

DEFINING TERRORISM

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"It is important to bear in mind that the term "terrorism" is commonly used as a term of abuse, not accurate description. It is close to a historical universal that our terrorism against them is right and just (whoever we happen to be), while their terrorism against us is an outrage. As long as that practice is adopted, discussion of terrorism is not serious. It is no more than a form of propaganda and apologetics." —Noam Chomsky

"It is only worth entering into definitions if something hangs on them. In this case, something does." —Adam Roberts, Professor of International Relations, Oxford University

Barely a few years into it, the twenty-first century is already clearly marked as the "Age of Terrorism." The attacks of September 11, 2001 marked a salient turning point in the history of the U.S. and indeed of global geopolitics. The U.S. declared its number one priority to be the "War on Terrorism," and its domestic, national, and international policies have changed accordingly. In his address to the nation shortly after the 9/11 attacks, Bush used the terms "terror," "terrorism," and "terrorist" thirty-two times without ever defining what he meant.

In the amorphous name of "terrorism," wars are being fought, geopolitical dynamics are shifting, the U.S. is aggressively reasserting its traditional imperialist role as it defies international law and world bodies, and the state is sacrificing liberties to "security." One of the most commonly used words in the current vocabulary, "terrorism" is also one of the most abused terms, applied to actions ranging from flying fully-loaded passenger planes into buildings to rescuing pigs and chickens from factory farms.

An urgent project for the contemporary era, then, is to critically engage the political semantics of the discourse of terrorism.

Semantic Chaos

"There has never been any consensus definition of terrorism." —Richard Betts, director of the Institute of War and Peace Studies, Columbia University

Everyone uses the term, but who really understands it? What precisely is terrorism? What causes it? Who engages in it? Should terrorists be identified according to their intentions, ideologies, tactics, or targets?

When is violence justified so that it is not "terrorism"? How is terrorism different from assault, murder, and other violent "criminal" acts? How can one distinguish morally culpable terrorists from legitimate guerrillas, insurgents, counter-terrorists, or freedom fighters?

Does terrorism include threats of violence as well as actual acts of violence? How important to the concept is the intent to create a psychological state of fear and intimidation, and thereby to inhibit freedom of action and peace of mind? How broadly should one define psychological terms like "fear" and "intimidation"?

"Americans can now read for themselves some of the noxious lessons the United States Army taught thousands of Latin Americans. . . . [The SOA manuals] recommended interrogation techniques like torture, execution, blackmail and arresting the relatives of those being questioned."

14. On the concept of animals as "subjects of a life," see Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

15. These numbers are from the years 1999–2000; fur figures vary greatly according to consumer demand. Hunting numbers have been steadily dropping as factory-farmed animal deaths continue to rise.

16. In June 2001, at the Frontiers of Freedom ecoterrorism conference, Rep. George Nethercutt (R-WA) unveiled his "Agroterrorism Prevention Act of 2001." The bill proposed to expand the 1992 Animal Enterprise Protection Act to protect the property interests of biotech, timber, and various agricultural and biological industries from "terrorists" and saboteurs. As noted by PR Watch, "The bill contains increased sentencing for all levels of violation and an expanded definition of types of businesses defined as 'plant enterprises,' including stores that sell 'plant products' (i.e. paper or wood). Under this extremely broad definition, blocking access to an office supply store, or 'conspiring' to limit profitability of paper products, could be considered 'agro-terrorism' if the loss of revenue met the law's threshold. Likewise, putting 'frankenfood' stickers on GMO products in grocery stores, if the profit loss could be proven, would be considered a terrorist act. Tree-sitting or road blocking to prevent a timber sale would almost certainly qualify as a disruption that would meet the revenue loss threshold." "Post 9/11 Anti-Environmentalism Threatens Green Activism," http://www.prwatch.org/documents/clear_v9n1.html. In June 2002, President Bush signed into law the "Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Response Act of 2002" (also known as the "Bioterrorism Preparedness Act of 2001"). The act is available online at: <http://www.theorator.com/bills107/hr2795.html>.

17. Walter Laqueur, *The Age of Terrorism* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1987), pp. 149–50.

18. For the text of the bill, see www.capitol.state.tx.us/tlo/78r/billtext/HB00433I.HTM.

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6. Thomas Kapitan, "The Terrorism of 'Terrorism,'" in James Sterba, ed., *Terrorism and International Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 47-66. Kapitan's essay is enormously important for the task of creating a credible definition of terrorism that does not render invisible the bulk of violence today and does not demonize peace and justice movements. Kapitan also describes various ways in which sloppy and politically motivated "terrorist" rhetoric increases terrorism, such as by encouraging a cycle of violence and revenge (53).

7. For a dated but still valuable account of U.S. state-sponsored terrorism, see Edward S. Herman, *The Real Terror Network: Terrorism in Fact and Propaganda* (Boston: MA: South End Press, 1982).

8. A 1937 League of Nations Convention, for instance, defines terrorism as "all criminal acts directed against a State and intended or calculated to create a state of terror in the minds of particular persons or a group of persons or the general public." Title 22 of the U.S. Code defines terrorism as "premeditated, politically motivated violence" against "noncombatant targets by subnational groups" usually with the goal to influence an audience.

9. These fascist dictatorships created and financed by the U.S. were euphemistically called (right-wing) "authoritarian" governments to distinguish them from the allegedly far more evil (left-wing) "totalitarian" governments. See Herman's *The Real Terror Network* on this distinction.

10. Edward S. Herman, "Global Rogue State," www.zmag.org/zmag/articles/feb98herman.htm.

11. Stephan Marshall interview with Noam Chomsky, www.guerrillanews.com/counter_intelligence/207.html

12. Philip Cryan, "Defining Terrorism," 2000 www.counterpunch.org/cryan1.html.

13. See School of the Americas Watch at www.soaw.org/new. Their site notes that "SOA graduates have included many of the most notorious human rights abusers from Latin America. SOA graduates have led military coups and are responsible for massacres of hundreds of people. Among the SOA's nearly 60,000 graduates are notorious dictators Manuel Noriega and Omar Torrijos of Panama, Leopoldo Galtieri and Roberto Viola of Argentina, Juan Velasco Alvarado of Peru, Guillermo Rodriguez of Ecuador, and Hugo Banzer Suarez of Bolivia. SOA graduates were responsible for the Uraba massacre in Colombia, the El Mozote massacre of 900 civilians in El Salvador, the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero, and the Jesuit massacre in El Salvador, the La Cantuta massacre in Peru, the torture and murder of a UN worker in Chile, and hundreds of other human rights abuses. In September 1996, under intense pressure from religious and grassroots groups, the Pentagon released seven Spanish-language training manuals used at the SOA until 1991. The New York Times reported,

What is it to be an "innocent" victim of terrorism? Who is "innocent" and who is "guilty"? Can there be terrorism against military targets or only against "civilians" and "non-combatants"?

Does terrorism involve a sudden, singular, direct dramatic action such as a bomb strike, or can it also include an economic or political policy that unfolds slowly, indirectly, yet devastatingly (such as decisions by a government that lead to poverty, hunger, homelessness, and sickness for millions of its own citizens, or the actions the World Bank takes to suppress justice struggles and enforce economic austerity policies on the underdeveloped world)?

How does the new world of information and computers require changing the definition of terrorism (e.g., "cyber-terrorism")? And in a world of high-tech chemistry and genetics, what about the new threats of "bio-terrorism" involving the use of a biological agents to infect a large population? And what of "agro-terrorism" which deploys a pathogen against crops, livestock, and poultry? In addition to injury to people, can there be terrorism against an economic system?

Is it reasonable to speak of the "human terrorism" against the animal world?

It seems that the meaning of the term terrorism becomes clear in inverse relation to the frequency with which it is used. This is true in part because "terrorism" is inherently a complex concept, but more so because it is a subjective, highly loaded, emotionally and politically charged term whose meaning is relative to one's political ideology and agenda, and even one's culture. Since no individual, group, or government wants to accept the negative consequences of the term, "terrorism" is always what someone else does.

There is no consensus definition of terrorism. One recent survey of definitions by leading researchers found 109 different definitions. Beset by political differences, the United Nations General Assembly was unable to pass a resolution denouncing terrorism until 1985. A recent book discussing attempts by the United Nations and other international bodies to define terrorism is three volumes and 1,866 pages long, yet still reaches no firm conclusion. As the UN puts it, "the question of a definition of terrorism has haunted the debate among states for decades." The European Union also has been unable to formulate an adequate definition of terrorism acceptable to all member states. Yet another illustration of the diffuse nature of the term lies in the fact that the U.S. State Department, the Department of Defense, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation all employ different definitions.

The Exploitation of Language

U.S. industries and the state capitalize on the vagueness of the term "terrorism" to apply it in any way they see fit to suit their purposes. In post-9/11 America, the term is used so broadly and promiscuously by state and indus-

try interests that a “terrorist”—or “eco-terrorist,” if an action challenges the interests of those exploiting animals or natural resources—is simply anyone who disagrees with, challenges, or inhibits their profit-driven agendas. We could not put it better than Dan Berry, who wrote on the Clearinghouse for Environmental Advocacy and Research: “If environmental groups cost business money, then they’re eco-terrorists.” Under the current administration, protesters, demonstrators, and government critics are denied their constitutional rights, placed under surveillance, harassed, beaten, jailed, and defamed as treacherous conspirators and terrorists.

The political relativity of the concept is manifest in the trite but true phrase “one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter.” Depending on the interpreter, violence against a perceived enemy can be seen as terrorism or counter-terrorism, as aggressive offense or legitimate defense. To Israel and the U.S. government, Palestinian organizations are terrorists, but to Palestinians they are freedom fighters opposing the occupation of their homeland. The Indian government considers groups working to liberate Kashmir from Indian oppression to be terrorists, while many Pakistanis embrace them as liberators. The U.S. calls its violent allies friends and impugns its foes as terrorists. If we use violence against our enemies, it is a just war or strike; if they use it against us, it is terrorism. The Reagan administration championed the contras as freedom fighters, whereas the Nicaraguan people who endured their bombs and bullets viewed them—more accurately—as terrorists. In November 2001, Bush publicly referred to the Northern Afghanistan alliance as “our friends,” ignoring the fact that, “Since 1992, the various Alliance factions have killed tens of thousands of civilians every bit as innocent as America’s 9/11 victims; their rap sheets includes rape, torture, summary executions and ‘disappearances.’” The U.S. hailed Osama bin Laden and his comrades as freedom fighters in the 1980s, while many government officials denounced Nelson Mandela as a terrorist. The Western world reviled the 9/11 attacks as a paradigm of evil, but Al Qaeda and other enemies of the U.S. upheld it as a legitimate strike in their jihad, while decrying U.S. bombings of Afghanistan as terrorism. The U.S. corporate-state complex censures the ALF as terrorists, while many activists champion them as freedom fighters.

The problem raised by pluralistic perspectives on terrorism is that of establishing some kind of non-arbitrary foundation by which to condemn heinous terrorist acts. Yonah Alexander proposes the norms of international law as the way to distinguish terrorism from a “lawful war.” Others find the critical issue to be whether the immediate target is civilian. Still others uphold the indeterminacy—the lack of precision and stability—of the term’s meaning.

One important point of clarification is that, while the terms “violence” and “terrorism” are used interchangeably, they are two different concepts. All terrorism involves violence, but not all violence is terrorism. For example, violence may be used in cases of self-defense or against legitimate targets—“combatants” rather than “non-combatants”—in conditions of war. Quite

House Bill 433, “Animal Rights and Ecological Terrorism”

IV. Definitions of “Bioterrorism” and “Agro-terrorism”

Bioterrorism is the use of biological agents to intentionally produce disease or intoxication in susceptible populations. —USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Bioterrorism is the use of biological agents in terrorism. This includes the malevolent use of bacteria, viruses, or toxins against people, animals, or plants. —Onnalee Hennebery, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Bioterrorism can be described as the use, or threatened use, of biological agents to promote or spread fear or intimidation upon an individual, a specific group, or the population as a whole for religious, political, ideological, financial, or personal purposes. These biological agents, with the exception of smallpox virus, are typically found in nature in various parts of the world. They can be, however, weaponized to enhance their virulence in humans and make them resistant to vaccines and antibiotics. This usually involves using selective reproduction pressure or recombinant engineering to mutate or modify the genetic composition of the agent. Bioterrorism agents may be disseminated by various methods, including aerosolization, through specific blood-feeding insects, or food and water contamination. —Arizona Department of Health Services

Agroterrorism is the act of any person knowingly or maliciously using biological agents as weapons against the agricultural industry and the food supply. —Steve Cain, Agricultural Communications Specialist

Agroterrorism is the use of biological or chemical agents directed against crops and livestock in an effort to disrupt the food supply to a population. —Vermont Health Alert Network

1. For an excellent historical and political analysis of the complexity of terrorism, see “The Criminology of Terrorism: History, Law, Definitions, and Typologies,” faculty.ncwc.edu/toconnor/429/429lect01.htm.
2. Ray Takeyh, “Two Cheers from the Islamic World,” *Foreign Policy*, 2002, 128 (Jan-Feb): 70-1.
3. Cited in Dennis Hans, “Bush’s Definition of Terrorism Fits Northern Alliance Like a Glove; TV Interviewers Don’t Notice,” *Common Dreams News Center*, November 23, 2001, www.commondreams.org/views01/1123-05.htm.
4. “Terrorist Group Profiles,” library.nps.navy.mil/home/tgp/tgpmain.htm.
5. For an analysis of the self-interested nature of the definition of terrorism, see Brian Whitaker, “The Definition of Terrorism,” *The Guardian*, May 7, 2001.

Terrorism is the unlawful use or threat of violence against persons or property to further political or social objectives. It is usually intended to intimidate or coerce a government, individuals or groups, or to modify their behavior or politics. —Vice-President's Task Force, 1986

1. It is premeditated—planned in advance, rather than an impulsive act of rage.
 2. It is political—not criminal, like the violence that groups such as the mafia use to get money, but designed to change the existing political order.
 3. It is aimed at civilians—not at military targets or combat-ready troops.
 4. It is carried out by subnational groups—not by the army of a country.
- Paul Pillar, former deputy chief of the CIA's Counterterrorist Center

Terrorism is the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological. —Department of Defense

The term “terrorism” means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience. The term “international terrorism” means terrorism involving citizens or the territory of more than one country. The term “terrorist group” means any group practicing, or that has significant subgroups that practice, international terrorism. —State Department

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. —FBI Definition (revised July 2001)

III. Definitions of “Domestic Terrorism” and “Animal Rights and Ecological Terrorism”

Domestic terrorism involve[s] acts dangerous to human life that (A) are a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or of any State; and (B) appear to be intended (or to have the effect): (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 (or any function thereof) by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping (or threat thereof); or (C) occur primarily within the territorial jurisdiction of the United States. —USA Patriot Act (Section 802)

Animal rights or ecological terrorist organization means two or more persons organized for the purpose of supporting any politically motivated activity intended to obstruct or deter any person from participating in an activity involving animals or an activity involving natural resources. —Texas

conveniently, however, the U.S. military says, “We also consider as acts of terrorism attacks on military installations or on armed military personnel when a state of military hostilities does not exist at the site, such as bombings against U.S. bases.” Even the U.S. military can be the target or object of a terrorist attack—but it will never admit to conducting terrorist attacks itself.

The USA Patriot Act shrewdly exploits semantic vagueness. It defines terrorism so broadly (see below) that virtually all political struggle falls under its rubric. The inclusion of attacks on property (see the FBI definition below) means that groups like the ALF and ELF can be considered terrorists by those who accept this definition. Talk of “harboring” terrorists throws out into the political arena a vast net of guilt by association.

Clearly, “terrorism” is not just a word; it is a weapon. The definition is politically motivated by the user in order to target certain individuals or groups. Speakers routinely brand their adversaries as terrorists to malign their cause and demonize them while, conversely, legitimating their own cause and any means necessary to secure it. Regarding the politically motivated use of terrorist accusation, Tomis Kapitan acutely observes:

There is a definite political purpose. . . . Because of its negative connotation, the “terrorist” label discredits any individuals or groups to which it is affixed. It dehumanizes them, places them outside the norms of acceptable social and political behavior, and portrays them as people who cannot be reasoned with. By delegitimizing any individuals or groups described as “terrorist,” the rhetoric:

- Erases any incentive an audience might have to understand their point of view so that questions about the nature and origins of their grievances and the possibility [of] legitimacy of their demand will not even be raised.
- Deflects attention away from the policies that might have contributed to their grievances.
- Repudiates any calls to negotiate with them.
- Paves the way for the use of force and violence in dealing with them and, in particular, gives a government “freedom of action” by exploiting the fears of its own citizens and stifling any objections to the manner in which it deals with them.
- Fails to distinguish between national liberation movements and fringe lunatics.

Those who monopolize power and the means of communication monopolize meaning; they can advance fraudulent definitions of terrorism that become widely accepted and internalized as common sense.

Definitional Exclusion #1: The U.S. and State-Sponsored Terrorism
For self-serving purposes, the prevailing definitions of terrorism leave out

two key facets of violence: state and state-sponsored terrorism, and species terrorism.

First, they define terrorists as lone individuals like Ted Kaczynski or sub-state groups like the Red Brigade. They thereby exclude state or state-sponsored violence, such as the longstanding U.S. policies that financed and directed coups and political violence against civilian populations in Guatemala (1954), Lebanon (1958), the Dominican Republic (1965), Vietnam (1954–75), Laos (1964–1975), Cambodia (1969–1975), Nicaragua (1980–1990), Grenada (1983), Panama (1989), and Iraq (1990–1991, 2003–) to name just some rogue interventions.

Terrorism is something that can be directed against a government, but not directed by a government. U.S. definitions of terrorism include the actions of insurgency movements—social justice movements always demeaned as “communist” in the past—but never the horrors perpetuated by U.S. clients like Somoza in Nicaragua, Pinochet in Chile, and sundry dictators and right-wing death squads. The chemical warfare the U.S. unleashed against the people of Vietnam caused far more casualties than anything perpetuated by Saddam Hussein (using chemicals and weapons given to him by the U.S.). In its imperialist war against Vietnam alone, the U.S. killed over four million people.

Official U.S. state definitions of terrorism always deploy Manichean Good vs. Evil dramas. This strategy allows a double standard whereby the forces of Good ignore or downplay their own violence and legal violations, while hysterically denouncing comparable or lesser infractions by the Evil side. But, as Noam Chomsky observes, the U.S. itself is a textbook case of any reasonable definition of terrorism. In the United States Code and army manuals, terrorism is defined as “the calculated use of violence against civilians to intimidate, induce fear, often to kill, for some political, religious, or other end.” The problem with the official definition, however, is that it “turns out to be almost the same as the definition of official U.S. policy,” though the latter is masked as “counter-insurgency” or “low-intensity conflict.” The official definition, Chomsky claims, makes the U.S. “a leading terrorist state because it engages in these practices all the time. . . . It’s the only state, in fact, which has been condemned by the World Court and the Security Council for terrorism, in this sense.”

Similarly, if one adheres to the official FBI definition of violence, it is clear that in country after country, as systematic and deliberate policy, the U.S. government has used deliberate “force or violence” “unlawfully,” “to intimidate or coerce a government, [a] civilian population, or [a] segment thereof,” in order to achieve “political or social objectives.” In Philip Cryan’s deconstruction, the U.S. has been “directly responsible for acts of terrorism, and for the ‘harboring’ of terrorists, on an almost unimaginable scale in terms of human death and the creation of fear. When Green Berets trained the Guatemalan army in the 1960s—leading to a campaign of bombings, death squads, and ‘scorched earth’

Terrorism is an act carried out to achieve an inhuman and corrupt objective and involving threat to security of any kind, and in violation of the rights acknowledged by religion and mankind. —Ayatulla Taskhiri, Iranian religious scholar

Terrorism is the half-thinking man’s conditioned reflex to sustained oppression and lack of personal empowerment. —Shaukat Qadir, retired Pakistani soldier and political analyst

Terrorism has become an invective that opposing sides hurl at each other for propaganda. The word means those who deliberately harm innocent life for the purpose of forcing behavioral change. —Mark Somma, Chair of the Political Science Department, Fresno State University

“Terrorism” is a word people use to refer to armed struggles they don’t like. —John Burdick, Associate Professor, Syracuse University

II. State and Political Definitions

All criminal acts directed against a State and intended or calculated to create a state of terror in the minds of particular persons or a group of persons or the general public. —League of Nations (1937)

Any act intended to cause death or serious bodily injury to a civilian, or to any other person not taking an active part in the hostilities in a situation of armed conflict, when the purpose of such act, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population, or to compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act. —United Nations

Terrorism is an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi-) clandestine individual, group or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons, whereby—in contrast to assassination—the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. The immediate human victims of violence are generally chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative or symbolic targets) from a target population, and serve as message generators. Threat- and violence-based communication processes between terrorist (organization), (imperiled) victims, and main targets are used to manipulate the main target (audience(s)), turning it into a target of terror, a target of demands, or a target of attention, depending on whether intimidation, coercion, or propaganda is primarily sought. —UN Office of Drugs and Crime, Academic Consensus Definition (Schmid, 1988)

Regardless of the differences between governments on the 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. —United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan

and political goals. —Yonah Alexander, Director of the Institute for Studies in International Terrorism, State University of New York

Terrorism is the use or threatened use of force designed to bring about political change. —Brian Jenkins, founder of the RAND Corporation's terrorism research program

Terrorism constitutes the illegitimate use of force to achieve a political objective when innocent people are targeted. —Walter Laqueur, Chairman of the International Research Council at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, author of *The Age of Terrorism*

Terrorism is the premeditated, deliberate, systematic murder, mayhem, and threatening of the innocent to create fear and intimidation in order to gain a political or tactical advantage, usually to influence an audience. —James M. Poland, Emeritus Professor, Criminal Justice, California State University, Sacramento

Terrorism is the use of force or the threat of force by an individual, group, or nation-state against a civilian population to achieve a political end. —Robert Jensen, Professor in the School of Journalism, University of Texas at Austin

Terrorism is the systematic use of coercive intimidation against civilians for political goals.... The goals of terrorism are always political.... Terrorism as a political act is a primary means of expression and not a last resort.... The targets of terrorist coercion are the civilian population. —Pippa Norris, Montague Kern, and Marion Just, authors of *Framing Terrorism: The News Media, the Government and the Public* (2003)

Terrorism is the deliberate use of violence, or the threat of such, directed upon civilians in order to achieve political objectives. —Tomis Kapitan, Professor of Philosophy Northern Illinois University

Intrinsically, terrorism is a state of mind. Political terrorism, presumably, is the state of mind of political actors who are paralyzed by the threat of unpredictable attack. By default the concept has come to be employed to characterize the kinds of actions that are assumed to induce "terrorism." The circularity of this definition is obvious. —Ted Robert Gurr, founder and director of Maryland's Center for International Development and Conflict Management

Terrorism is the calculated use of violence or threat of violence to attain goals that are political, religious, or ideological in nature through intimidation, coercion, or instilling fear. —Noam Chomsky, Professor of Linguistics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

assaults that killed or 'disappeared' 200,000—U.S. Army Colonel John Webber called it 'a technique of counter-terror.'"

The U.S. coup against the democratically-elected Socialist leader Salvador Allende led to tens of thousands of civilian deaths and torture on a mass scale. Terrorist Henry Kissinger, a key architect of the coup, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1973 and the media continues to portray him as a credible policy expert and ambassador to peace. The U.S. backing of the infamous contras fomented massacres and bloodshed in Nicaragua in the early 1980s, and its backing of the fascist government of El Salvador resulted in 70,000 civilian deaths. The U.S. "harbors" terrorists and rogue states on a global scale. Bin Laden's main line of support stems from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, two major U.S. allies; and the CIA trained and funded the Afghan resistance movement that became the epicenter of terrorist training camps. Speaking of terrorist training camps, let us not forget that at the infamous School of the Americas in Fort Benning, Georgia, the U.S. instructed thousands of Latin American military personnel, humanitarian soldiers like Manuel Noriega who went on to become some of the best dictators, torturers, and mass murderers money can buy.

Definitional Exclusion #2: Species Terrorism

Virtually all definitions of terrorism, even by "progressive" human rights champions, outright banish from consideration the most excessive violence of all—that which the human species unleashes against all nonhuman species. Speciesism is so ingrained and entrenched in the human mind that the human pogrom against animals does not even appear on the conceptual radar screen. Any attempt to perceive nonhuman animals as innocent victims of violence and human animals as planetary terrorists is rejected with derision.

But if terrorism is linked to intentional violence inflicted on innocent persons for ideological, political, or economic motivations, and nonhuman animals also are "persons"—subjects of a life—then the human war against animals is terrorism. Every individual who terrifies, injures, tortures, and/or kills an animal is a terrorist; fur farms, factory farms, foie gras, vivisection, and other exploitative operations are terrorist industries; and governments that support these industries are terrorist states. The true weapons of mass destruction are the gases, rifles, stun guns, cutting blades, and forks and knives used to experiment on, kill, dismember, and consume animal bodies.

The numbers of animals slaughtered by human beings is staggering. Each year, in the U.S. alone:

- Over 10 billion farmed animals are killed for food consumption;
- 17–70 million animals are killed for testing and experimentation;
- Over 100 million are killed for hunting; and
- 7–8 million animals are trapped or raised in confinement for their fur.

These figures do not include the millions of animals killed by the Wildlife Services division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (formerly known

as Animal Damage Control) to protect livestock industry cattle; the 55,000 horses killed in the United States and processed for human consumption; the countless numbers of animals exploited and killed by various facets of the animal “entertainment” industry; and other forms of killing by human predators.

For the animals, every second is a 9/11 attack.

The FBI concept of terrorism defines terrorism as attacks on property, but not on non-human life. Thus, by a definitional *fait accompli*, the ALF is a terrorist group, but not the animal exploitation industries that murder billions of animals every year. The corporate-state complex coined the neologism “eco-terrorism” and currently is expanding and exploiting the meaning of “agro-terrorism,” to bring acts of sabotage against property by groups like the ALF and ELF within the conventional parameters of heinous and despicable forms of violence and evil. Despite national laws against property destruction that already exist, the destroyers of animals and the Earth are intent on reframing sabotage as terrorism, thereby maximizing their ability to vilify and punish strikes against them.

What is Terrorism?

As suggested by the German philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, one cannot always precisely specify the necessary and sufficient elements of a definition, but one can provide a cluster of related concepts. There is no single, universally accepted definition of terrorism, nor is there ever likely to be. Key aspects of terrorism—such as political or ideological motives, violence, targeting noncombatants, the aim of terrorizing, the goal to modify behavior—are relatively clear, but formulating them in a clear, compact, quasi-objective definition has proven to be an enormous challenge. As terrorism expert Walter Laqueur writes, “Even if there were an objective, value-free definition of terrorism, covering all its important aspects and features, it would still be rejected by some for ideological reasons.”

Any broad, abstract definition of “terrorism” always is open to attack by counter-example, will leave out some important element, will be vague to the point of meaninglessness, and may lend itself to political repression. The State Department definition focuses on subnational groups and leaves out nation states. Government analyses exclude from their definitions of terrorism political and economic policies that slowly but surely kill thousands of millions of innocent people. No definitions of terrorism, even those advanced by “progressives” like Chomsky, ever take into consideration the human war against animals.

Our own definition below does not incorporate a psychological aspect involving attempts to create “fear” or “intimidation,” because we find these terms lend themselves to overly broad interpretations that legitimate political repression of activist groups. We prefer to focus on physical violence against all forms of life. Given the root word of “terror,” terrorists clearly aim to frighten and intimidate their targets, but their primary intention

is to inflict physical injury or to kill (and so we find it a bit of a stretch to call groups like SHAC terrorists but certainly not those who profit from violence against animals). We also exclude from our definition of terrorism acts of property destruction against industries as: (1) these acts are defensible in principle; (2) such illegal actions already have names and penalties that do not merit being upgraded from sabotage, vandalism, or arson to terrorism; and (3) the real terrorism involves the crimes that corporations and governments commit against human beings, animals, and the Earth.

Capturing a diversity of definitions of terrorism is a way to begin building a fair and just working definition. Although co-opted by and for the interests of U.S. industries and elites, the meaning of the term “terrorism” is worth struggling over, because in this obscenely violent world there are real terrorists whose actions need to be defined, condemned, and deterred. The task of shaping an accurate definition of terrorism is of enormous consequence today; nothing less than democracy and the right to dissent is at stake. Vague definitions of terrorism give government greater latitude in persecuting dissent. Rather than be standing targets for the terrorism of “terrorism,” activists and voices of opposition need to provide sound definitions and expose the real terrorists for who and what they are.

The following definitions are examples of attempts to define terrorism, including general statements and U.S. government definitions. The repetition of terms and meanings is unavoidable, but it points to key elements that may be necessary or part of a future consensual definition. Save for our own, no definition below directly includes the violence a human being, industry, state, or human species directs against animals.

That is a key philosophical and political task of the present era.

I. General Definitions

The unlawful use or threatened use of force or violence by a person or an organized group against people or property with the intention of intimidating or coercing societies or governments, often for ideological or political reasons. —The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition

Terrorism is the intentional use of physical violence directed against innocent persons—human and/or nonhuman animals—to advance the religious, ideological, political, or economic purposes of an individual, organization, corporation, or state government. —Steven Best and Anthony J. Nocella

Terrorism is the deliberate use of violence against civilians in order to attain political, ideological, or religious aims. —Boaz Ganor, Executive Director of the Institute for Counter-Terrorism

Terrorism is the threat and use of both psychological and physical force in violation of international law by state and sub-state agencies for strategic