

The Ethical Wrongfulness of Terrorist Actions



Mahmoud Masaeli, Editor & Conference Chairman



As the second in a series on ‘ethics and international relations’ the conference on The Ethical Wrongfulness of Terrorist Actions was held on Friday and Saturday, October 17-18, 2008 in Saint Paul University. The aim of the conference was to discuss and explore the wrongfulness of terrorism in both domestic and international scene. Eighteen speakers presented their ideas in the conference. The eight completed essays submitted appear in this book.

Mahmoud Masaeli (above)

Conference initiator and organizer

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‘In The Aegis Of Public Sentiment’: Racial Terrorism In America, 1830-1900

Trevor A. Corless

To undertake in the study of terrorism is to tread heavily in murky water. The water becomes murky where attempts to formulate a universal definition of terrorism begin. As a guide forward, it is prudent to heed the warning by long-time terrorist researchers Alex P. Schmid and Albert J. Jongman, who, in their bible of terrorist research *Political Terrorism*, plead with those concerned to not give up a search for a universal definition, stating that it would be altogether “dangerous...as it plays into the hands of those experts from the operational anti-terrorist camp who have a ‘we-know-it-when-we-see-it’ attitude that easily leads to double standards which produce bad science and also, arguably, bad policies.” It is worth noting too that this “operational anti-terrorist camp”, seemingly enlarged since 9/11, often includes those who unapologetically dismiss any comprehensive examinations of the “root causes” of terrorism, exemplified in just one among many recently published primers on the subject where the author emphatically asserts from the beginning that “terrorism is never about the causes, but always about the strategy used to win it.”² These attitudes towards the subject are all too common; they undermine the complexities, disagreements, and nuances within the subject itself, and they presume to know more about terrorism as a whole than researchers and policy makers world-wide actually do.

Although the purpose of this article is not to add to the myriad of academic and institutional definitions of what terrorism is or is not, an unidentified subject is of little use to the reader. An unidentified subject leads the reader to prescribe their own definition where one is omitted, or not clearly implied, thus distorting any argument made about the subject from the outset. A definition of terrorism cannot isolate it from other forms of political violence; it must walk a sensitive tightrope where an operational definition distinguishes an act of terrorism from other forms of political violence, such as guerilla warfare and civil war, but does not divorce the two. That is to say, terrorism is a *form* of political violence, and the treatment of the subject under this canopy may serve to clarify the water below, particularly the relative disconnect between the subject of terrorism and the larger society or “audience” from which it is born and ultimately seeks to communicate with.

This leads to a few important reminders on the subject, derived from those who have studied it on more than one occasion. Terrorism is not random violence against random target(s). Terrorism involves a violent attack(s) that randomly affect members of a targeted group(s) who play a key role in the production of a political message. Terrorism is a “violent communication strategy” where the “sender”; terrorist, intends to deliver a political message to a “receiver”; enemy or public, through a “message generator”; victim(s). As terrorism expert Brian Jenkins points out, terrorism is “violence for effect”, in which the victims do not matter as individuals, but instead serve to represent the entire targeted group or class. Upon victimization, they function as a communication device with the message that other members of the targeted group may be next. The broader the scope of the terrorist’s political message, the broader the group of potential victims. This marks the distinction between terrorism and other forms of political violence, political assassination, and even murder because the violent act is not an end in itself, where the violence concludes upon the acts’ completion, either successfully or not. Terrorism is a *campaign* of political violence involving an implicit threat of further violence which produces a state of fear among the targeted group that can be manipulated and coerced to suit the political demands of the terrorists themselves.

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Anarchist Activism as ‘Terrorism’: Questions of Violence vs. Non-Violence

Adam Goodwin

In interrogating the ‘ethical wrongfulness’ of terrorism, it would be apt to first give a definition of terrorism. What better reference to cite than the US Code. The definition for ‘international terrorism’ is contained within Title 18, Chapter 113B, Section 2331:

International terrorism is considered to (A) involve violent acts or acts dangerous to human life that are a violation of the criminal laws of the United States, or that would be a criminal violation if committed within the jurisdiction of the United States;

(B) appear to be intended—

(i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population;

(ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or

(iii) to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping; and

(C) occur primarily outside the territorial jurisdiction of the United States, or transcend national boundaries.

This definition is valuable; because, by default, it criminalizes the state. The very first intent is the essential precondition to the formation of a state: to intimidate or coerce a civilian population. If one were to hunt for examples to match the other two preconditions of the intent of terrorism, it would not be difficult to pull up suitable examples for most industrialized countries in less than an hour of searching.

In this analysis, I take as my central assumption that the hoarding of wealth through its systematic redistribution via such schemes as the fractional reserve banking system and the issuance of fiat currency is the impetus behind the core grievances of modern activists. What we perceive as modern liberal institutions, and the numerous pathologies associated with them, such as systemic violence, ideologies of racism, false consciousness etc., are merely epiphenomena—mere symptoms—of the central doctrine of resource (read wealth) distribution and its protection.

The intent of my approach is to explore boundaries—I will review the legitimate versus the illegitimate. Not only has the idea of what constitutes legitimate social progress been categorized in capitalist economic terms like purchasing power parity, economic growth, per capita GDP etc.; but the avenues for pursuing qualitative changes have been regulated and channeled. The act of helping people has been formatted to a set code. In the same way, resistance to injustice has been colonized—it’s been infected with an ideological virus which views social change as being instituted or implemented.

In tandem with this is the Dahlian (1971, 1989) definition of democracy: the congruence of contestation and inclusion in a political system. The inclusion element reflexively serves to limit the means of contestation. The contestation element, taking the form of resistance, is legitimate only when it obtains specific criteria. However, those criteria are applicable only to those who are outside of the ruling political cadre—otherwise known as the ‘governed masses’.

The act of contesting politics has been colonized by the ideology of limiting the violence of the masses. This has been allowed to extend as far as the most basic instinct of humans—that of self-defense against violence: one cannot resist an agent of the state while they perform their ‘legitimate’ duties. This limitation serves two mutually constitutive functions: it reinforces the reification of the state by reproducing what Max Weber (1919) termed the state’s claim to the monopoly on the legitimate use of violence, and, secondly, as a result of the first, it inhibits the social development of people by protecting the commodity-for-currency exchange logic that pervades the capitalist state/society nexus. It is on this first function that I will concentrate my analysis.

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A Taxonomy of Violence Applied to the FLQ Crisis

Thomas W. Jarmyn

On October 15, 1970 the city of Montreal and the government of Quebec called upon the government of Canada to declare a state of apprehended insurrection under the *War Measures Act*. Canadian soldiers had already been deployed to Quebec to support police efforts in response to the FLQ (Front de Libération du Québec). The Mayor of the city of Montreal, Jean Drapeau, and the Premier of Quebec, Robert Bourassa, were of the opinion that increased powers of arrest and detention would allow the crimes of the FLQ to be investigated and would hopefully lead to the rescue of two kidnap victims, James Cross and Pierre Laporte.

The government of Canada acceded to that request on October 16th, 1970 and invoked the *War Measures Act*, suspending the Canadian Bill of Rights, granting the right of search and seizure without warrant, detention without charge or bail, declaring certain organizations illegal and making membership in those same organizations illegal. According to the statement of Prime Minister Trudeau there was a state of apprehended insurrection in the province of Quebec and:

The authority contained in the act will permit governments to deal effectively with the nebulous yet dangerous challenge to society represented by terrorist organizations. The criminal law as it stands is simply not adequate to deal with systematic terrorism.

The Prime Minister’s statement included four justifications for the imposition of the *War Measures Act*: 1) there was a state of apprehended insurrection; 2) brought about by terrorist organizations; 3) these organizations were engaged in acts of systematic terrorism; and, 4) the criminal law did not adequately deal with these acts.

Traditionally acts of violence have been characterized as either criminal acts or acts of war. The imposition of the *War Measures Act* was justified by the limitations of the criminal law and the alleged inadequacy of the responses provided by it. However, it is also clear that the Canadian government did not proceed to a full state of martial law or war. What was the basis for the creation of this third category of violence and the response to it? Was it properly characterized as terror? Was the response appropriate?

Tarik Koch, in his discussion of Carl Schmitt’s *Theory of the Partisan*, says that:

The distinction within the concept of war generally between ‘war’, ‘civil

Sample from “The Ethical Wrongfulness of Terrorist Actions”

war’, ‘terrorism’, and ‘crime’, while involving distinctions in the manner, form and scale of violence involved (technological, logistical, strategic) is one which is dependent upon a recognised or assumed legitimacy of the actors involved.

He then writes:

All war involves terror; the war of the state is no less terrible than the terrorist’s use of a car bomb or airplane as a missile. Each involves the politically motivated killing of another people designated as an enemy. What renders the act legal or illegal, legitimate, or illegitimate, depends upon nothing particular about the act itself. Rather, the question of legitimacy is one of legal and political judgment. This does not occur within a vacuum but occurs within a global legal and political context.

This analysis raises the question of the basis upon which the legal or political judgment is rendered. It suggests that particular violent acts do not have objective characteristics that render them legal or illegal and that justifies a state or other actor responding in a particular manner.

Kochi’s analysis suggests that the distinction between the various forms of violence is based solely upon the recognized or assumed legitimacy of the actors involved. I disagree with this analysis as it limits the use of violence purely to state actors. It would permit a circumstance where a limited club of state actors joined together and agreed that, as long as violence was conducted by members of the club, then a certain set of rules would apply, however, there would be no rules in response to violence by actors from outside of the club. Kochi’s analysis is inadequate for the purposes of assessing all violent actors because it is not capable of being applied to the full spectrum of those actors.

Schmitt’s *Theory of the Partisan* provides a basis for extending the classification of war beyond conventional state actors. However, does it extend far enough to justify the response of the Canadian government to the FLQ? I will argue that the *Theory of the Partisan* in combination with Schmitt’s *Concept of the Political*, Ignatieff’s *Lesser Evil* and Walzer’s *Just and Unjust War* establish further subdivisions of acts of violence based upon the characteristics of the actor and the acts involved and that in this case the elevated response of the Canadian government was morally justified.

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Charles Taylor: A Philosophical Evaluation of Identity and Terrorist Actions

Arthur Ashley Labenek

...

In an unstable world challenged by plenty of security concerns brought on by international, domestic and advanced cyber-terrorist networks, how does one begin to think through the question concerning the ethical wrongfulness of terrorist actions? There is no middle ground in this debate but rather two opposing points of view: 1) terrorist activities can be defended in the name of freedom; or 2) they are always ethically wrong regardless of the time and place. The question of whether or not terrorism is ethically wrong is not an easy one to answer, not only because of the diametric nature of the arguments surrounding it, but also because in order to answer the question we must first face the problem of defining what terrorism means for the international community. It is critical to view the study of terrorism through a philosophical and ethical lens because, not only do terrorist actions weaken civil, political and economic stability, they also propagate even more chaos through which the individual must navigate. Indeed, the ferocious tides of terrorism alter the decisive nature of what it means to be a human being living in community with other individuals. This paper will favor an individualistic approach rather than a collective approach when formally thinking through how our resources should be assigned when combating terrorism. That is to say, rather than showing how terrorism impacts government, commerce and national security, I will focus my inquiry on how it causes agony and hardship on the self, particularly in relation to human social interaction. In hopes of bringing clarity to these questions, I will outline and appropriate the basic tenets of Charles Taylor and Brian Jenkins and bring them both into the conversation to evaluate the importance of reflecting on the domain of terrorist actions from a historical perspective.

This research paper is divided into three main sections. I highlight (I) the seminal writings of Brian Jenkins and Charles Taylor and adapt their philosophy to an examination of the tragic events of 9/11. Taylor argues that misrecognition or nonrecognition of identity creates barriers between individuals that erodes the flow of dialogue.¹ The failure to recognize the inherent gifts of other human beings inevitably leads to a sense of alienation and discon-

nection from community and social life. Therefore, minority interest groups resort to violence and ignite the flames of hatred when their identities are misrecognized or unrecognized by others. Terrorists represent a residuum of self-awareness and human identity – a loss of self. Brian Jenkins explains this relationship with his analogy of terrorism as a form of theatre. The actor-spectator relationship in a traditional theatre is architecturally similar to terrorist actions because within the conventions of the theatrical event a message is not intended to be directed at an audience but with the audience in mind. In other words, the actor-spectator relationship is not meant to be monologue but a dialogue. Terrorists forgo the theatrical conventions and command the attention of the spectator as they confuse and permanently tangle the mind and heart of the audience. Naturally, the psychology of the spectator is challenged because he walks out of the theatre a changed person. Both the actor and the spectator cannot move forward in reconciliation, develop a sense of self, and construct common horizons of understanding one another if one party is constantly bombarded with the lethal forces of violence and hatred. In order to bridge the gap between the actor-spectator: recognition, identification and dialogue are central concepts in combating terrorism.

Second, I argue (II) for the incorporation of a robust ethic of recognition that fully engages both the actor and the spectator. Fear and terror cause uneasiness and breakdown the efforts of dialogue and education by poisoning the environment from inside a community. The realization or understanding of identity, dialogue, and recognition may, in turn, reveal the true nature of human community, which is embodied in love for humanity and maintaining the sanctity of life.

In the final section (III), I examine two key passages of the Qu’ran that bring into question the higher moral imperative that is being used to justify and sponsor violence and hatred toward others.

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What is Wrong with the Metaphorical War on Terror?

Mahmoud Masaeli

Language is a central point where ‘I’ and ‘world’ meet or, rather, manifest their original unity.

This means that language is not just about a set of words which designate things; it is the vehicle of this kind of reflective awareness. This reflection is a capacity we only realize in speech. Speaking is not only the expression of this capacity, but also its realization.

After months of threats and a long military build-up, war against Iraq launched in 2003 by the United States under a metaphorical language: “This nation is leading the world in confronting and defeating the man-made *evil* of international terrorism”. It continues that terrorism is a phenomenon which has no regard for the “rules of *morality*”. By reading of these quotes one can easily figure out that two metaphors dominated the American leaders’ conceptualization of the war against Iraq. The United States, metaphorically, sees a nation-state as a person wrongly engaging with the rest of the world. The latter person – Iraq – is a villain who has already expressed aggressiveness toward its innocent neighbouring people out of greediness and ambition, hence is a threat to the whole region and must be stopped⁷. The language employed in these quotes reveals an intention to gain the support of world leadership through the application of force over other independent states. The preemptive gravity of this hidden agenda had already been disclosed in the National Security Strategy of the United States of America: “We must be prepared to stop rogue states and their terrorist clients before they are able to threaten or use weapons of mass destruction against the United States and their allies and friends”. It is then obvious that the metaphors are employed to justify a future war of aggression; a metaphorical reasoning that serves a neo-conservative expansionist foreign policy.

Departing from this hypothesis, two major criticisms must be directed against the metaphorical reasoning in the socio-political imagination of the world by American leaders. Firstly, the metaphorical war on the *evil* of international terrorism is a means to influence and manipulate American society. The religious metaphorcity employed in George Bush’s speeches such as ‘axis of evil’, ‘rogue states’, and ‘moral justice’ reflect policies that are designed by

a hegemonic power to take the position of world leadership. That is to say that “the project of America’s leadership becomes America’s own *pragma*, the thing to be done, and the foreign policy projects to be aspired to”. Secondly, the war against Iraq is more ‘preventive’ (war of aggression) than ‘preemptive’ (anticipatory self-defense) as claimed by George Bush: “our security will require all Americans to be forward-looking and resolute, to be ready for preemptive action when necessary to defend our liberty and to defend our lives”¹¹. This claim does not meet the legally accepted norms of preemption; rather, it expresses a violation of generally accepted norms of behaviour. Indeed, the customary international law under which a preemptive war might be authorized, the war on Iraq cannot be justified because it does not meet the conditions of permissible preemption. As a result, if the war on Iraq cannot be legally justified, it should therefore be considered as an aggressive war. The aggressive war is both morally and legally wrong; morally wrong because it is an ‘offence against international morality’, and legally indefensible since it constitutes ‘the supreme crime’ in international law.

The present essay analyzes the moral and legal wrongfulness of the war against Iraq. In the first part, the moral wrongfulness of language of the war will be analyzed. The second part examines the distinction between the two categories of ‘preemptive’ and ‘preventive’ wars concluding that ‘preemption’ has basically been used to cover the foreign policy objectives of the neo-conservatives. The third part argues that such a war undermines the importance of accountability for a peaceful life-world.

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Boko Haram: New Dimension In Religious Crises And Its Implications For Christian Missions In Nigeria

Sampson Madubochi-Reuben Nwaomah

Abstract

The Nigerian nation has witnessed at least twenty-seven conflicts related to religious ideologies in the last two decades. Most of these crises have resulted in the loss of unquantifiable human, material capital. The most recent of these crises was that of August 2009 caused by a new Islamic movement called *Boko Haram* which detests western education and civilization. The essay begins with an overview of the general concept and causes of religious conflicts in Northern Nigeria and then proceeds to examine the philosophical ideologies of the movement and the reactions of the Nigerian Muslim. Since *Boko Haram* associates western education with Christianity, the paper concludes by drawing some implications for Christian missions in Nigeria.

1. Introduction

Conflict is a principal dilemma in any human society, and most times, it is expected. From human history it appears that conflict is an on-going process in human relations and may arise within and among groups and communities. In the case of Nigeria, one of the several conflicts that constantly plague the socio-political history of the nation is religious conflicts. These conflicts which are quite frequent occur mostly between the Christian and Muslim population in the Northern part of the country. These conflicts, which sometimes assume terrorist dimensions, have resulted in huge economic depletions in the form of loss of lives and properties and have also affected the Christian-Muslim relationship in the country. The most recent of these conflicts is that instigated by the Boko Haram Islamic movement which resulted in the loss of about 740 lives and destruction of property worth millions of naira. This paper therefore is an attempt at discussing the Boko Haram crises. However, in doing this, this paper begins with a survey of religious crises in Northern Nigeria followed by the Boko Haram crises, the ideology of the movement, responses from the Muslim community and finally the implications it holds for Christian missions in Nigeria.

2. Survey Of Religious Conflicts In Nigeria

In discussing religious conflicts in the Nigerian nation, it is of significance to attempt a definition of religious conflict. Perhaps, the most apt description

that this work adopts is that of Gofwen. He opines that religious conflict may be defined as: “a specific form of conflict between groups which differed ideologically along religious lines within a pluralistic setting with each striving for political relevance.”¹ Elaborating on this religious parochialism, a scholar opined:

i) Religions are parochial and emotional socializers. They specialize in building one-faith exclusive brotherhood communities; ii) Religion, at some point, is politics and is the most potent and long lasting political association. Moreover, religious creeds excite and extract the deepest possible emotional and physical loyalties from their adherents when in political competition with people of other faiths.²

One major element which drives this type of conflict is the exclusive and superior outlook that every religious persuasion adopts in its dealing or assessment of others. This attitude tends to hedge out the others thus classifying them as ignorant and doomed. Invariably, this situation creates an atmosphere of hostility. This atmosphere of hostility tends to intensify where contending religious persuasions see their numerical strengths as a plus in political equations. In such a situation, the leaders think that an invading religion is a threat to the hegemony it enjoys. Further, where the political, social or economic factors are unfavourable, this could prompt a tendency of the anticipation of messiah within a religious persuasion. Conversion campaigns by opposing religion(s) and fanaticism arising from indoctrination of the adherents, mostly due to parochial education, could also reinforce religious hostility thereby leading to conflict.

At least 29 religious conflicts have occurred in Nigeria between 1980 and 2009.

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The Ethics of Suicide Terrorism; An Analysis of the Hamas Charter

Rico Sneller

“I dedicate this wedding [i.e. death for Allah] to all of those who have chosen Allah as their goal, the Qur’an as their constitution and the Prophet [Muhammad] as their role model. Jihad is the only way to liberate Palestine – all of Palestine – from the impurity of the Jews...”

“My dear mother, you who have cared for me, today I sacrifice my life to be your intercessor [on Judgment Day]. O my love and soul, wipe your tears, don’t be saddened. In the name of Allah, I’ve achieve all that I’ve aspired. Don’t let me see you sad on my wedding day with the Maidens of Paradise. So be happy and not sad, because in the name of Allah, after death is merciful Allah’s paradise.”

These words belong to the farewell address of a Hamas martyr about to kill both himself and a host of Israelis. I found them on the Israeli Palestinian Media Watch website. This site contains a record of significant Palestinian TV broadcasts, with English subtitles.

How is the suicide combatant’s ethics shaped? What can be inferred here philosophically from documentary evidence? To answer this question I will deal extensively with the 1988 Hamas Charter. Extremist religious texts are rarely investigated as to their philosophical relevance. This might be due to the lack of proper philosophical interest in religion for many decades. The recent revival of interest in religion is mainly characteristic of the social sciences; however, these are frequently oriented towards oral testimonies, to the neglect of textual documents. The book *Terror in the Mind of God*, published in 2000, pays some attention to “life manifestations objectified in written form” (*schriftlich fixierte Lebensäußerungen*, Dilthey), but is for the greater part turned towards potential and real terrorists and their oral witnesses. The same can be said about *My Life Is a Weapon*, *Modern History of Suicide Bombing* or *Army of Roses: Inside the World of Palestinian Suicide Bombers*. The more recent *Violence, Victims, Justifications* neglects religion as a *proper* source of inspiration.

In this article I depart from the hypothesis that written religious documents testify to the religious in a particular way. Apart from the permeable boundary between writing and speech, written sources are characterised by their greater hue of solemnity and canonicity – features commonly used to distinguish religious phenomena from other ones. To take an example: almost at the same time William James and Rudolf Otto distinguished between religious and other experiences by pointing at the greater “element of solemnity” of the former. Let me emphasize once more that the difference between

speech and writing is not absolute, especially as regards the religious sphere – where what is called the ‘ritualistic’ can be seen as a kind of ‘scriptural engraving’; nevertheless, writing, so I would argue, can be taken as a radicalisation of the oral, above all if ‘spiritual’ contents are expressed. In the same line, Dilthey conceives of writing as the accomplishment of language:

“the artistic [arts-like, *kunstmäßige Verstehen*] understanding of life manifestations objectified in written form [*dauernd fixierter Lebensäußerungen*] we call *explanation*. As it is only in language that spiritual life [*das geistige Leben*] finds its complete, exhaustive and, for that matter, expression- enabling objective conception, explanation comes to its full accomplishment in the interpretation of remnants of human existence that have been preserved in *writing*.”

A few pages earlier Dilthey had suggested that writing and religion are closely, if not paradigmatically connected, as the link between religious experience and its scriptural fixation seems to be very tight:

“The possibility of experiencing religious states in my own existence is, both for me and for the majority of other people today, fairly limited. However, when going across Luther’s epistles and writings, the accounts of his contemporaries, the proceedings of religious talks and councils as well as his official communication, I have a religious experience [*erlebe ich einen religiösen Vorgang*] of such eruptive force, of such energy, wherein life and death are at stake, that it lies beyond the possibility of a contemporary person to have any kind of such experiences. Nevertheless, I can re-enact [*nacherleben*] this experience.”

If, then, ‘religion’ and ‘text’ are significantly linked to each other, even in the case of the so-called religions of ‘preliterate’ cultures, a critical reading of a religious extremist *textual* document will probably be as legitimate as it is necessary.

In this article I will try to interpret the Hamas Charter in light of different prevailing moral frameworks, i.e. a teleological, a neo-Aristotelian and a deontological one. As it will appear that none of these frameworks is capable of giving a satisfactory interpretation, I will subsequently deal with the relation between morality and the dimension of the *sacred*. As from the Age of Enlightenment, with its rebuttal of religion, this dimension has been neglected to the extent that today we almost completely lack adequate philosophical language to bring it to expression. ... (article continues in the book)

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Terror & Kant

Peter Wesolowski

1. The Clutches of Terror upon Today’s Global Community

In a time of growing worldly instability, a deadly, new form of combat is emerging. As nations struggle to devise plausible solutions for this latest military tactic commonly referred to as terrorism, human life hangs in the balance. Quite often, international relations experts tackle this issue from distinctly modern, sociological and political perspectives, failing to incorporate the insight of pre-twentieth-century scholars. One such thinker is eighteenth-century German philosopher Immanuel Kant, whose writings; although sometimes theoretical and abstract, bear noteworthy similarities to today’s international problem of terrorism.

The following investigation intends to address two concerns pertinent to the thinker’s philosophical doctrine. Firstly, whether he could justify an act of terrorism as morally permissible and; secondly, the role nations should play, if any, in establishing peaceful relationships amongst each other. It is also important to carefully examine the weaknesses of Kantian thought, as they are indeed present and pose questions regarding their relevance within twenty-first century circumstances. However, before his theories can be examined, it is crucial to understand and investigate this multi-faceted and controversial topic at its very core.

Terrorism is an undoubtedly intricate and fundamentally complicated worldwide phenomenon, and thus its examination can be approached from many directions. This investigation will offer a synthesized interpretation concerning some of its most critical points; including, the attempt to find a clear definition of the term ‘terrorism’ itself, its evolution throughout time with especial relevance to the period wherein Kant composed his writings, its present-day relevance, and potential arguments for its justification. Only after this research has been thoroughly conducted, will the focus shift to a more philosophical methodology.

The investigation of Immanuel Kant’s doctrine will assess the role of violence in his moral conception, his views regarding war, his hypothetical opinions regarding the response to terrorism, and the outcomes surrounding his self-defense doctrine. In an effort to harmonize both fields of inquiry, the investigation will retain these aforementioned divisions but balance them appropriately.

Defining Terrorism

The term ‘terrorism’ is itself notoriously obscure and extremely difficult to define; theoretical literature alone consists of over one hundred individual interpretations. Attempts to clarify its meaning can be rendered especially difficult considering the propagandistic fashion with which mainstream media outlets and even political groups carefully intersperse its usage to further their own agendas. In his compelling work *The Terrorism Reader*, David J. Whittaker argues that the modern media, “whose efforts to communicate an often complex and convoluted message in the briefest amount of airtime or print space possible have led to the promiscuous labeling of a range of violent acts as ‘terrorism.’” The chief sources claiming appropriate definitions of the term are, of course, US-based security agencies, but even their interpretations vary.³

Definitions of terrorism by the Federal Bureau of Investigation⁴, US Department of Defense⁵, US State Department⁶, and the government of the United Kingdom⁷ are analyzed by Whittaker. He expounds the aforementioned conceptualizations in detail, finding similarities within their divergent linguistic structure. One universal point spanning each division’s views concludes that terrorism includes some violence, force, or threat against some given non-military target(s) – though the latter remains unspecified, except by the FBI and UK Government, who interpret it as being either persons or property. Motivational factors of those who perpetrate said actions are also relatively universal between the definitions; often involving a willingness to further political or religious objectives. But despite these obvious similarities, there do exist inconsistencies of emphasis regarding some of the most important points within these four major definitions.

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