

Terrorism¹

The notion of terrorism in the modern day is a very ambiguous idea. In fact, if one were to ask ten random individuals what they believed terrorism to be, the inquisitor would likely get ten different answers. Understandably this process of logic may be inherently flawed, as what is *random*: is it ten people flooding the busy streets of China, ten people on Fifth Avenue in New York City; and of those ten what is their current knowledge of the subject, what is their daily profession? The difference that arises across all human beings would not be of such particular concern had it been over a term that was not as prevalent as it is today in modern society, and more precisely modern America. I must concede now that I am a citizen of the United States, and I may very well carry biases and political skews reflective of such an association; however as one who regularly attempts to pool information from many different sources, I will make a valiant effort to minimize such influence.

The questions posed in the preface to this report came to fruition upon noticing two particular trends: the prevalence of the term *terrorism* in the current United States media and the multiple definitions by various intellectuals, government agencies and officials. The United States Department of Defense defines terrorism as the unlawful use of -- or threatened use of -- force or violence against individuals or property to coerce or intimidate governments or societies, often to achieve political, religious, or ideological objectives.² The Federal Bureau of Investigation defines as the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian

¹ The nature of this topic upon research gave rise to extensive verbiage on the definition of said word. There is a point, just give me a little foundation room to get there

² www.defenselink.mil

population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives.³ These definitions, though broad, seem to be fairly in line with each other on the level of legality; however both definitions can be twisted by that same issue of legality dependent on the scope of precedent used to elaborate.

Our textbook cultivates a different definition: premeditated politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience.⁴ The primary addition to that definition is the word *noncombatant*; a civilian specifically, only (possibly) connected by national association (citizenship), a non-political actor. This is a term neglected by two of the primary United States government agencies within their concise definitions.⁵ The theory that the lack of language is intended is purely argumentative and will not be speculated here; however the disparity between the definitions does promote further investigation.

Perhaps the best way to go about defining terrorism would be to articulate what is known and elaborate on the differences between ideas as opposed to picking terms to include. For this exercise I will choose the term *warfare* and then the notion of *terror* as both words are paramount notions in *terrorism*. For arguments sake I will use a conventional Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary to illicit the meaning of the chosen words.⁶ Warfare is defined as military operations between enemies: WAR: also an

³ 28 C.F.R. Section 0.85

⁴ page 427

⁵ A note must be made here, the fact that the term noncombatant or "innocent" may arise in a report written by said agencies does not promote an argument that it is a part of the definition. This is almost wholly opinion, but it should be stated that the necessity of a concise meaning of a word (a definition) is paramount in expressing full knowledge of said word. Dictionaries are written with the express job to define a term in as precise and succinct language as possible; i.e. definitions are one sentence long. I am aware that variations appear as numbered secondary definitions; however they are offshoots of the primary definition that included all necessary language

⁶ I am not trying to create a double standard, the notion that words can be defined accurately is plausible as the impossibility of such would be ludicrous

activity undertaken by a political unit (as a nation) to weaken or destroy another.⁷ This appears to be a sufficient definition by many individuals' standards as it incorporates the core factors. I will note that the definition of war can vary upon practice, and the ever evolving notion of *rules of warfare* is also a factor; however there is a difference between an understanding of an idea and an analysis of its practice.

Terror is defined as a state of intense fear.⁸ Another definition many would hold accurate. The term *fear* is not cited in any of the previous definitions for terrorism that I have mentioned, yet it is the terms root. If one were to speculate, the root of the mentioned definitions seems to be the theory of violence. Now it is plausible to believe that violence will inherently instill fear, but that would necessitate the furtherance of including how those being affected react; if this is not spelled out then it is an assumption leaving much room for interpretation. The neglecting of particularly including fear or a specific derivative was a tremendous hang-up, so-to-speak, in my research. The idea that a fundamental idea was left out of a definition that led to a declaration of war was almost disturbing, but further research would have to be done. There must be a semblance of the idea within the framework of the military actions taken.

Interestingly the *Report to the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States*⁹ does not elaborate on the definition of terrorism, it only goes on to articulate the changes in the counterterrorism program within the department. Having already noted that the Federal Bureau of Investigation's definition is lacking, one must look at the words spoken by government officials to form a theory as to what lies behind

⁷ *Tenth Edition* page 1331

⁸ *Tenth Edition* page 1217

⁹ U.S. Department of Justice: Federal Bureau of Investigation © April 14, 2004

the definition previously noted. In an address made the night of September 11, 2001 the President of the United States George W. Bush stated:

The pictures of airplanes flying into buildings, fires burning, huge structures collapsing, have filled us with disbelief, terrible sadness, and a quiet, unyielding anger. These acts of mass murder were intended to frighten our nation into chaos and retreat. But they have failed; our country is strong.

A great people has been moved to defend a great nation. Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America. These acts shattered steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve.

America was targeted for attack because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world. And no one will keep that light from shining.¹⁰

The words spoken by President Bush, obviously, are not solely his own but conferred over with top officials and articulated by a staff of speech writers. This fact falls square upon an essay written by Philip Devine and Robert Rafalko¹¹ that, granted in a primitive nutshell, defined terrorism heavily by the manner in which it is reacted to. The notion of fear is included, however the President immediately progresses to the theory that the attacks occurred as an affront to the prosperity within the country.¹²

This response can be interpreted in many ways, it has been called an address of bravado, an attack on those lesser, a call to arms, etcetera but the fact that it has been interpreted in so many ways is the most *dangerous* part. I will not hesitate to say that human nature instinctually will react to an attack with self-defense, in fact it may be the most primal instinct of any living creature (that being another topic altogether). With this I would allow some leeway to those in officiating careers reacting as such, but the

¹⁰ Full transcript can be found at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010911-16.html>

¹¹ *On Terror* © 1982 Sage Publications

¹² Now this may very well have been a case of *we need an answer now, regardless* but I would like to believe more brainstorming went into the address, and even more so the actions later

reactions past the instant after are the defining moments and this address was dominant in all political and military movements thereafter.

However, from what I have found (and from the multiple definitions given) there has not been much adjustment on the particular definition per se. Those given are the most current that I can uncover, and watching any television news cast will not expand the idea further. The media grasping on to the *buzz word* of terrorism has been a very interesting ordeal, as was the United States Government to declare a *war* on terrorism. Now these particular occurrences are undoubtedly essays in themselves, but I will have to incorporate the declaration of a *war*.

The movement of a war on terrorism has been very muddled by the current conflict in Iraq. In fact, the reasoning and execution of that conflict is an entire other essay with, in my opinion, very limited connections to the topic at hand.¹³

The declared war on terror from the United States embodied itself in the invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001. The initial invasion was entitled *Operation Enduring Freedom*.¹⁴ One may consider now that this is the moment in which the theoretical line between terrorism and war blurs. The invasion by the United States was of a significant military power, beginning with air strikes and culminating into the use of cluster bombs. Prior to the air strikes¹⁵ however, the United States pressured Pakistani aid groups to stop food convoys to Afghanistan. It is well known that Afghanistan continues as a country with a tremendous need in foreign aid, there is not a specific number but it has been cited as majority percentages. As well, Afghanistan was the number one recipient of U.S.

¹³ I am fairly certain there is a collective question into the current war in Iraq, and so I would like to have the contents of this paper reside aside from it

¹⁴ Now, I really don't want to step on Noam Chomsky's toes (Speech October 18, 2001), but I also realized the irony of having a military operation entitled *suffering freedom*

¹⁵ *New York Times* September 16, 2001

humanitarian assistance prior to September Eleventh 2001.¹⁶ The halting of such aid (most notably food convoys) is a very disturbing occurrence when it is not an intended *attack* on those who have committed the harm. Afghanistan was known to house a fair amount of training grounds and groups of Taliban association; however the act of repealing aid did not solely affect those particular groups. The number of civilians in the country on the verge of starvation is estimated in the millions¹⁷ and so puts a very heavy burden on the logic behind restricting the sustenance. The response to such a decision may very well be fear, of starvation and personal safety. And to the civilians it is occurring to them only because of a national association, the radical actors are not singled out and the effects are felt by all.

The air strikes by the United States and Britain created yet another quandary. Since the al Qaeda groups were loosely affiliated¹⁸ and spread out across the country (and world) the specific targets were not known and the air strikes claimed many civilians.¹⁹ Aside from the obviously unfortunate human losses, the bombings made it essentially impossible for aid groups, including the United Nations World Food Programme²⁰, to venture into the country and deliver rations. The fear for personal safety did not only affect Afghans but all who ventured within the country. The total of civilian victims to date is not known, nor can it ever be, as determining the numbers of those lost due to

¹⁶ *Humanitarian and Reconstruction Aid to Afghanistan* © September 5 2002 U.S. Agency for International Development

¹⁷ p. 6 “Some six million vulnerable Afghans are already fully or partially dependent on international food assistance for survival.” *2001 Estimated Food Needs and Shortfalls for WFP Operations and Projects* © October 2001 World Food Programme

¹⁸ Presidential Address September 20, 2001

¹⁹ there is no official United States count, see <http://www.cursor.org/stories/noncounters.htm> for further information

²⁰ p. 6 “the delivery of food became yet more challenging when air strikes against Afghanistan began on 7 October 2001” *2001 Estimated Food Needs and Shortfalls for WFP Operations and Projects* © October 2001 World Food Programme

military violence and starving directly due to lack of international aid is not possible. Since the stated invasion, the amount of aid to the country has decreased especially in regard to American funds.²¹ This in turn puts fear into the lives of many civilian Afghans. Now, whereas it might seem that I am pointing the finger at the United States in a manner to show that they themselves acted as terrorists, the ambiguity in the definition is what is really at fault. The lack of funding and rations getting to those in need put a tremendous hardship on many individuals, as well as those who lost their lives due to various bombing attacks; however the United States does not accept a *law of international stature* that would hold them accountable, which unrelated their actions to the CIA and FBI's definitions. As well, there is no device within the definition to measure their reaction, but this may particularly be where the notion of terrorism is based (as stated previously).

Understandably there are *rules of war* which are constantly changing with the modern era, however I feel it would be ill advised to let the interpretations of *war* blur the fact that there is evidence necessary to proceed in that direction. Also one's own reaction must be measured against the original affront so as not to cause similar or ever more widespread harm. As of today five years have passed since the invasion of Afghanistan and the United States is still fully engulfed in a war on terror, and yet the definition of just that term is still eluding them.

Another topic that causes one to really think into what a real reaction says of the actor is how others react to such; the invasion of Afghanistan prompted Amnesty International to instate an immediate and full investigation into what may have been

²¹ *Afghanistan Reconstruction: Deteriorating Security and Limited Resources Have Impeded Progress* © June 2004 General Accounting Office, and many other sources.

violations of international and humanitarian law such as direct attacks on civilian objects or indiscriminate attacks.²² This would continue the very heavy burden of weighing whether the United States acted as best as they could after the terrible atrocities of September 11, 2001.

To move away from American involvement post September Eleventh, recent activities in South America have escalated to very violent proportions. As of May 15, 2006 upwards of 80²³ people have lost their lives due to drug related gang violence in Brazil; the violence began four days prior in Sao Paulo in response to prison transfer of gang leaders.²⁴ The violence was first directed at police officers of the city, however tensions and violent acts escalated into attempts to burn city buses carrying civilians. As of May 17th four civilians²⁵ have lost their lives, with many more fearing for their own wellbeing; also much of the population must take great risks to travel as bus routes have been closed and bus owners refuse to run schedules.²⁶ As one Brazilian, Evandro Pereira, states “The authorities need to gain control of the jails again and we expect them to do so, I will not allow my family to go outside;”²⁷ aside from this being tragic it brings about the idea of terrorism on a few levels. First it is beginning to target civilians unconnected to the political decisions being asked to be considered; second it is most obviously inciting a feeling of fear in civilians all over the city; thirdly in relation to grander definitions it is a minority against the majority, and lastly it is meant as a coercive effort

²² Press Release October 26, 2001

²³ ABC News May 15th 2006 *Violence in Brazil Kills More Than 80*
<http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory?id=1964979>

²⁴ Washington Post May 15th 2006 *70 Die in 4 Days of Violence in Brazil*
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/15/AR2006051500465.html>

²⁵ The Australian May 17th 2006 *Gan Violence paralyzes Sao Paolo*
<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,20867,19162252-2703,00.html>

²⁶ BBC News May 15th 2006 *Sao Paulo Residents Under Siege*
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4774185.stm>

²⁷ Same article as noted above

to promote political change. A strong point to take note of following the violence will be how specifically the government of Brazil as well as other nations including the United States, and members of the United Nations, react to the situation.

Beside the explained connections to a form of terrorism noted, the violence comes at an interesting time in that the United States released a report²⁸ regarding the anti-drug war which began in Brazil and has since spanned other nations across the globe (including Afghanistan). The report, a budget report, cites an \$80.6 million increase from 2006 to \$12.7 billion in funding for the fiscal year of 2007.²⁹ The budget has stayed fairly constant, with small, relatively speaking, increases over the past three years. The spending on such a *war* has come under fire numerous times for many, many years; but that should not take away from the connections that can be elicited by funding to countries in such disorder. In fact, the report states that a portion of the money will go directly toward funding and improving police and military operations.³⁰ Understandably this is an effort to minimize trafficking, but I highly doubt direct attacks on police by drug-related gang members are out of the realm of importance. As well, the Government Accountability Office released a report in December of 2005 criticizing figures of the year's previous successes in lowering volume of trafficking as well as American usage.³¹

These occurrences fall squarely into the realm of defining terrorism by how it is reacted to. Though it may seem like this report is weighing heavily on the United States and its actions, the United States is the leading nation in the world, and in many respects

²⁸ National Drug Control Strategy: FY 2007 Summary

²⁹ p. 3

³⁰ p. 112, \$721.5 million, p. 116 has an additional \$9 million for the exact same reasons

³¹ As much as I tried, the report cited in the San Francisco Chronicle on December 7th 2005 *Watchdog Challenges U.S. Drug War in Colombia* (in an advance copy) is not available on the GAO report archive. If necessary please disregard comment citing discrepancies in figures. There has not been a GAO report on the subject, according to their archive, since 2004.

uncontested. In addition, the decision to begin a war on terror creates a very particular course of action that will be hounded by all those with opinions. This is not to provide justification for a verbal attack on America, but an analysis of the reaction will be very much based on the amount of funding and where it goes. In January 2006 the Government Accountability Office released a report³² specifically citing the methods used to determine where the money went that was intended for the broad intention of anti-terrorism efforts. To open the report it is stated:

Seven of 34 agencies that reported receiving funding related to combating terrorism activities to OMB [Office of Management and Budget] used different methodologies to estimate the portion of their authorized funding that supports such activities. These 7 agencies account for about 90 percent of the total fiscal year 2006 budget request that the 34 agencies estimate relate to combating terrorism. All of these methods involve some level of professional judgment. Agencies stated this process is managed through OMB oversight and supervisory review. OMB staff said they do not review the overseas component of combating terrorism funding data since they are no longer required to report it. As a result, Congress does not receive OMB-reviewed data on the entirety of counterterrorism funding.³³

It goes on to state that recommendations cited in their 2002 report have not been followed.

The first recommendation requests that OMB include agencies' obligation data in its annual reporting of funding data on combating terrorism. OMB staff continue to cite the effort required to produce such data but said they might consider reporting obligation information for a targeted set of accounts. Without obligation data, it is difficult for Congress to know (1) how much funding from prior years is still available to potentially reduce new spending requests, (2) whether the rate of spending for a program is slower than anticipated, or (3) what the size of the program is for a particular year and over time. The second recommendation was for OMB to direct relevant departments to develop or enhance combating terrorism performance goals and measures and include such measures in the governmentwide plan. Three of the seven agencies told us that OMB had not directed them to develop performance measures or enhance such measures for combating terrorism activities. However, four of the seven agencies

³² Combating Terrorism: Determining and Reporting Federal Funding Data

³³ p. 2

had developed such measures. OMB staff said they are working with agencies to improve performance measurement of government programs related to combating terrorism. The development of such measures would assist Congress in determining whether funding increases have improved performance results. The third recommendation calls for the inclusion of national-level and federal governmentwide combating terrorism performance measures in supplements to existing strategies and their future revisions. There have been no supplements or revisions to the existing strategies that include governmentwide or national-level combating terrorism measures.

This is a fairly disturbing thought in that one would like to believe a majority of governmental decisions are made based on solid, empirical evidence. However an agency created solely as a nonpartisan check of congressional and executive actions is stating there are discrepancies in the way daily efforts against terrorism are being run. Yet, how can there not be discrepancies when the focal point is a highly subjective topic in itself?

I can not say that I have an answer to the question posed; in fact I have very much come to the conclusion that a fair amount of all political acts are to be considered grey areas. Real life, to use the very over-used phrase, is rarely made up of clear cut yes/no questions and even less so directly position to one of those two answers. I digress whereas I am simply stating the obvious to those who have spent their lives observing and studying the political science realm. The horrendous situation in Sao Paulo will play out in the very near future, under a very watchful eye of many; but I feel it necessary to return to a topic alluded to before: war.

Michael Walzer, in his novel *Just and Unjust Wars*, includes a chapter about terrorism and begins: “the word ‘terrorism’ is used most often to describe revolutionary violence... the systematic terrorizing of whole populations is a strategy of both conventional and guerilla war, and of established governments as well as radical

movements.”³⁴ This grouping of terrorism within means of war further blurs the lines drawn by current definitions; essentially stating it is a method and not anything different from the rules of war (which I’ve mentioned are ever-changing). Walzer continues: “in war, terrorism is a way of avoiding engagement with the enemy army. It represents an extreme form of the strategy of the ‘indirect approach.’”³⁵ The definition, though its foundation is produced, analyzed and defended in ethical terms, creates a very difficult equation of war and its boundaries; which seem almost limitless with the inclusion of terrorism as only a particular strategy of action. Oddly, in a footnote,³⁶ Walzer directs the readers’ attention to a specific event in history: the bombing of Hiroshima. However this footnote moves the reader into another chapter dealing with *supreme emergency*³⁷ beginning with a portion of President Truman’s address on August 12, 1945:

We have used [the bomb] against those who have attacked us without warning at Pearl Harbor, against those who have starved and beaten and executed American prisoners of war, against those who have abandoned all pretense of obeying international laws of warfare. We have used it in order to shorten the agony of war...

Again cited are the rules of war, which coincidentally changed as soon as an atomic bomb was dropped for the first time on a nation. The problem seen here is that the decision to drop the bomb was a reaction to an affront (and eventual warfare) but it begs the question as to whether the act is considered terrorism (in Walzer’s eyes) or as justifiable terms of war (in Truman’s, and undoubtedly Congress’ eyes). The dichotomy protruding had the roles been reversed³⁸ is answered by Walzer”

³⁴ p. 197

³⁵ p. 197

³⁶ p. 204

³⁷ chapter 16

³⁸ Walzer uses San Francisco as a Japanese target to balance Hiroshima as an American target, in relation to shortening the agony of war

The distinction is only plausible, however, if one renders a judgment not only against the ordinary people of Hiroshima and insists at the same time that no similar judgment is possible against the people of San Francisco, say, or Denver.

Walzer is not able to create an argument that logistically works in such a situation, as I agree there cannot be one; it is hypocritical and a logistically fallacious.³⁹ And though the bombing of Hiroshima is much more involved than the page or so given to it here, the situation does give rise, again, to the disparity and necessity in accurately defining terrorism, especially aside from the confines of war.

Again this is not meant to be an attack on the United States, but it is meant to show that a reaction must be included with any modern definition of the word *terrorism*. As it stands, the United States could be considered terrorists solely by the bombing of Hiroshima by some definitions; and not so by others. The life lost by such a decision to a still debatable question is a problem, especially when the country of the United States is currently fighting a war against said debatable topic. If that sentence sounds ambiguous, it is because it is. And even more ambiguous would be to define the United States' current war on terror after such historical inclusions and arguments: the United States is fighting a war against war through war, the *rules* of which constantly changing.

Conclusion

Though this report has taken a very conversational and at times argumentative form, I must admit that it is partially due to the inability of the writer to get his arms around a topic as large as terrorism. In fact, I am not sure whether I started or finished with more questions. I will fully recognize that the historical accounts included are no

³⁹ Rafalko: Guilt by Association, Appeal to Sympathy, Appeal to Authority, Hasty Generalization

where near exhaustive, as we are all students everyday to the history of this country's inhabitants and the globe's.

I must also reiterate that though this report may seem to put the United States and its actions in the spotlight, in my opinion the leading country in the world deserves to have the most scrutinizing eyes laid upon it. As powerful a political actor as the United States is, and through its decision to engage a war on terrorism; the country has placed a very high hurdle in front of itself. And this hurdle, in my opinion, can only be surpassed through practice; but in this instance the practice is through the devotion to scholarly research and global conversation as to the very problem posed, terrorism and its most destructive aspect: what it is, specifically. The answer⁴⁰ *should* not be as elusive as it seems when so many lives depend on it, but it *has* proven to be so. I do hope that I have accurately delved a bit more into the notion of terrorism; most notably civilians as well as the reaction to said violence, enough to place the theory in the readers mind that there is indeed more to be considered on the subject.

⁴⁰ which I regret to inform the reader I do not have