

# The True Meaning of Terrorism and Response to Terrorism

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**Abstract:** This research mainly focuses on the divergences and controversies over defining terrorism and how to define, understand and deal with terrorism. Based on the systematic survey and study of previous definitions about terrorism and fully referring to other relevant information and data, this article is devoted to exploring the main characteristics and nature of terrorism, then putting forward a clear, pragmatic and widely accepted definition of terrorism from a relatively unique perspective, and then not only tries to use it as a tool to explain, clarify and solve the problems relating to terrorism in reality, but also deepen the battle against the intangible conception of terrorism by proposing some suggestions to strike at the tangible entity of terrorist organizations and terrorists.

**Keywords:** Terrorism, Terrorist Organization, Terrorist, Terrorist Attack, Definition, Combating Terrorism

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## 1. Introduction

Terrorism is a universal enemy of mankind [1]. Though the international society has spared no efforts in fighting against terrorism, different kinds of brutal and bloody terrorist attacks continuously present themselves to the public through various channels and there is no sign of any decrease in the number of new attacks being received. Statistics show that since the current Global War on Terror after 9/11 the number of terrorist attacks worldwide has increased gradually and significantly. These days with the rampage of ISIS in the Mideast and the horrible serial terrorist attacks in Europe, the commonplace talk was dredged up again: why is it that the harder the world community fights against terrorism, the more terrorist attacks there are? Why can't the international society make concerted efforts to combat terrorism? Although studying and combating terrorism for so many years, people are still confused about many things relating to terrorism, such as why were the suicide bombers of Palestine regarded as terrorists if they were treated as martyrs in their own homeland? Why are there so many controversies about the nature of the ruthless killing of off-duty soldiers and policemen? Why are people of different faiths or complexions committing the same violent crimes, such as shooting at a theatre, handled differently? These differences have greatly affected the progression of

counter-terrorism.

The key obstacle lies in the fact that nowadays "there is neither an academic nor an accurate legal consensus regarding the definition of terrorism" [2]. What's more "what is described as terrorism by one group may be variously regarded as heroism, foreign policy, or justice by others" [3]. After the 9/11 terrorist attacks Zeidan cautioned that "the repercussion of the current preponderance of the political over the legal value of terrorism is costly, leaving the war against terrorism selective, incomplete and ineffective" [4]. This has greatly affected the result of counter-terrorism, so much so that a UN High Level Panel in 2004 lamented that "a lack of agreement on a clear and well known definition undermines the normative and moral stance against terrorism and has stained the United Nations image" [5]. The reality is that the present situation of the study of terrorism is not very encouraging, and statistics show that there has been deficient attention on the definitional issue of terrorism. It seems surprising to see "[given] the exceptional salience and policy relevance of this concept, that over 77% of scholars in leading political science journals who focus on terrorism fail to define it, and many of the remaining 23% offer definitions of their own without paying due consideration to the implications of their conceptual choices" [6]. Other researchers got the same conclusion when analyzing the main academic terrorism

journals in the period of 1990–1999. They found that “[o]f the 490 articles published in the ten-year period, just eight (1.6 per cent) could be regarded as primarily conceptual papers” [7].

In order to enrich the research on the definition of terrorism to make the fight against terrorism easier and more practical and efficient, this article makes an elaborative study circumfusing the existing definitions of terrorism, generalizing the common characteristics and nature of terrorism, clarifying some confusing even erroneous zones, eliminating some differences, and then does some comparative study of and differentiates from some similar notions, and on this basis arrives at several basic theoretic definitions and proper explanations to realistic affairs relating to terrorism. Tactics on fighting against terrorism are also proposed.

## 2. Literature Review

### Central Issue

We all know the importance and necessity of combating terrorism, but what is terrorism? Throughout the years, various countries, international organizations and scholars have attempted to define terrorism from different points of view. Opinions vary and there is no unanimous conclusion, so much so that the study of these definitions almost becomes a field of research, in and of itself. What’s more, some went so far as to suggest that the failure to define the concept was itself a cause of terrorism [8]. Schmid even argued that the lack of a definite definition was perceived widely as one of the factors likely to encourage future terrorism [9]. Studies have found that there are more than 200 different definitions of terrorism. In fact as early as the beginning of 1990s, Simon reported that at least 212 different definitions of terrorism existed across the world and 90 of them were recurrently used by governments and other institutions [10]. Even inside the U.S. Government, different departments and agencies use different definitions reflecting different professional perspectives on the subject. Let’s just take some influential definitions of U.S. as an example to see how definitions may vary.

The U.S. Department of Defense has two definitions of terrorism. The original one was “the unlawful use 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” [11]. The new one which was made public in 2010 is “the unlawful use of violence or threat of violence to instill fear and coerce governments or societies. Terrorism is often motivated by religious, political, or other ideological beliefs and committed in the pursuit of goals that are usually political” [12]. This new definition emphasizes the psychological effect of terrorism and distinguishes between motivations for terrorism and goals of terrorism, especially highlighting the political goal. Since 1983, the U.S. Department of State has used Title 22 (reminiscent of the English phrase catch-22) of the United States Code, Section 2656f(d) to define terrorism [13], which stipulates terrorism as “premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets

by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience” (U.S. Department of State, 2003, p. xiii). This official legal version of the definition focuses on activities that are premeditated by groups at an understate level, but turns a blind eye to whether the use of threat is a terrorist act or not. Another interesting feature of this definition is the characterization of the victims as “noncombatants”, which refers to civilians and unarmed or off-duty military personnel. This is quite controversial and touches off many arguments. We can see that even two departments of the same government cannot fully agree with each other on defining terrorism. The same definitional problem also lies in other bureaus of the U.S., such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Defense Intelligence Agency, and the Vice President’s Task Force on Terrorism of 1986, etc. This illustrates how the designation of essential elements of terrorism can be quite divergent.

The divergences and disputes not only lie in the contents, but also refer to the nature of terrorism. Making a meticulous study of the definitions of terrorism, we can find there are also some rowdy scenes and confusion about the nature of terrorism. Some define terrorism as an act, such as terrorism is “an act or threat of violence against noncombatants with the objective...” [14]. Meanwhile, “terrorism is the use of violence (or force)...” is a common formulation which can be seen in many definitions of terrorism. Some define terrorism as a method or strategy, the distinguished scholar Robert Watson alleged “political terrorism can be defined as a strategy, a method by which an organized group or party tries to get...” [15]. Regarding terrorism as a method is certainly not new. The formulation of terrorism as a “method of combat” was first introduced into the discussion by J. B. S. Hardman in the *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* in 1936 [16]. Some define terrorism as a combination of act and method. The representative one is given by Walter Laqueur, an American historian and political commentator, “Terrorism is the use or the threat of the use of violence, a method of combat, or a strategy to achieve certain targets...” [17]. Some define terrorism as an idea, such as “terrorism is an ideology and conception attributing to spiritual level in nature. Terrorism itself is not the object of legal regulation...” [18]. Some define terrorism as a crime, such as “we must declare terrorism a crime against humanity, and we consider the terrorists enemies of mankind...” [19] and “Germany, the United Kingdom, Spain outlawed terrorism more than a decade ago” [11]. Some think it is a kind of war; “many politicians, political scientists, journalists, and even military officers often refer to terrorism as warfare—a mode of war” [20] and “Hanle finds it necessary to use the term total war to denote this activity (terrorism). This in turn allows him to use limited war to refer to those activities...” [21]. Others evade such thorny question by giving a general idea describing terrorism as “ineluctably political in aims and motives, violent—or, equally important...” [22] or “terrorism sprouts from the existence of aggrieved groups. These groups share two essential characteristics...” [23] can also be found here and there. So much so that Higgins, the judge of the International

Court of Justice, even thought terrorism was merely a convenient way of alluding to activities and has no legal significance [24].

Because of the different understandings about what terrorism is, “the term terrorism has become so widely used in so many contexts as to become almost meaningless” [25]. Even worse, “The term terrorism is currently being employed across the world in a number of illegitimate and misleading ways” [26]. Taking today’s situation in Syria as an example to see how confusedly the term “terrorism” is used. There the government troops have been fighting the rebel forces in the name of count-terrorism, and when giving an interview to Russian media outlets President Bashar al-Assad claimed his country was at war with terrorism and the war would end with the eradication of terrorism [27]. Meanwhile the Syrian government itself has been accused of engaging in state sponsored terrorism by President George W. Bush and by the U.S. State Department [28], and on September 5, 2012 Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan stated, “The regime(Syria) has become one of state terrorism” [29]. What’s more some governments even apply anti-terrorism laws to imprison political opponents [26] etc. Whether or not any or all of these should be classified as terrorism (or terrorists), “the point is that the label is all too often used without any real rigor as to what terrorism is and what its parameters are” [30]. To tag the actions or organizations as terrorism is so arbitrary and irresponsible that the word “terrorism” has been available as a “free for all” counter mark for any actor who wishes to denounce the activities of their political adversaries. As Türker and Crenshaw pointed out “the term is often used in a careless or pejorative way for rhetorical reasons” [31] and it has almost become a “fad word” which is used as a reference to violence regardless of the nature and character of that violence [32]. Vice versa, when we indeed need the concept to condemn some evil actions it may not be available as a label as long as there is no general conviction as to what terrorism really means or what its connotation and extension are. Even talking of the notorious 9/11 attacks, there still exist great controversies about the nature of the case. According to a 2006 Gallup poll, which involved 50,000 interviews in various nations, 7% of the 1.3 billion Muslims in the world—90 million people—went as far as to see the 9/11 attacks as “completely justified” [33].

The notion is so confusing, the opinions are so various and the reality is so complicated that, within academia, the phenomenon is seen as something in its “pre-theory stage”, or, to speak more frankly, as something that “is widely recognized as theoretically impoverished” [34]. Some even claimed that defining terrorism was not only useless, but also impossible if seriously considering the historicity and stability of the concept, and claimed that the reason the generic definition of terrorism was not achieved is because no definition could fully cover all terrorism variations that have occurred throughout history [17]. Then what are the essential variations or elements that constitute the definition of terrorism?

Comparative study of the definitions of terrorism

Before bridging these differences to conclude a

comprehensive convention on international terrorism that incorporates a single, all-encompassing, legally binding definition of terrorism, “it would be useful to delineate some broad characteristics of the phenomenon” [35]. In the later 1980s, two Dutch researchers named Schmid and Jongman at the University of Leiden adopted a social science approach to make a content analysis of different definitions of terrorism in order to find the regular pattern on defining terrorism. They enumerated and identified the main components on the basis of more than 100 academic and official definitions of terrorism, and found a total of 22 different definitional elements, of which the most frequently appeared components defining terrorism were as follows: violence; political goals; inflicting fear and terror; threat; psychological effects and (anticipated) reactions; and so on [36]. Based on this they produced their own definition of terrorism which certainly captures the essential aspects of definitions of terrorism. Afterwards in 2002, three researchers, Leonard Weinberg, Ami Pedahzur and Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler, used different methods and made a similar survey which consisted of 73 definitions drawn from 55 articles collected from three journals. They found the 5 most common frequencies of definitional elements of terrorism are: violence or force; political; threat; method of combat, strategy or tactic; group, movement, organization as perpetrator; etc [37]. From this we can see that public awareness of terrorism is changing with time. A 2003 study by Jeffrey Record for the US Army also quoted the source of Schmid and Jongman’s survey and drew the conclusion that “Terrorism expert Walter Laqueur also has counted over 100 definitions and concludes that the ‘only general characteristic generally agreed upon is that terrorism involves violence and the threat of violence.’ Yet terrorism is hardly the only enterprise involving violence and the threat of violence. So does war, coercive diplomacy, and bar room brawls”. In another study, Merari found that three common elements exist in the legal definitions of terrorism in the U.S., Germany, and Britain. The first is the use of violence, second is political objectives, and the third is the intention of propagating fear in a target population, which was in line with Schmid and Jongman’s survey.

The evolution of the term of terrorism. The emotional side of terrorism has undergone tremendous change

According to etymology, language is organic, changeable, fluctuating, depending on the needs of thinkers and speakers over time and place. The literal meaning and the emotional side of some words or phrases may undergo significant changes with time. Terrorism is no exception. The term “terrorism” was first recorded in English language dictionaries in 1798 meaning “systematic use of terror as a policy”. But with time, the quality and dimension of the word has “politically and emotionally changed” [38] and, drastically, “the meaning of terrorism has undergone a transformation”. From once referring to revolutionaries, then repressive government, now the term terrorism is commonly used to describe terrorist acts committed by non-state or subnational entities against a state [22]. Meanwhile, it has lost its original meaning on the emotional side and changed from a

neutral word to a derogatory word. "In fact, the only universally accepted attribute of the term terrorism is that it is pejorative" [39]. It is only something the bad guys do. As Conor Gearty remarked, "[T]he word resonates with moral opprobrium and as such is, as far as the authorities and others are concerned, far too useful an insult to be pinned down and controlled" [40]. Nowadays, "terrorism is a pejorative term. It is a word with intrinsically negative connotations that is generally applied to one's enemies and opponents, or to those with whom one disagrees and would otherwise prefer to ignore" [41]. When people employ the term, they characterize their enemies' actions as something evil and lacking human compassion. In summary, nowadays terrorism, which is considered worse than war, torture, or murder, has become a pejorative term that is fraught with negative and derogatory meanings usually referring to the killing of people by non-governmental political activists for political reasons, often as a public statement in modern times and communication in peaceful times.

The specific research questions are: what is terrorism and how should terrorism and other relevant notions be defined?

### 3. The Main Characteristics of Terrorism

From intensive study of different kinds of definitions of terrorism and other relevant information, several main characteristics of terrorism which are widely accepted can be found.

Summarizing the acceptable characteristics of terrorism

*Having a general subject and fixed object.* The subject of terrorism is general. Every person, whether old or young, man or woman, can be a potential terrorist; and a certain group, as long as it is tightly organized and commits violence on its behalf, could also be the subject of terrorism. There is also a common view that all kinds of terrorist attacks invariably focus their targets on civil or soft objectives, so the victims of terrorism inevitably cover noncombatants or civilians or other innocent people.

*Having certain kind of goals and motives.* There are always some causes for terrorism to happen. The goal of terrorism is to coerce governments or international organizations to do or refrain from doing something. Normally such goals carry some political elements and are not illusory with no reality whatever, but achievable and can be reached by struggle. The goals generate motivation, and motivation drives and conducts man's behavior.

*Pursuing double level effect.* Terrorist attacks always cause casualties and property losses. But this is only a superficial phenomenon. "The direct victim is generally not the ultimate target of the violence" [42]. In fact the true meaning of terrorism exists in organized and systematic attempts to create fear, to cause an atmosphere of terror in society and spread panic among certain population [16]. The casualties and property loss are only the necessary funerary objects. The main goal is to intimidate the people, through which to bring pressure on some government or organization. The more casualties and property loss, the better.

*Being deliberate and elaborate for concrete action.* There is no negligence in terrorist crime. Terrorists are always conscious about what they are going to do, whether proactive or being forced to do so. Though the targets of terrorism are selected at random, the means which are used to launch the attack and the actions themselves are always painstakingly premeditated and carefully planned in advance.

*Being violent and criminal in nature.* Violence is tightly connected with terrorism. All the violent methods that can be imagined, found and applied to commit casualties and property loss can be used to launch terrorist attacks. The concrete acts or conducts which are used to launch terrorist attacks are criminalized under any national body of criminal law. Therefore all terrorist actions are under the jurisdiction of every country.

The main controversies about defining terrorism and the reasonable solutions to them.

There are so many definitions of terrorism. Nevertheless, there is little consensus on the definition of terrorism, both within academic and policy circles. The Obama administration even considered replacing terrorism with violent extremism in an effort to distance itself from the counter-terrorism policies of the Bush government and the war against terrorism [43]. Even one of the most influential definition of the United Nations involving the suppression of the financing of terrorism had only gotten 132 signatories and 22 ratifications at first (as of July 2015 the treaty has been ratified by 187). Before ratification, some states gave excuses that they would not be totally restrained by it. Why can't the international community reach an agreement on the definition of terrorism? It is almost impossible to reach broad agreement without solving the controversies scientifically and reasonably first.

The main focus is whether or not the international community can reach an agreement on terrorism regardless of its political divergences.

As the saying goes one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter [35], some scholars alleged that it is unlikely that any definition will ever be generally agreed upon [44]. Schmid even quoted Laqueur's words to caution those engaged in such a conceptual pursuit as saying "terrorism is dangerous ground for simplificateurs and generalisateurs" [9]. In 2011 in a briefing paper for the Australian Parliament, Angus Martyn has stated that "the international community has never succeeded in developing an accepted comprehensive definition of terrorism. During the 1970s and 1980s, the united nations attempts to define the term foundered mainly due to differences of opinion between various members about the use of violence in the context of conflicts over national liberation and self-determination". This statement hits the heart of the thorny question: can justicial cause justify the actions for that cause and exempt an extreme violence targeting civilians from terrorist attacks?

To solve this tough question we can only make a distinction between the goals and the means realizing the goals. In a sense there are two types of goals: sublime or evil, and two types of means of realizing the goals: cautious and vicious. Anything

with a positive side should be treated correspondingly. If either the goal or the means to realize the goal is right, there exists an appropriate reason to exempt such things from the worst judgment. While as above-motivated, terrorism is a pejorative and perhaps the most excruciating term which is used to condemn one of the worst things in the world. So if a goal is sublime and deemed to be so by the majority of mainstream society, the actions fighting for the goal can't be considered in the category of terrorism. Just as Hoffman argued, "The difference between the revolutionary and the terrorist... lies in the reason for which each fights. Whoever standing by a just cause and fighting for the freedom and liberation of his land from the invaders, the settlers and the colonialists, cannot possibly be called a terrorist" [22]. So we should be scrupulous in order not to terrorize legitimate violent resistance to oppressive regimes and become complicit in that oppression.

This does not mean people can use whatever methods to realize their goals. The sublime motivation only exempts the nature of the action from terrorism, but not from being a crime. It is still illegal though justifiable. This exemption only diverts the international community to resort to other conventions, treaties, and relevant international or domestic laws to deal with such unjust actions. That is to say even if there is a sublime motivation, people still should behave themselves to act cautiously, instead of using unscrupulous divisive tactics to turn such goals into reality. If not, the methods themselves are reprehensible and blamable, and should be condemned and punished anyway. We also should know using justified reasons to cut the connection of some extreme violent crimes against civilians from terrorism does not mean the definition of terrorism can be made contingent upon delving into the root causes of this issue, but means such actions don't constitute the requirements of terrorist crimes at all.

Just cause must only be limited to such political motivations as national liberation and self-determination. But where should the line be drawn between the quest for nationalist identity and an act of terrorism? [45]. The question can be answered by adding several integral layers of meaning. First, the organizations fighting for such political motivations must have positive political appeal and have the potential to turn into a political party representing the benefits of some populations. Such just cause must be recognized by international society and the organizations fighting for the cause must have the will and potential to be recognized by the international community. The member of such an organization himself and most members of his family must actually feel proud of his decision, and joining the organization enhances his and his family's appearance in the eyes of his cognition.

Other contentions, such as whether only those attacks targeting civilians can be classified as terrorism, whether the state can be the subject of terrorism, whether terrorism is the weapon of the weak against the strong, which have puzzled the mind of those who devote to define terrorism, can also find negative answer here.

## 4. Defining Terrorism and Relevant Notions

Clarifying some misconceiving or confusing concepts

Sound strategy requires a clear definition of the enemy, and the need for a definite definition about terrorism is self-evident. So how to define terrorism more scientifically and accurately? Before giving an answer we should first clarify a couple of confusing even misconceiving notions.

Terrorist act is not equal to terrorism. Some define terrorism from the perspective of behavior, and this is somewhat reasonable. But terrorist action doesn't mean terrorism itself. Here what we want to emphasize is that most of the legal provisions which unanimously define terrorism as behaviors, which can be seen in many international conference resolutions, treaties, or the legal codes of various countries, are not definitions of terrorism at all, however are misused or misunderstood by many as definitions of terrorism. This is totally wrong and confusing. We all know in criminal law we define a particular kind of crime by describing the behavioral characteristics of such crime in detail, and when someone engages in that behavior, we consider him as committing such a crime. In order to avoid prejudice the provisions of criminal law are carefully and deliberately elaborated to avoid emotional or affective words and shun ambiguous or subjective terminology, so every crime is unique, special and explicit. The same is true for defining terrorist act. In order to identify something as terrorist act according to the law, it is necessary, even indispensable, to describe it in detail behaviourally. So almost all the definitions in the legal codes relating to terrorism are the definitions of terrorist act, not terrorism itself.

Terrorism is different from terror. Though the term terrorism comes from the word terror, there are tremendous differences between them. Terror is an ancient word and only refers to a status, or more accurately, "an induced state of fear or anxiety within an individual or group of individuals" [46]. Terror is a normal social phenomena, which is created by a level of fear that so agitates the body and mind that those struck by it are not capable of making an objective assessment of risks anymore [42]. It can be created by terrorist actions, and can also be created by other violent crimes, even by some natural disasters, such as earthquakes, tsunamis, wild animal attacks, and so on. Terror can be experienced and exercised by any person, even by those who are mentally ill, just like joy, sorrow, and other human feelings. Terrorism is a relatively new word, which became an issue on the international agenda in 1934, when the League of Nations drafted a convention for the prevention and punishment of terrorist acts which took the first major step toward making terrorism highly illegal and punishable [47]. Terrorism not only involves the systematic use of violence to realize some goals which are tightly connected with political, religious or ideological motivation, but actually is the strategy or methodology leading to or guiding a series of violent actions. A single person can create terror but is incapable of realizing the goal connected with terrorism. Individuals can only make sense

when they are in groups.

#### The nature of terrorism

Terrorism is, first and foremost, a methodology or strategy which involves systematic use of violence to realize certain political, religious, or ideological goals tightly connected with faith and belief in times of peace or conflict. In order to realize any goal, there have to be actions and guidance to conduct the actions, so that energy will not be wasted on something useless or even counterproductive. The same is true for terrorism. Terrorism is the guidance or creed of serial actions which are helpful in achieving the fixed goals. The mechanism of terrorism can only be manifested by behaviors and the goals of terrorism can only be achieved by actions (including language). But terrorism itself is not action at all, and it is not under the domain of legal regulation. "The term 'terrorism' cannot be used as a behavioural description" [3]. It is only the bridge between the goals and actions, and it guides the actions to goals. In order to achieve the goals, the actions have to be comprehensive and multiple, which is formidable for a single person. To say more accurately, the goals relating to terrorism can only be fulfilled by a group having the common faith. But terrorism can't be labeled or tagged to any organization or entity. Only an organization that "looks, smells and kills like terrorism" could be considered terrorist. Of course, there is rarely the case that terrorism is used exclusively as a form of struggle by an organization. "In general terrorism forms but one part of the political activity of those who carry it out, and in some cases this other activity includes other forms of political violence" [30]. But as long as an entity takes terrorism as its guiding strategy and main behavior patterns, advocates violence and glorifies indiscriminate killing, it is very likely a terrorist organization.

The mechanism of terrorism is unique from any other crimes or accidents. Namely, the essence of terrorism lies in its intent to generate a psychological impact beyond the immediate victims [8] and "the primary intent [of terrorism]... is to produce fear and alarm that may serve a variety of purposes" [32]. To cause damage and casualty is only the ostensible phenomenon. "For the most part terrorism is aimed at the audience, not the victims" [48]. So it is no wonder that the 7/7 London and 9/11 terrorist attacks made the British and U.S. feel that the whole nation was attacked. Therefore the key to the mechanism of terrorism resides in the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear and panic in the mind and heart through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change [22]. As long as the public is intimidated and their opinions about something are vacillated, or the government is forced to take extremely excessive measures to insure the public safety, no matter how many losses, the attack can be considered a successful one. Namely it is the response of the public that really reflects the success of the attacks, and even a fruitless attack could be regarded as a successful one. For example, despite the failure of the 2009 underwear bombing, Al Qaeda called it a success because the fear caused a disruption in the transportation of goods and that resulted in economic damage [49]. It wasn't even necessary to kill anyone.

#### The nature of terrorist crime

Terrorist crime is the general designation of all kinds of relevant violent crimes. It is a bag which contains many related violent crimes, and we can't specialize it in one imputation. If we want to emphasize the special violent crime relating to terrorism, what we can do is to put "terrorist" before the special crime. Terrorist crime can't be confirmed on the spot, there are no such things as acts of violence that can be in and of themselves inherently labeled having the nature of terrorism, even those that might be commonly associated with terrorism, such as a suicide bomber self-detonating in a crowded market place, can't be taken for granted as an act of terrorism without any further thought. It is not a case that "you know it when you see it" [50]. It is only when one adds deeper meaning, such as motive, goal and/or ascription, to the concrete act that one can then determine whether or not such an act might be labeled as terrorism. Namely terrorist crime is not something that can be labeled by first sight, it can only be verified after investigation.

#### The definition of terrorism and how to comprehend it

From the aforementioned discussion, terrorism can be defined as this: Terrorism is a methodology or strategy which advocates systematic use or threat use of calculated violence against randomly selected targets to create an atmosphere of terror among certain people or general public beyond the immediate victims with the aim to bring political, religious, social or economic change. From this definition, we could deduce other relevant definitions relating to terrorism. A terrorist organization is an illicit clandestine non-state organization or subnational entity which takes terrorism as its guidance and focuses on committing violent crimes to pursue political, religious or ideological goals. A terrorist is the person who physically or mentally attaches or affiliates to a certain kind of terrorist organization and is willing to fight for the organization. Terrorism is the credendum or beacon light which guides the behaviors of a terrorist organization and condenses it together. The goals associated with terrorism can only be achieved by a terrorist organization. All the people attached or affiliated to the terrorist organization are terrorists. If a person can't be traced to any terrorist organization, the person can't be considered a terrorist. Namely, terrorists actually or nominally belong to terrorist organizations and are members of terrorist organization, whether physically or spiritually, formally or virtually, as long as he believes in it and fights for it. Terrorists can't exist alone, and they are meaningful only in the organization. As the saying goes, no man is an island, and everyone relies on his interaction with others. The sense of belonging drives the ordinary people to do something they would not ordinarily do, and the group dynamic is vital for terrorists to grow and succeed. Terrorist crime is the means for terrorist organizations and terrorists to realize their goals, the manifestation and embodiment of terrorism, and can be the bond between terrorism, terrorist organizations and terrorists.

On the basis of defining, comparison and analysis of terrorism and other related notions, we can derive the following conclusions: all the actions committed by terrorist organizations are terrorist actions, and the criminal ones of

them can be considered as terrorist attacks. As Schmid referring to the “faulty circular reasoning” came to the view that once a group has been designated “terrorist”, all acts of violence by that group were “terrorist” [35]. The violent actions which are committed by individuals for terrorist organizations or in the name of terrorist organizations are also terrorist attacks. However not all the criminal actions committed by the terrorist organization members are terrorist attacks, especially the ones out of personal willingness. The violent crimes which have nothing to do with terrorist organizations are not terrorist attacks; thereby the individual person who commit violent actions out of their own opinion or under the influence of other things, no matter how violent, bloody or using whatever methods, is a normal violent criminal. Above all, terrorists always fight for the goals related to terrorism which are pursued by terrorist organization. A specific terrorist crime is not an isolated one, and it is only an integrant link of systematic organized crimes of terrorist organizations. When one terrorist attack occurred, it means more similar attacks will follow after this despite many attacks may have already happened.

From this point of view, we can easily distinguish whether a crime is terrorist one or not. All the genuine sole-wolf having nothing to do with a terrorist organization and fighting for personal or some other reasons can't be redeemed as a fighter fighting for terrorism. So recent years in some specific countries many extremists who butchered the students in schools or killed the passengers by setting the bus on fire can't be regarded as terrorists, because they committed violent crimes purely out of spite, retaliation or other private reasons. But if the sole wolf commits crimes for certain terrorist organization, actually or nominally, he could be regarded as a terrorist. Take the lone gunman Man Haron Monis as an example, who held hostage ten customers and eight employees of a Lindtchocolate café located at Martin Place in Sydney, Australia, and declared that this action was a formal attack by ISIS. During the incident Monis was killed and several others were killed or injured. The investigation corroborates that Monis was a mentally ill person and had nothing to do with ISIS. Controversies about the nature of the case have never ceased. From the discussion above we think this is a typical terrorist attack. We can also say with certainty that the bombing of U.S. Destroy Kole is also a terrorist attack. Meanwhile the behaviors done for some kind of belief which is illusive or fanciful and assumed by no organization have nothing to do with terrorism, and the same is true for the persons who commit such things. Hence all the criminals who committed crimes out of hallucination are not terrorists.

## 5. Combating Terrorism

The general requirement to combat terrorism

We all know terrorist crime mainly and deliberately targets the innocent people and civilians in peacetime environments. Which makes terrorism so shocking and extranormal that it can't be considered as a domestic affair confined to the involving country. A characteristic feature of terrorism is “the

violation of established norms.” It crosses the redline and becomes an international crime just as war crimes and crimes against humanity. As a result it threatens the world peace and development for mankind and becomes an evil against the whole world. So we have to go all out to fight against terrorism. But how to combat terrorism?

Before we take concrete measures to combat terrorism, we should clarify one question first: What promote and foster terrorism? There are many reasons for terrorism to originate and grow, but maybe President Bush hit the nail on the head by saying terrorism hates the democracy and freedom [51]. Terrorism and democracy are incompatible, so if all the people in spite of their nationality, race, colour, faith, can join hands to make the world more prosperous, more democratic and freer, then terrorism will have nowhere to hide.

Concrete countermeasures on combating terrorism

Making concerted efforts to fight. International terrorism can only be fought by international cooperation. In order to fight against terrorism more effectively, we have to think and work with one heart and one mind. The all-important problem is to reach a maximum consensus about what we are fighting: what is terrorism. Because “it is not enough to declare war on what one deems terrorism without giving a precise and exact definition” (President Emile Lahoud, Lebanon 2004), and the widely accepted definition of terrorism is a counter-terrorist weapon itself [52]. Once a comprehensive definition is formulated, the whole world can provide the strongest moral condemnation to terrorist activities, meanwhile have enough precision to permit the prosecution of criminal activities without condemning acts that should be deemed to be legitimate [53]. Also based on the agreement the relevant nations can draw up the international or multilateral or bilateral conventions, treaties and other common rules on counter-terrorism built on a win-win situation, furthermore the participating parties can take active measures to introduce them into domestic laws. Only the international community in accordance with each other on mutual legal assistance can the concrete methods, such as information sharing, financial control, criminal extradition work well, can the battle against terrorism be effective and efficient.

Taking proactive measures to combat terrorism. Normally there are two types of counter-terrorism policies: proactive or reactive. Proactive policy involves aggressively fighting against terrorist organizations and eliminating their resources, infrastructure and personnel; while reactive policy refers to protective measures either to divert the attack or limit its consequences. Proactive policy also comprises two types of concrete measures: preemptive and strike. The proactive measures are more efficacious because the preemptive attacks, if successful, can continuously incapacitate the terrorist organizations and remove them from posing terrorist threats to all potential targets. What's more, they even can sever the branches and destroy the roots of terrorism. Then how to use proactive policies more efficiently? What we should do is to find the suspicious terrorist organizations and terrorists from the hint of terrorist behaviors or other clues and then confirm and destroy them. The U.S. Anti-terrorism policy listing and identifying both

Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) and Domestic Terrorist Organizations (DTOs) and then using all kinds of methods to sanction and strike them exemplify such measures.

Dealing with terrorism rationally. Terrorism mainly is a form of psychological warfare. It aims at attaining specific political ends (motivation) through the creation of fear, and not through the mere act of violence. Namely it prefers to the psychological effect than the tangible aftermath. As above-mentioned, to cause casualties and property losses which are only the by-products of terrorism is only superficial phenomena, the true intention is to realize deep-seated goals by intimidating the watching audience. The key point lies in whether or not the terrorist attack can be understood or misinterpreted by the audience as its perpetrators expect. Just being aware that fear is what terrorists really want. Then if the public involved can contain the instincts of fear and hysteria and not be provoked, and if the authoritative can remove terror from terrorism and cut the link between the terrorist attack and the intimidation arousing from it effectively, terrorism will not work at all. So the government and its people should be aware that "the media is the oxygen of terrorism". What they should do is, on the one hand, to give the radical groups a voice on a regular basis in line with liberal principles of the free market of ideas [54] on the other hand, to pull out all the stops to prevent terrorism from getting publicity to reduce the motivation to act violently, especially not oversell the effect of terrorist attacks for the sake of eye-catching, and what's more, to face the potential and actual terrorist attacks rationally and appropriately, neither underestimate nor overreact to terrorism, not let them affect, or to say the least, strongly impact the social order and the regular life of the people. If so, terrorism is nothing but only a normal social phenomenon.

Making the goals for terrorist organization impossible to realize. As above-mentioned, every terrorist organization has and fights for realizable goals. When the goals become illusive and unachievable, the survival of the terrorist organization will become arduous. So what the authorities should do is to take multi-pronged measures to continuously deteriorate the living environment of terrorist organizations. To exploit every opportunity to make the people relentlessly and widely expose to science knowledge about the vicious quality of terrorism, and take concerted actions to make it clear that the strategy of the terrorist organization can't lead to the intended results. Only if the international society can reach the result of making the existence of terrorist organization be like water without a source, or a tree without roots, making terrorism be the object of universal condemnation and preventing young people from joining such evil organizations, can the battle against terrorism win the final victory.

## 6. Conclusion

It takes time to win the battle against terrorism.

The human society has been fighting to eradicate the threat of terrorism for many years, but till now there is no sign that the goal will be realized in the foreseeable future. Two major obstacles hinder the process of the battle. One lies in the

subjective factors and resides in the people's minds and mainly manifests itself in the form of what is and how to combat terrorism, which is also what this paper tries to clarify. The other lies in the objective factors and mainly manifests itself in the form of disparate development, cultural differences and the inherent defects in human nature, etc., which needs the concerted, coordinated and selfless efforts of human society to overcome. Just as the illicit drug-related trafficking can't be eliminated at present, the battle against terrorism can't be accomplished at one stroke. Sometimes terrorism works and such successful cases boosted the confidence of terrorist organizations and made others to follow. Meanwhile although more and more terrorist groups were wiped off by the justice force or died from other reasons, new forms of terrorism and terrorist organizations emerge on and on. What's more the soil for breeding terrorism still exists. As long as the world develops unevenly, the people can't express their opinions and thoughts freely and unimpededly, communication and dialogue is not heartfelt and direct, the authentic information is concealed or distorted intentionally by some evil entities or other vicious forces, people can't get the true information conveniently and easily, terrorism can't be eliminated ultimately.

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