

Question 11: Can states be terrorists?

Policymakers broadly contend that terrorism is a form of political violence limited to non-state actors. Scholars are divided on the matter with some arguing that states can also be guilty of terrorism. This lecture analyses the main objections to the use of the term 'state terrorism' and assess the various methods and strategy through which states may be involved in terrorism.

Discussion questions

1. States have the monopoly over the legitimate use of coercive force. Discuss
2. The United State, and other western democracies, are guilty of state terrorism. Discuss
3. The US list of 'State Sponsors of Terrorism' is the result of objective analysis of the issue. Discuss, providing examples

Essential readings

Blakeley, R. 2009. "State Terrorism in the Social Sciences: Theories, Methods and Concepts." In *Contemporary State Terrorism: Theory and Practice*, edited by Richard Jackson, Eamon Murphy, and Scott Poynting, 12–27. Routledge.

Byman, Daniel. 2018. "How States Exploit Jihadist Foreign Fighters." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 41 (12): 931–45.

Further readings

Figuerola Ibarra, Carlos. 2013. "Genocide and State Terrorism in Guatemala, 1954–1996: An Interpretation." *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 32 (s1): 151–73.

Jalata, Asafa. 2005. "State Terrorism and Globalization: The Cases of Ethiopia and Sudan." *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 46 (1–2): 79–102.

Herman, Edward S. 1987. "U.S. Sponsorship of International Terrorism: An Overview." *Crime and Social Justice*, no. 27/28: 1–31.

Honig, Or, and Ido Yahel. 2017. "A Fifth Wave of Terrorism? The Emergence of Terrorist Semi-States." *Terrorism and Political Violence*, June, 1–19.

Robie, David. 2016. "The Rainbow Warrior, Secrecy and State Terrorism: A Pacific Journalism Case Study." *Pacific Journalism Review* 22 (1): 187–212.

Smith Finley, Joanne. 2019. "Securitization, Insecurity and Conflict in Contemporary Xinjiang: Has PRC Counter-Terrorism Evolved into State Terror?" *Central Asian Survey* 38 (1): 1–26.

Sproat, Peter Alan. 1991. "Can the State Be Terrorist?" *Terrorism* 14 (1): 19–29.

Stohl, Michael. 2006. "The State as Terrorist: Insights and Implications." *Democracy and Security* 2 (1): 1–25.

Zanchetta, Barbara. 2016. "Between Cold War Imperatives and State-Sponsored Terrorism: The United States and 'Operation Condor.'" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 39 (12): 1084–1102.

Non-peer reviewed resources

- Byman, Daniel. 2008. "The Changing Nature of State Sponsorship of Terrorism." Washington: Saban Center at The Brookings Institute.
<https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-changing-nature-of-state-sponsorship-of-terrorism/>
- "National Security Podcast: Counter-terrorism and China's war on Uyghurs." February 11, 2019. <https://www.policyforum.net/national-security-podcast-counter-terrorism-and-chinas-war-on-uyghurs/>
- "Noam Chomsky: US is world's biggest terrorist." *Global Conversation*, April 17, 2015.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vRbnPA3fd5U>.
- "The Age of Terror. In the Name of the State," *The Discovery Channel*, 2002.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qC4sEo8529U>.
- "Talk to Al Jazeera - Joshua Oppenheimer: Indonesia's 'regime of fear'," *Al Jazeera English*, 26 March 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u7szJVJF4jk>.