acting for or in opposition to established authority, when such action is designed to create extreme anxiety and/or fear-inducing effects in a target group larger than the immediate victims with the purpose of coercing that group into acceding to the political demands of the perpetrators. (p. 16)

Certainly, this definition is not as complex as Schmid's. Still, one would not call it succinct.

Other authors skirt the simplicity/complexity issue only to create definitions that have their own shortcomings. Consider, for example, definitions of terrorism that concentrate on the use of motivational violence to achieve a political end. Although they manage to distinguish between terrorism and criminal activity, they do not distinguish between a terrorist hijacking and a military battle. Authorities whose works have a tendency to conflate terrorism with a variety of other forms of coercion include Brian Crozier (*Terrorist Activity*, 1974) and James Lodge (1981).

Neil Livingstone (Livingstone & Arnold, 1986) and Benjamin Netanyahu (1986; 1995) offer yet another direction in defining terrorism. These authors, notwithstanding their well-documented political positions, claim that terrorism represents a cheap and effective weapon of warfare against the United States and Western civilization

itself. Gerardo Jorge Schamis (1980) takes a somewhat less ethnocentric position and argues that terrorism now constitutes a new form of warfare that has been sponsored by underdeveloped countries to fight against militarily stronger ones. And for the noted French terrorism expert Gerard Chaliand (1987), terrorism is a natural outgrowth of the anticolonial struggle; it is merely another weapon of revolutionary guerrillas in their campaign of psychological warfare. Donald Hanle (1989) also links the theory of terrorism to warfare. For this career U.S. Air Force officer, terrorism is a form of war based on the manipulation of force to meet political objectives. All forms of terrorism, Hanle argues, employ force as a form of war.

Edward Herman (1983) and Jeffrey Ian Ross (1995) eschew the military approach to explaining terrorism in favor of defining terrorism in much the same way Hannah Arendt did in her classic *Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951). For Herman and Ross, terrorism is something a state does to its citizens to maintain political power, which for Arendt meant state control from the “cradle to the grave.” For others, like David Claridge (1996) and Roberta Goren (1984), terrorism is something defined and practiced by a state against people for a variety of reasons as diverse as struggles of liberation and pacifications of populations after annexation. Many proponents of this approach label the policies of Israeli, as well as of the former South African regime, terroristic. Noam Chomsky (1986) would even argue that the United States itself conducts terrorist activities against selected targets while attacking other countries for promoting terrorist activities. Although controversial, Chomsky’s viewpoint is shared by many radical academicians. Still others look toward the state and its agents to provide definitions of terrorism, an approach favored by Brent Smith (1994) in his informative *Terrorism in America: Pipe Bombs and Pipe Dreams*.

Probably the most widely used method of defining terrorism involves those authors who have tried to come to terms with the concept through writing about the psychological causes of terrorism. Some of these authors have created their psychological definitions through the study of individual terrorists (see, e.g., Cooper, 1977; Kellman, 1983; Morf, 1970; Post, 1984). Other authors have turned to the terrorist groups themselves (see, e.g., Clark, 1983; McCauley & Segal, 1987; Morf, 1970) or the region in which these terrorist groups operate for their theories (see, e.g., Ferracuti & Bruno, 1981; Heskin, 1984). Still other authors and theorists have developed broad psy-

chological theories for explaining the causes of terrorism (see, e.g., Crenshaw, 1990; Gurr, 1970; Kaplan, 1978; Ross, 1996; Weinberg & Davis, 1989).

### THE SEARCH FOR THE PERFECT TYPOLOGY

Definitions are indeed important tools of social research, but they fail to capture the complexity of the dynamics and consequences of terrorist acts. Typologies offer yet another approach. They allow for the concept of terrorism to be subdivided into related categories of some type of classification system.

One of the first to employ this approach was Paul Wilkinson, the noted Scottish scholar. In 1974, Wilkinson wrote that terrorism should be classified according to type of terrorist action: revolutionary terrorism, subrevolutionary terrorism, and repressive terrorism. *Revolutionary terrorism*, writes Wilkinson, is the use of "systematic tactics of terroristic violence with the objective of bringing about political revolution" (p. 36). Whereas revolutionary terrorism seeks total change, the second category in Wilkinson's typology, *subrevolutionary terrorism*, is terror used "for political motives other than revolution and governmental repression" (p. 38). Wilkinson's third category, *repressive terrorism*, is defined as "the systematic use of terroristic acts of violence for the purposes of suppressing, putting down, quelling, or restraining certain groups, individuals or forms of behaviour deemed to be undesirable by the oppressor" (p. 40).

About the same time that Wilkinson published *Political Terrorism*, J. Bowyer Bell (1975) settled on a sixfold classification scheme related to the motivation of the terrorist: psychotic, criminal, vigilante, endemic, authorized, and revolutionary. According to Bell, the *psychotic* terrorist's purpose was psychological gratification, the *criminal* sought profit, the *vigilante* wanted to retaliate, the *endemic* acted out of internal struggles, the *authorized* represented state repression, and the *revolutionary* aimed at bringing about change through fear. Frederick Hacker (1977), a psychiatrist, followed with a similar classification system for terrorists that is also the title of his popular book, *Crusaders, Criminals, and Crazies*.

The typologies of Wilkinson, Bell, and Hacker complement one another and have served as the basis for further classification in recent