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# Terrorism

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*"Terrorist" redirects here. For other uses, see [Terrorist \(disambiguation\)](#).*


It has been suggested that [Terror](#) be [merged](#) into this article or section. ([Discuss](#))

There is no universally agreed, legally binding, criminal law [definition of terrorism](#).<sup>[1][2]</sup> Common definitions of **terrorism** refer only to those violent acts which are intended to create fear (terror), are perpetrated for a religious, political or ideological goal, deliberately target or disregard the safety of [non-combatants](#) (civilians), and are committed by non-government agencies.<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup>

Some definitions also include acts of [unlawful](#) violence and war. The use of similar tactics by criminal organizations for [protection rackets](#) or to enforce a [code of silence](#) is usually not labeled terrorism though these same actions may be labeled terrorism when done by a politically motivated group.

The word "terrorism" is politically and emotionally charged,<sup>[3]</sup> and this greatly compounds the difficulty of providing a precise definition. Studies have found over 100 definitions of "terrorism".<sup>[4][5]</sup> The concept of terrorism may itself be controversial as it is often used by state authorities to delegitimize political or other opponents,<sup>[6]</sup> and potentially legitimize the state's own use of armed force against opponents (such use of force may itself be described as "terror" by opponents of the state).<sup>[6][7]</sup>

Terrorism has been practiced by a broad array of political organizations for furthering their objectives. It has been practiced by both right-wing and left-wing political parties, [nationalistic](#) groups, religious groups, revolutionaries, and ruling governments.<sup>[8]</sup> An abiding characteristic is the indiscriminate use of violence against [noncombatants](#) for the purpose of gaining publicity for a group, cause, or individual.<sup>[9]</sup>

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## Origin of term

*See also: [Terror and State terrorism](#)*

"Terror" comes from the [Latin verb](#) *terrere* meaning "to frighten".<sup>[10]</sup> The *terror cimbricus* was a panic and state of emergency in Rome in response to the approach of warriors of the [Cimbri](#) tribe in 105 BC. The [Jacobins](#) cited this precedent when imposing a [Reign of Terror](#) during the French Revolution.<sup>[11][12]</sup> After the Jacobins lost power, the word "terrorist" became a term of abuse.<sup>[6]</sup> Although the Reign of Terror was imposed by a government, in modern times "terrorism" usually refers to the killing of innocent people<sup>[13]</sup> by a private group in such a way as to create a media spectacle.<sup>[14]</sup> This meaning can be traced back to [Sergey Nechayev](#), who described himself as a "terrorist".<sup>[15]</sup> Nechayev founded the Russian terrorist group "People's Retribution" (Народная расправа) in 1869.

In November 2004, a [United Nations Secretary General](#) report described terrorism as any act "intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants with the purpose of intimidating a population or compelling a government or an international organization to do or abstain from doing any act".<sup>[16]</sup>

## Definition

*Main article: [Definition of terrorism](#)*

The [definition of terrorism](#) has proved controversial. Various legal systems and government agencies use different [definitions of terrorism in their national legislation](#). Moreover, the International community has been slow to formulate a universally agreed, legally binding definition of this crime. These difficulties arise from the fact that the term "terrorism" is politically and emotionally charged.<sup>[17]</sup> In this regard, Angus Martyn, briefing the Australian Parliament, stated that "The international community has never succeeded in developing an accepted comprehensive definition of terrorism. During the 1970s and 1980s, the United Nations attempts to define the term foundered mainly due to differences of opinion between various members about the use of violence in the context of conflicts over national liberation and [self-determination](#)."<sup>[1]</sup>

These divergences have made it impossible for the [United Nations](#) to conclude a [Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism](#) that incorporates a single, all-encompassing, legally binding, criminal law definition terrorism.<sup>[18]</sup> Nonetheless, the [international community](#) has adopted a series of [sectoral conventions](#) that define and criminalize various types of terrorist activities. Moreover, since

[Occitan](#)[Plattdüütsch](#)[Polski](#)[Português](#)[Română](#)[Русиньскый](#)[Русский](#)[Саха тыла](#)[Shqip](#)[Sicilianu](#)[Simple English](#)[Slovenčina](#)[Slovenščina](#)[Српски / Srpski](#)[Srpskohrvatski /](#)[Српскохрватски](#)[Suomi](#)[Svenska](#)[Tagalog](#)[Türkçe](#)[Українська](#)[Tiếng Việt](#)[Walon](#)[Winaray](#)[粵語](#)[Žemaitėška](#)[中文](#)

1994, the [United Nations General Assembly](#) has repeatedly condemned terrorist acts using the following political description of terrorism: "Criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for political purposes are in any circumstance unjustifiable, whatever the considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or any other nature that may be invoked to justify them."<sup>[19]</sup>

[Bruce Hoffman](#), a well-known scholar, has noted that:

It is not only individual agencies within the same governmental apparatus that cannot agree on a single definition of terrorism. Experts and other long-established scholars in the field are equally incapable of reaching a [consensus](#). In the first edition of his magisterial survey, "Political terrorism: A Research Guide," Alex Schmid devoted more than a hundred pages to examining more than a hundred different definition of terrorism in a effort to discover a broadly acceptable, reasonably comprehensive explication of the word. Four years and a second edition later, Schimd was no closer to the goal of his quest, conceding in the first sentence of the revised volume that the "search for an adequate definition is still on" Walter Laqueur despaired of defining terrorism in both editions of his monumental work on the subject, maintaining that it is neither possible to do so nor worthwhile to make the attempt."<sup>[20]</sup>

Nonetheless, Hoffman himself believes it is possible to identify some key characteristics of terrorism. He proposes that:

By distinguishing terrorists from other types of criminals and terrorism from other forms of crime, we come to appreciate that terrorism is :

- ineluctably [political](#) in aims and [motives](#)
- violent – or, equally important, threatens [violence](#)
- designed to have far-reaching psychological repercussions beyond the immediate victim or target
- conducted by an organization with an identifiable [chain of command](#) or [conspiratorial cell structure](#) (whose members wear no [uniform](#) or identifying insignia) and
- perpetrated by a subnational group or [non-state](#) entity.<sup>[21]</sup>

A definition proposed by Carsten Bockstette at the [George C. Marshall Center for European Security Studies](#), underlines the psychological and tactical aspects of terrorism:

Terrorism is defined as political violence in an [asymmetrical conflict](#) that is designed to induce terror and psychic [fear](#) (sometimes indiscriminate) through the violent [victimization](#) and destruction of [noncombatant targets](#) (sometimes iconic symbols). Such acts are meant to send a message from an illicit clandestine organization. The purpose of terrorism is to exploit the [media](#) in order to achieve maximum attainable [publicity](#) as an amplifying force multiplier in order to influence the targeted audience(s) in order to reach short- and midterm [political](#) goals and/or desired long-term end states."<sup>[22]</sup>

Walter Laqueur, of the [Center for Strategic and International Studies](#), noted that "the only general characteristic of terrorism generally agreed upon is that terrorism involves violence and the threat of violence".<sup>[citation needed]</sup> This criterion alone does not produce, however, a useful definition, since it includes many violent acts not usually considered terrorism: [war](#), [riot](#), [organized crime](#), or even a simple [assault](#).<sup>[citation needed]</sup> Property destruction that does not endanger life is not usually considered a [violent crime](#),<sup>[according to whom?]</sup> but some have described property destruction by the [Earth Liberation Front](#)<sup>[23]</sup> and [Animal Liberation Front](#)<sup>[24]</sup> as violence and terrorism; see [eco-terrorism](#).

Terrorist attacks are usually carried out in such a way as to maximize the severity and length of the psychological impact.<sup>[25]</sup> Each act of terrorism is a "performance" devised to have an impact on

many large audiences. Terrorists also attack national symbols,<sup>[26]</sup> to show power and to attempt to shake the foundation of the country or society they are opposed to. This may negatively affect a government, while increasing the prestige of the given [terrorist organization](#) and/or [ideology](#) behind a terrorist act.<sup>[27]</sup>

Terrorist acts frequently have a political purpose.<sup>[28]</sup> Terrorism is a political tactic, like letter-writing or protesting, which is used by activists when they believe that no other means will effect the kind of change they desire.<sup>[*according to whom?*]</sup> The change is desired so badly that failure to achieve change is seen as a worse outcome than the deaths of civilians.<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup> This is often where the inter-relationship between [terrorism and religion](#) occurs. When a political struggle is integrated into the framework of a religious or "cosmic"<sup>[29]</sup> struggle, such as over the control of an ancestral homeland or holy site such as Israel and Jerusalem, failing in the political goal (nationalism) becomes equated with spiritual failure, which, for the highly committed, is worse than their own death or the deaths of innocent civilians.<sup>[30]</sup>

Very often, the victims of terrorism are targeted not because they are threats, but because they are specific "symbols, tools, animals or corrupt beings"<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup> that tie into a specific view of the world that the terrorists possess. Their suffering accomplishes the terrorists' goals of instilling fear, getting their message out to an audience or otherwise satisfying the demands of their often radical religious and political agendas.<sup>[31]</sup>

Some official, governmental definitions of terrorism use the criterion of the illegitimacy or unlawfulness of the act.<sup>[32]</sup><sup>[*non-primary source needed*]</sup> to distinguish between actions authorized by a government (and thus "lawful") and those of other actors, including individuals and small groups. Using this criterion, actions that would otherwise qualify as terrorism would not be considered terrorism if they were government sanctioned.<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup> For example, firebombing a city, which is designed to affect civilian support for a cause, would not be considered terrorism if it were authorized by a government.<sup>[*original research?*]</sup> This criterion is inherently problematic and is not universally accepted,<sup>[*attribution needed*]</sup> because: it denies the existence of [state terrorism](#);<sup>[33]</sup> the same act may or may not be classed as terrorism depending on whether its sponsorship is traced to a "legitimate" government; "legitimacy" and "lawfulness" are subjective, depending on the perspective of one government or another; and it diverges from the historically accepted meaning and origin of the term.<sup>[34][35][36][37]</sup>

Among the various definitions there are several that do not recognize the possibility of [legitimate use of violence](#) by civilians against an invader in an [occupied country](#).<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup> Other definitions would label as terrorist groups only the [resistance movements](#) that oppose an invader with violent acts that indiscriminately kill or harm civilians and non-combatants, thus making a distinction between lawful and unlawful use of violence.<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup> According to Ali Khan, the distinction lies ultimately in a [political](#) judgment.<sup>[38]</sup>

An associated, and arguably more easily definable, but *not equivalent* term is [violent non-state actor](#).<sup>[39]</sup> The semantic scope of this term includes not only "terrorists", but while excluding some individuals or groups who have previously been described as "terrorists", and also explicitly excludes [state terrorism](#). According to the FBI terrorism is the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives.<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup>

## Pejorative use

The terms "terrorism" and "**terrorist**" (someone who engages in terrorism) carry strong negative connotations.<sup>[40]</sup> These terms are often used as political labels, to condemn violence or the threat of violence by certain actors as immoral, indiscriminate, unjustified or to condemn an entire segment of a population.<sup>[41]</sup> Those labeled "terrorists" by their opponents rarely identify themselves as such, and

typically use other terms or terms specific to their situation, such as [separatist](#), [freedom fighter](#), [liberator](#), [revolutionary](#), [vigilante](#), [militant](#), [paramilitary](#), [guerrilla](#), [rebel](#), patriot, or any similar-meaning word in other languages and cultures. [Jihadi](#), [mujaheddin](#), and [fedayeen](#) are similar Arabic words which have entered the English lexicon. It is common for both parties in a conflict to describe each other as terrorists.<sup>[42]</sup>

On the question of whether particular terrorist acts, such as killing civilians, can be justified as the lesser evil in a particular circumstance, philosophers have expressed different views: while, according to David Rodin, [utilitarian](#) philosophers can (in theory) conceive of cases in which the evil of terrorism is outweighed by the good which could not be achieved in a less morally costly way, in practice the "harmful effects of undermining the convention of non-combatant immunity is thought to outweigh the goods that may be achieved by particular acts of terrorism".<sup>[43]</sup> Among the non-utilitarian philosophers, [Michael Walzer](#) argued that terrorism can be morally justified in only one specific case: when "a nation or community faces the extreme threat of complete destruction and the only way it can preserve itself is by intentionally targeting non-combatants, then it is morally entitled to do so".<sup>[43][44]</sup>

In his book *Inside Terrorism* [Bruce Hoffman](#) offered an explanation of why the term *terrorism* becomes distorted:

“ On one point, at least, everyone agrees: *terrorism* is a pejorative term. It is a word with intrinsically negative connotations that is generally applied to one's enemies and opponents, or to those with whom one disagrees and would otherwise prefer to ignore. 'What is called terrorism,' [Brian Jenkins](#) has written, 'thus seems to depend on one's point of view. Use of the term implies a moral judgment; and if one party can successfully attach the label *terrorist* to its opponent, then it has indirectly persuaded others to adopt its moral viewpoint.' Hence the decision to call someone or label some organization *terrorist* becomes almost unavoidably subjective, depending largely on whether one sympathizes with or opposes the person/group/cause concerned. If one identifies with the victim of the violence, for example, then the act is terrorism. If, however, one identifies with the perpetrator, the violent act is regarded in a more sympathetic, if not positive (or, at the worst, an ambivalent) light; and it is not terrorism.<sup>[45][46][47]</sup> ”

The pejorative connotations of the word can be summed up in the [aphorism](#), "One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter".<sup>[42]</sup> This is exemplified when a group using [irregular military](#) methods is an ally of a [state](#) against a mutual enemy, but later falls out with the state and starts to use those methods against its former ally. During [World War II](#), the [Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army](#) was allied with the British, but during the [Malayan Emergency](#), members of its successor (the [Malayan Races Liberation Army](#)), were branded "terrorists" by the British.<sup>[48][49]</sup> More recently, [Ronald Reagan](#) and others in the American administration frequently called the [Afghan Mujahideen](#) "freedom fighters" during [their war](#) against the [Soviet Union](#),<sup>[50]</sup> yet twenty years later, when a new generation of Afghan men are fighting against what they perceive to be a regime installed by foreign powers, their attacks are labelled "terrorism" by [George W. Bush](#).<sup>[51][52]</sup> Groups accused of terrorism understandably prefer terms reflecting legitimate military or ideological action.<sup>[53][54][55]</sup> Leading terrorism researcher Professor Martin Rudner, director of the Canadian Centre of Intelligence and Security Studies at Ottawa's [Carleton University](#), defines "terrorist acts" as attacks against civilians for political or other ideological goals, and said:

“ There is the famous statement: 'One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter.' But that is grossly misleading. It assesses the validity of the cause when terrorism is an act. One can have a perfectly beautiful cause and yet if one commits terrorist acts, it is terrorism regardless.<sup>[56]</sup> ”

Some groups, when involved in a "liberation" struggle, have been called "terrorists" by the Western governments or media. Later, these same persons, as leaders of the liberated nations, are called "statesmen" by similar organizations. Two examples of this phenomenon are the [Nobel Peace Prize laureates Menachem Begin](#) and [Nelson Mandela](#).<sup>[57][58][59][60][61][62]</sup> [WikiLeaks whistleblower Julian Assange](#) has been called a "terrorist" by [Sarah Palin](#) and [Joe Biden](#).<sup>[63][64]</sup>

Sometimes states which are close allies, for reasons of history, culture and politics, can disagree over whether or not members of a certain organization are terrorists. For instance, for many years, some branches of the United States government refused to label members of the [Irish Republican Army](#) (IRA) as terrorists while the IRA was using methods against one of the United States' closest allies (Britain) which Britain branded as terrorism. This was highlighted by the [Quinn v. Robinson](#) case.<sup>[65][66]</sup>

For these and other reasons, media outlets wishing to preserve a reputation for impartiality try to be careful in their use of the term.<sup>[67][68]</sup>

## Types of terrorism

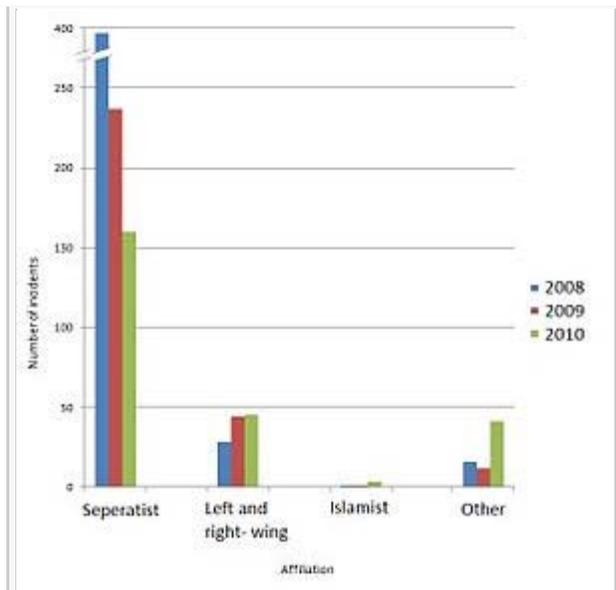
In early 1975, the [Law Enforcement Assistant Administration](#) in the United States formed the National Advisory Committee on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals. One of the five volumes that the committee wrote was entitled *Disorders and Terrorism*, produced by the Task Force on Disorders and Terrorism under the direction of H.H.A. Cooper, Director of the Task Force staff.<sup>[69]</sup> The Task Force classified terrorism into six categories.

- **Civil disorder** – A form of collective violence interfering with the [peace](#), [security](#), and normal functioning of the community.
- **Political terrorism** – [Violent](#) criminal behaviour designed primarily to generate [fear](#) in the community, or substantial segment of it, for political purposes.
- **Non-Political terrorism** – Terrorism that is not aimed at [political](#) purposes but which exhibits “conscious design to create and maintain a high degree of fear for [coercive](#) purposes, but the end is individual or collective gain rather than the achievement of a political objective.”
- **Quasi-terrorism** – The activities incidental to the commission of [crimes](#) of [violence](#) that are similar in form and method to genuine terrorism but which nevertheless lack its essential ingredient. It is not the main purpose of the quasi-terrorists to induce terror in the immediate victim as in the case of genuine terrorism, but the quasi-terrorist uses the modalities and techniques of the genuine terrorist and produces similar consequences and reaction.<sup>[70]</sup> For example, the fleeing [felon](#) who takes [hostages](#) is a quasi-terrorist, whose methods are similar to those of the genuine terrorist but whose purposes are quite different.
- **Limited political terrorism** – Genuine political terrorism is characterized by a [revolutionary](#) approach; limited political terrorism refers to “acts of terrorism which are committed for [ideological](#) or [political](#) motives but which are not part of a concerted campaign to capture control of the [state](#).”
- **Official or state terrorism** –“referring to nations whose rule is based upon [fear](#) and [oppression](#) that reach similar to terrorism or such proportions.” It may also be referred to as **Structural Terrorism** defined broadly as terrorist acts carried out by governments in pursuit of political objectives, often as part of their foreign policy.

Several sources<sup>[74][75][76]</sup> have further defined the typology of terrorism:

- Political terrorism
  - Sub-state terrorism
    - Social revolutionary terrorism
    - Nationalist-separatist terrorism
    - Religious extremist terrorism

- Religious fundamentalist Terrorism
- New religions terrorism
- Right-wing terrorism
- Left-wing terrorism
- Single-issue terrorism
- State-sponsored terrorism
- Regime or state terrorism
- Criminal terrorism
- Pathological terrorism



Number of failed, foiled or successful terrorist attacks by year and type within the [European Union](#). Source: [Europol](#).<sup>[71][72][73]</sup>

## Motivation of terrorists

Attacks on 'collaborators' are used to intimidate people from cooperating with the state in order to undermine state control. This strategy was used in the USA in its [War of Independence](#) and in Ireland, in Kenya, in Algeria and in Cyprus in their independence struggles.

Attacks on high profile symbolic targets are used to incite counter-terrorism by the state to polarise the population. This strategy is used by Al Qaeda in its attacks on the USA in September 2001. These attacks are also used to draw international attention to struggles which are otherwise unreported such as the [Palestinian airplane hijackings in 1970](#) and the South Moluccan hostage crises in the Netherlands in 1975.

Abrahm suggests that terrorist organizations do not select terrorism for its political effectiveness.<sup>[77]</sup> Individual terrorists tend to be motivated more by a desire for social solidarity with other members of their organization than by political platforms or strategic objectives, which are often murky and undefined.<sup>[77]</sup>

## Democracy and domestic terrorism

The relationship between domestic terrorism and democracy is very complex. Terrorism is most common in nations with intermediate political freedom, and is least common in the most democratic nations.<sup>[78][79][80][81]</sup> However, one study suggests that suicide terrorism may be an exception to this general rule. Evidence regarding this particular method of terrorism reveals that every modern suicide campaign has targeted a democracy—a state with a considerable degree of political freedom.<sup>[82]</sup> The study suggests that concessions awarded to terrorists during the 1980s and 1990s for suicide attacks increased their frequency.<sup>[83]</sup>

Some examples of "terrorism" in non-democracies include [ETA](#) in Spain under [Francisco Franco](#),<sup>[84]</sup> the [Shining Path](#) in Peru under [Alberto Fujimori](#),<sup>[85]</sup> the [Kurdistan Workers Party](#) when [Turkey](#) was ruled by military leaders and the [ANC](#) in South Africa.<sup>[86]</sup> Democracies, such as the United Kingdom, United States, [Israel](#), [Indonesia](#), India, Spain and the [Philippines](#), have also experienced domestic terrorism.

While a democratic nation espousing civil liberties may claim a sense of higher moral ground than

other regimes, an act of terrorism within such a state may cause a dilemma: whether to maintain its civil liberties and thus risk being perceived as ineffective in dealing with the problem; or alternatively to restrict its civil liberties and thus risk delegitimizing its claim of supporting civil liberties.<sup>[87]</sup> For this reason, **homegrown terrorism** has started to be seen as a greater threat, as stated by former CIA Director Michael Hayden.<sup>[88]</sup> This dilemma, some social theorists would conclude, may very well play into the initial plans of the acting terrorist(s); namely, to delegitimize the state.<sup>[89]</sup>

## Religious terrorism

*Main article: [Religious terrorism](#)*

**Religious terrorism** is terrorism performed by groups or individuals, the motivation of which is typically rooted in **faith**-based tenets. Terrorist acts throughout the centuries have been performed on religious grounds with the hope to either spread or enforce a system of belief, viewpoint or opinion.<sup>[90]</sup> Religious terrorism does not in itself necessarily define a specific religious standpoint or view, but instead usually defines an individual or a group view or interpretation of that belief system's teachings.

## Perpetrators

The **perpetrators** of acts of terrorism can be individuals, groups, or states. According to some definitions, clandestine or semi-clandestine state actors may also carry out terrorist acts outside the framework of a state of war. However, the most common image of terrorism is that it is carried out by small and secretive **cells**, highly motivated to serve a particular cause and many of the most deadly operations in recent times, such as the **September 11 attacks**, the **London underground bombing**, and the **2002 Bali bombing** were planned and carried out by a close clique, composed of close friends, family members and other strong social networks. These groups benefited from the free flow of information and efficient **telecommunications** to succeed where others had failed.<sup>[91]</sup>

Over the years, many people have attempted to come up with a **terrorist profile** to attempt to explain these individuals' actions through their psychology and social circumstances. Others, like Roderick Hindery, have sought to discern profiles in the propaganda tactics used by terrorists. Some security organizations designate these groups as *violent non-state actors*.<sup>[92]</sup> A 2007 study by economist **Alan B. Krueger** found that terrorists were less likely to come from an impoverished background (28% vs. 33%) and more likely to have at least a high-school education (47% vs. 38%). Another analysis found only 16% of terrorists came from impoverished families, vs. 30% of male Palestinians, and over 60% had gone beyond high school, vs. 15% of the populace.<sup>[93]</sup>

To avoid detection, a terrorist will look, dress, and behave normally until executing the assigned mission. Some claim that attempts to profile terrorists based on personality, physical, or sociological traits are not useful.<sup>[94]</sup> The physical and behavioral description of the terrorist could describe almost any normal person.<sup>[95]</sup> However, the majority of terrorist attacks are carried out by military age men, aged 16–40.<sup>[95]</sup>

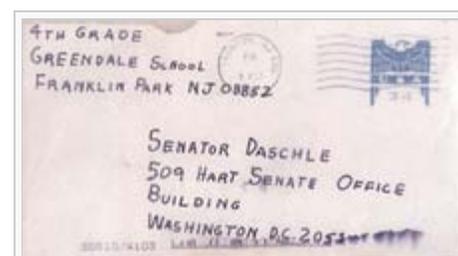
## Terrorist groups

*Main articles: [List of designated terrorist organizations](#) and [Lone wolf \(terrorism\)](#)*

## State sponsors

*Main article: [State-sponsored terrorism](#)*

A state can sponsor terrorism by funding or harboring a terrorist organization. Opinions as to which acts of violence by states consist of state-sponsored terrorism vary widely.



There is speculation that **anthrax** mailed

inside letters to U.S. politicians was the work of a *lone wolf* terrorist.

When states provide funding for groups considered by some to be terrorist, they rarely acknowledge them as such.

## State terrorism

*Main article: [State terrorism](#)*

“ Civilization is based on a clearly defined and widely accepted yet often unarticulated hierarchy. Violence done by those higher on the hierarchy to those lower is nearly always invisible, that is, unnoticed. When it is noticed, it is fully rationalized. Violence done by those lower on the hierarchy to those higher is unthinkable, and when it does occur is regarded with shock, horror, and the fetishization of the victims. ”

— [Derrick Jensen](#)<sup>[96]</sup>

As with "terrorism" the concept of "state terrorism" is controversial.<sup>[97]</sup> The Chairman of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee has stated that the Committee was conscious of 12 international Conventions on the subject, and none of them referred to State terrorism, which was not an international legal concept. If States abused their power, they should be judged against international conventions dealing with [war crimes](#), international [human rights](#) and [international humanitarian law](#).<sup>[98]</sup> Former [United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan](#) has said that it is "time to set aside debates on so-called 'state terrorism'. The [use of force by states](#) is already thoroughly regulated under international law"<sup>[99]</sup> However, he also made clear that, "regardless of the differences between governments on the question of definition of terrorism, what is clear and what we can all agree on is any deliberate attack on innocent civilians, regardless of one's cause, is unacceptable and fits into the definition of terrorism."<sup>[100]</sup>

State terrorism has been used to refer to terrorist acts by governmental agents or forces. This involves the use of state resources employed by a state's foreign policies, such as using its military to directly perform acts of terrorism. Professor of [Political Science](#) Michael Stohl cites the examples that include Germany's bombing of London and the U.S. atomic destruction of [Hiroshima](#) during World War II. He argues that "the use of terror tactics is common in international relations and the state has been and remains a more likely employer of terrorism within the international system than insurgents." They also cite the [First strike](#) option as an example of the "terror of coercive diplomacy" as a form of this, which holds the world hostage with the implied threat of using nuclear weapons in "crisis management." They argue that the institutionalized form of terrorism has occurred as a result of changes that took place following [World War II](#). In this analysis, state terrorism exhibited as a form of [foreign policy](#) was shaped by the presence and use of [weapons of mass destruction](#), and that the legitimizing of such violent behavior led to an increasingly accepted form of this state behavior.<sup>[101][102][102]</sup>

State terrorism has also been used to describe peacetime actions by governmental agents such as the bombing of [Pan Am Flight 103](#).<sup>[103]</sup> [Charles Stewart Parnell](#) described [William Ewart Gladstone's Irish Coercion Act](#) as terrorism in his "no-Rent manifesto" in 1881, during the [Irish Land War](#).<sup>[104]</sup> The concept is also used to describe [political repressions](#) by governments against their own civilian population with the purpose to incite fear. For example, taking and executing civilian [hostages](#) or [extrajudicial elimination](#) campaigns are commonly considered "terror" or terrorism, for example during the [Red Terror](#) or [Great Terror](#).<sup>[105]</sup> Such actions are often also described as



Some theorists suggest [genocide](#) is a type of terrorism as committed by [Adolf Hitler](#).<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

**democide** or **genocide** which has been argued to be equivalent to state terrorism.<sup>[106]</sup> Empirical studies on this have found that democracies have little democide.<sup>[107][108]</sup>

## Funding

*Main article: [Terrorist financing](#)*

**State sponsors** have constituted a major form of funding; for example, **PLO**, **DFLP** and some other terrorist groups were funded by the **Soviet Union**.<sup>[109][110]</sup> The **Stern Gang** received funding from **Italian Fascist** officers in Beirut to undermine the **British Mandate for Palestine**.<sup>[111]</sup>

"**Revolutionary tax**" is another major form of funding, and essentially a euphemism for "**protection money**".<sup>[109]</sup> Revolutionary taxes are typically extorted from businesses, and they also "play a secondary role as one other means of intimidating the target population".<sup>[109]</sup>

Other major sources of funding include **kidnapping** for ransoms, **smuggling**, **fraud** and **robbery**.<sup>[109]</sup>

The **Financial Action Task Force** is an inter-governmental body whose mandate, since October 2001, has included combatting **terrorist financing**.<sup>[112]</sup>

## Tactics

*Main article: [Tactics of terrorism](#)*

Terrorism is a form of **asymmetric warfare**, and is more common when direct **conventional warfare** will not be effective because forces vary greatly in power.<sup>[113]</sup>

The context in which terrorist tactics are used is often a large-scale, unresolved political conflict. The type of conflict varies widely; historical examples include:

- **Secession** of a territory to form a new sovereign state or become part of a different state
- Dominance of territory or resources by various **ethnic groups**
- Imposition of a particular form of government
- Economic deprivation of a population
- Opposition to a domestic government or occupying army
- Religious fanaticism

Terrorist attacks are often targeted to maximize fear and publicity, usually using **explosives** or **poison**.<sup>[114]</sup> There is concern about terrorist attacks employing **weapons of mass destruction**. Terrorist organizations usually methodically plan attacks in advance, and may train participants, plant undercover agents, and raise money from supporters or through **organized crime**. Communications occur through modern **telecommunications**, or through old-fashioned methods such as **couriers**.

## Responses

Responses to terrorism are broad in scope. They can include re-alignments of the **political spectrum** and reassessments of **fundamental values**.

Specific types of responses include:

- Targeted laws, criminal procedures, deportations, and enhanced police powers
- Target hardening, such as locking doors or adding traffic barriers
- Preemptive or reactive military action



- Increased intelligence and surveillance activities
- Preemptive humanitarian activities
- More permissive interrogation and detention policies

The term **counter-terrorism** has a narrower connotation, implying that it is directed at terrorist actors.

According to a report by Dana Priest and William M. Arkin in the *Washington Post*, "Some 1,271 government organizations and 1,931 private companies work on programs related to counterterrorism, homeland security and intelligence in about 10,000 locations across the United States."<sup>[115]</sup>

## Mass media

Media exposure may be a primary goal of those carrying out terrorism, to expose issues that would otherwise be ignored by the media. Some consider this to be manipulation and exploitation of the media.<sup>[116]</sup>

The internet has created a new channel for groups to spread their messages. This has created a cycle of measures and counter measures by groups in support of and in opposition to terrorist movements. The United Nations has created its own online counter-terrorism resource.<sup>[117]</sup>

The mass media will, on occasion, censor organizations involved in terrorism (through self-restraint or regulation) to discourage further terrorism. However, this may encourage organizations to perform more extreme acts of terrorism to be shown in the mass media. Conversely *James F. Pastor* explains the significant relationship between terrorism and the media, and the underlying benefit each receives from the other.<sup>[118]</sup>

There is always a point at which the terrorist ceases to manipulate the media *gestalt*. A point at which the violence may well escalate, but beyond which the terrorist has become symptomatic of the media *gestalt* itself. Terrorism as we ordinarily understand it is innately media-related.

—Novelist *William Gibson*<sup>[119]</sup>

## History

*Main article: History of terrorism*

The history of terrorism goes back to *Sicarii Zealots* — Jewish extremist group active in *Judaea Province* at the beginning of the first century AD. After *Zealotry* rebellion in the 1st century AD, when some prominent collaborators with Roman rule were killed,<sup>[120][121]</sup> according to contemporary historian *Josephus*, in 6 AD *Judas of Galilee* formed a small and more extreme offshoot of the Zealots, the *Sicarii*.<sup>[122]</sup> Their terror also was directed against Jewish "collaborators", including temple priests, Sadducees, Herodians, and other wealthy elites.<sup>[123]</sup>

The term "terrorism" itself was originally used to describe the actions of the *Jacobin Club* during the "*Reign of Terror*" in the *French Revolution*. "Terror is nothing other than justice, prompt, severe, inflexible," said Jacobin leader *Maximilien Robespierre*. In 1795, *Edmund Burke* denounced the Jacobins for letting "thousands of those hell-hounds called Terrorists...loose on the people" of France.<sup>[124]</sup>

In January 1858, Italian patriot *Felice Orsini* threw three bombs in an attempt to assassinate French Emperor *Napoleon III*.<sup>[125]</sup> Eight bystanders were killed and 142 injured.<sup>[125]</sup> The incident played a crucial role as an inspiration for the development of the early Russian terrorist groups.<sup>[125]</sup> *Russian*



[Sergey Nechayev](#), who founded People's Retribution in 1869, described himself as a "terrorist", an early example of the term being employed in its modern meaning.<sup>[15]</sup> Nechayev's story is told in fictionalized form by [Fyodor Dostoevsky](#) in the novel *The Possessed*. German anarchist writer [Johann Most](#) dispensed "advice for terrorists" in the 1880s.<sup>[126]</sup>

## Terrorism databases

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The following terrorism databases are or were made publicly available for research purposes, and track specific acts of terrorism:

- [MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base](#)
- [Global Terrorism Database](#)
- [Worldwide Incidents Tracking System](#)
- [Tocsearch](#) (dynamic database)

The following publicly available resource indexes electronic and bibliographic resources on the subject of terrorism:

- [Human Security Gateway](#)

The following terrorism databases are maintained in secrecy by the United State Government for intelligence and counter-terrorism purposes:

- [Terrorist Identities Datamart Environment](#)
- [Terrorist Screening Database](#)

## See also

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- [Aircraft hijacking](#)
- [Airport security](#)
- [Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives \(ATF\)](#)
- [Christian Terrorism](#)
- [Central Intelligence Agency \(CIA\)](#)
- [Civilian casualty ratio](#)
- [Counter-terrorism](#)
- [Crimes against humanity](#)
- [Cyber-terrorism](#)
- [Department of Homeland Security \(DHS\)](#)
- [Domestic terrorism in the United States](#)
- [Eco-terrorism](#)
- [Extremism](#)
- [Federal Bureau of Investigation \(FBI\)](#)
- [Federal Air Marshal Service \(FAMS\)](#)
- [Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism](#)
- [Immigration and Customs Enforcement \(ICE\)](#)
- [Insurgency](#)
- [Intimidation](#)
- [International Criminal Police Organization \(Interpol\)](#)
- [Islamic Terrorism](#)
- [Jewish Terrorism](#)
- [Jihadi tourism](#)
- [List of designated terrorist organizations](#)
- [List of terrorist incidents](#)
- [Narcoterrorism](#)
- [Patriot Act](#)
- [PDD-62](#)
- [Propaganda by deed](#)
- [S.W.A.T](#)
- [Special forces](#)
- [Strategy of tension](#)
- [Suicide attack](#)
- [Terrorism Information Awareness Program](#)
- [U.S. Customs and Border Protection \(CBP\)](#)
- [Unconventional warfare](#)
- [United States Secret Service](#)
- [VNSA](#)
- [War on Terrorism](#)
- [Palestinian political violence](#)
- [Victims of Acts of Terror Memorial](#)
- [House of Terror](#)

**State terrorism:**

- [Pakistani state terrorism](#)
- [State terrorism by Iran](#)
- [State terrorism and Russia](#)
- [State terrorism and the United States](#)

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## External links

### UN conventions

- **United Nations:Conventions on Terrorism** 
- **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime:** "Conventions against terrorism" . Archived from the original  on 2007-08-05. "There are 12 major multilateral conventions and protocols related to states' responsibilities for combating terrorism. But many states are not yet party to these legal instruments, or are not yet implementing them."
- **UNODC – United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime – Terrorism Prevention** 



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### Terrorism and international humanitarian law

- **Terrorism and international humanitarian law** , International Committee of the Red Cross

### News monitoring websites specializing on articles on terrorism

- **Insurgency Research Group**  – Multi-expert blog dedicated to the study of terrorism, insurgency and the development of counter-insurgency policy.
- **Jihad Monitor** 
- **Combating Terrorism Center at Westpoint** 

v · d · e		War on Terror
<b>Participants</b>	<b>Operational</b>	ISAF · Operation Enduring Freedom participants · Afghanistan · Northern Alliance · Iraq (Iraqi Armed Forces) · NATO · Pakistan · United Kingdom · United States · Philippines · Ethiopia
		Al-Qaeda · Osama bin Laden · Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula · Abu Sayyaf · Anwar al-Awlaki · Hamas · Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami ·

	<b>Targets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hezbollah</li> <li>Hizbul Mujahideen</li> <li>Islamic Courts Union</li> <li>Jaish-e-Mohammed</li> <li>Jemaah Islamiyah</li> <li>Lashkar-e-Taiba</li> <li>Mujahideen</li> <li>Taliban</li> <li>Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan</li> </ul>
<b>Conflicts</b>	<b>Operation</b> <i>Enduring Freedom</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>War in Afghanistan</li> <li>OEF – Philippines</li> <li>Georgia Train and Equip Program</li> <li>Georgia Sustainment and Stability</li> <li>OEF – Horn of Africa</li> <li>OEF – Trans Sahara</li> <li>Drone attacks in Pakistan</li> </ul>
	<b>Other</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Insurgency in the Maghreb (2002–present)</li> <li>Insurgency in the Philippines</li> <li>Iraq War</li> <li>Iraqi insurgency</li> <li>South Thailand insurgency</li> <li>Terrorism in Saudi Arabia</li> <li>War in North-West Pakistan</li> <li>War in Somalia (2006–2009)</li> <li>2007 Lebanon conflict</li> <li>Yemeni al-Qaeda crackdown</li> </ul>
<b>See also</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Abu Ghraib torture and prisoner abuse</li> <li>Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act</li> <li>Axis of evil</li> <li>Black sites</li> <li>Bush Doctrine</li> <li>The Clash of Civilizations</li> <li>Combatant Status Review Tribunal</li> <li>Criticism of the War on Terror</li> <li>Death of Osama bin Laden</li> <li>Enhanced interrogation techniques</li> <li>Extrajudicial prisoners</li> <li>Extraordinary rendition</li> <li>Guantanamo Bay detention camp</li> <li>Military Commissions Act of 2006</li> <li>NSA electronic surveillance program</li> <li>Pakistan's role</li> <li>Luis Posada Carriles</li> <li>President's Surveillance Program</li> <li>Protect America Act of 2007</li> <li>Targeted killing</li> <li><i>Targeted Killing in International Law</i></li> <li>Unitary executive theory</li> <li>Unlawful combatant</li> <li>USA PATRIOT Act</li> </ul>	
 Terrorism ·  War		

<b>Abuse</b>	
v · d · e	
<b>Types</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anti-social behaviour</li> <li>Bullying</li> <li>Child abuse</li> <li>Child sexual abuse</li> <li>Domestic abuse</li> <li>Elder abuse</li> <li>Harassment</li> <li>Humiliation</li> <li>Incivility</li> <li>Institutional abuse</li> <li>Intimidation</li> <li>Neglect</li> <li>Personal abuse</li> <li>Professional abuse</li> <li>Psychological abuse</li> <li>Physical abuse</li> <li>Sexual abuse</li> <li>Spiritual abuse</li> <li>Stalking</li> <li>Structural abuse</li> <li>Verbal abuse</li> <li><i>more...</i></li> </ul>
<b>Related topics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complex post-traumatic stress disorder</li> <li>Dehumanization</li> <li>Denial</li> <li>Destabilisation</li> <li>Exaggeration</li> <li>Adult grooming</li> <li>Child grooming</li> <li>Lying</li> <li>Manipulation</li> <li>Minimisation</li> <li>Personality disorders</li> <li>Psychological projection</li> <li>Psychological trauma</li> <li>Psychopathy</li> <li>Rationalization (making excuses)</li> <li>Victim blaming</li> <li>Victim playing</li> <li>Victimisation</li> </ul>

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