

Fighting “the Evil Scourge of Terrorism”:
From ‘Jewish Terrorism’ to ‘Islamic Terrorism’ in the
United States, 1940-2017

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Talking about ‘Terrorism’

On Monday, July 22, 1946, a little after 12:30 pm, a huge blast ripped through the prestigious King David Hotel in Jerusalem. 91 people died while another 46 were injured and large parts of the hotel’s Southern wing were destroyed. At the time, this part of the hotel was used as headquarters by the British authorities who had installed offices in the building, immediately raising suspicions that the hotel had been targeted because of the British administrative presence. The Irgun, a Jewish militant group, claimed responsibility for the bombing which marked a bloody high point in the continuously escalating conflict between the Jewish communities and the British forces in Mandatory Palestine. Back in 1922, Britain had received an official mandate by the League of Nations to administer “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, it being clearly understood that nothing should be done which might prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine” (“Palestine”). In the years since then, the conflict between the Arab and Jewish populations and the British forces concerning the ownership and control of Palestine had been brewing, regularly erupting into violence and destruction.¹

Contemporary commentators were clear in their condemnation of the bombing. British Prime Minister Clement Attlee, for instance, called what had transpired an “insane act of terrorism.” Similarly, President Truman warned that “[s]uch acts of terrorism w[ould] not advance, but on the contrary might well retard, the efforts that [we]re being made [. . .] to bring about a peaceful solution of this difficult problem.” *The New York Times* also reported on the bombing on its title page the next day, writing that “terrorists, believed to belong to either Irgun Zvai Leumi or the Stern gang, blew up a large part of the offices of the chief secretary of the Palestine Government” (Meltzer 1). The article continued by describing how rescuers “were bringing out bodies on stretchers, leaving a trail of blood over the rubble” before ending on the note that a British White Paper was set to be

¹For more on the history of Mandatory Palestine and the events which led to the foundation of Israel in 1948 and the Arab-Israeli War that same year, see, e.g., Bell, *Terror*; Golani; and Suárez.

released which “detail[ed] evidence that, the Government said, linked Jewish leaders with Palestine violence” (1, 3).

Meanwhile, George Metesky, angry that his former employer, the Consolidated Edison power company, had refused to pay him compensation for an accident at work which left him disabled and out of a job, had begun planting self-made pipe bombs in irregular intervals in New York City. Between 1940 and 1956, Metesky deposited at least 33 devices in public spaces like restrooms and theaters. Two thirds of these pipe bombs went off, injuring 15 people (“15 Were” 10). The police struggled to develop a lead on the identity and whereabouts of the unknown perpetrator who was quickly nicknamed the “Mad Bomber” by the media as people living in the city became increasingly anxious and panicked about the bombings.² In order to capture Metesky, the police had to adapt its strategies, developing practices like criminal profiling with the help of a psychiatrist, which would become a standard in police work from then on.³

There are some important similarities between the bombing of the King David Hotel and the “Mad Bomber” of New York City. In both cases, bombs were the weapons of choice and in both cases, a higher, more powerful institution was targeted. Moreover, the perpetrators framed their acts as expressions of their anger, frustration, and feelings of not having been treated fairly by the institution in question. Another similarity was that the choice to bomb one’s opponent expressed a marked disparity in power; “the breakaway groups” (141), as Motti Golani calls the Jewish underground resistance, acted explicitly without the approval and support of the Jewish Agency, the official Jewish representation in Palestine. Similarly, Metesky had also exhausted all other venues for complaints and compensation and was left, in his view, with no other option to articulate his outrage. In both cases, the bombers’ grievances are, to a certain extent, understandable and relatable, even if the manner in which they acted them out is not.

Interestingly, however, while the bombing of the King David Hotel was labeled an act of ‘terrorism,’ the reporting on Metesky’s hidden pipe bombs did not make use of the term at all. Articles in *The New York Times* generally refrained from characterizing Metesky’s deeds as ‘terrorism’ and the man himself as ‘terrorist.’ Instead, journalists described

²See, e.g., Salisbury as well as the pieces “Suspect” and “Bomber’s Grievances.”

³For more on George Metesky and his impact on police work, see the studies by Cannell and Greenburg.

incidents in a matter-of-fact style, reporting, for instance, that “[a] home-made time bomb exploded yesterday in a washroom on the lower level of Grand Central Terminal” (“Bomb Injures” 33). That article also referred to Metesky, whose identity was still unknown then, simply as “the man who had left the bomb in the washroom” (33), indicating that the term ‘terrorism’ was not part of the semantic field from which journalists drew to describe these incidents.

It matters immensely whether an incident of violence is categorized as ‘terrorism’ or not. Take, for instance, the mass shooting at Fort Hood, Texas, on November 5, 2009. Major Nidal Malik Hasan, an army psychiatrist working at the post, killed 13 people and wounded another 20 before being shot and gravely injured himself by another officer on the base. Investigations afterwards not only attempted to explain what had motivated Hasan to plan and execute such an attack and what his objectives were, but also centered around questions of how to classify the incident itself. As Robert McFadden reported in *The New York Times* that day, army spokesman “General Cone said that terrorism was not being ruled out, but that preliminary evidence did not suggest that the rampage had been an act of terrorism” (“Army”). Similarly, President Obama called the event a “tragic shooting” and a “horrible incident” (“Remarks at the Closing”). Two days later, the President cautioned the public that “[w]e c[ould]n’t fully know what le[d] a man to do such a thing,” equally eschewing references to ‘terrorism’ (“President’s Weekly”).

However, when it became publicly known that Hasan (whose parents had been immigrants from the Middle East) was not only a devout, practicing Muslim but had actually been in contact with Anwar al-Awlaki, “a radical cleric in Yemen known for his incendiary anti-American teachings” (Johnston and Shane), the question of whether or not Hasan’s mass shooting at the fort constituted a case of ‘(Islamic) terrorism’ against the United States was soon answered. President Obama initially avoided calling the shooting an incident of ‘terrorism’ and stressed instead that Islam did not condone violence, stating, for example, during the memorial service for those killed in the shooting: “It may be hard to comprehend the twisted logic that led to this tragedy. But this much we do know: No faith justifies these murderous and craven acts; no just and loving God looks upon them

with favor. For what he has done, we know that the killer will be met with justice in this world and the next” (“Remarks at a Memorial”).

But the president’s views and attempts to introduce nuance into the debate were not echoed by other commentators. Even though army investigators who had been tasked with examining the shooting “tentatively concluded that it was not part of a terrorist plot,” they did explain that Hasan had “acted out under a welter of emotional, ideological and religious pressures” (Johnston and Schmitt). Johnston and Schmitt’s article then proceeded to discuss the role of Anwar al-Awlaki and described him as “a prominent proponent of militant Islam,” suggesting that the shooter’s ardent faith as well as his communications with al-Awlaki were key elements in what had motivated him. Moreover, the journalists consistently evoked the ‘terrorism’ subtext by quoting Jarret Brachman, “a terrorism consultant to the government,” as stating that al-Awlaki was “one of the most popular figures among hard-line, English-speaking jihadis around the world.” The article ultimately implied that, despite official denials, it was very much possible to interpret the Fort Hood shooting as a case of ‘Islamic terrorism.’

Other news outlets made that claim openly. For instance, the conservative magazine *The National Review* ran an article entitled “Still Willfully Blind” in response to Obama’s comments in which it insisted:

After the carnage we’ve seen for two decades, and the high religious authorities that have endorsed it, it is simply astounding that an American president – at a solemn memorial service for soldiers killed just days ago by a jihadist acting on his rational, broadly accepted understanding of his religious duty – could claim that ‘no faith justifies’ sneak-attack murders, and that no religion teaches that ‘God looks upon them with favor.’ In fact, a widely held interpretation of Islam holds exactly these principles. No one is saying that all Muslims follow Hasan’s construction of Islam, but *hundreds of millions do* and they have scriptures to back up their beliefs – scriptures we could all read if we’d just pull our heads out of the sand. (McCarthy)⁴

Calling Hasan a “jihadist” clearly framed the shooting as a case of ‘Islamic terrorism’ against the United States. But the article went beyond that by maintaining that a significant portion of Muslims around the world shared the shooter’s beliefs and insisted that Islamic scripture did, in fact, support these violent beliefs harbored by “*hundreds of millions*” of Muslims. Indeed, the fact that journalist Andrew McCarthy chose to emphasize this

⁴Throughout this study, unless it is stated otherwise, all emphases in quotations are taken from the original source.

particular noun phrase in his article for *The National Review* stressed the (supposed) pervasiveness of the threat emanating from “a jihadist” like Hasan.

Eventually, in later years, even President Obama accepted the framing of the Fort Hood shooting as case of ‘(Islamic) terrorism.’ On December 6, 2015, a good six years after the incident, the president referred to the shooting in a speech on the current U.S. ‘counter-terrorism’ strategy and explicitly listed the incident in conjunction with other ‘Islamic terrorist’ attacks. In the speech, Obama acknowledged that ‘terrorism’ continued to pose a grave threat to U.S. national security:

Over the last few years, however, the terrorist threat has evolved into a new phase. As we’ve become better at preventing complex, multifaceted attacks like 9/11, terrorists turned to less complicated acts of violence like the mass shootings that are all too common in our society. It is this type of attack that we saw at Fort Hood in 2009, in Chattanooga earlier this year, and now in San Bernardino. And as groups like ISIL grew stronger amidst the chaos of war in Iraq and then Syria, and as the Internet erases the distance between countries, we see growing efforts by terrorists to poison the minds of people like the Boston Marathon bombers and the San Bernardino killers. (“Address”)

Here, references to, e.g., 9/11, the threat of the Islamic State (variously abbreviated as IS, ISIL, or ISIS), or the Boston Marathon bombing clearly (re-)constructed the Fort Hood shooting as ‘Islamic terrorism’ targeting and attacking the United States, suggesting, at the very least, that the president had changed his mind about how to categorize the incident.

However, while a consensus developed relatively quickly that the Fort Hood shooting constituted ‘(Islamic) terrorism,’ public opinion was noticeably more divided in the case of the Las Vegas shooting on October 1, 2017. Stephen Paddock, whose motives are still not entirely clear, fired over 1,000 rounds out of his hotel room into a crowd of over 20,000 people who were attending a country music festival. 58 people died and 887 more were injured (Turkewitz and Medina). Paddock then committed suicide in his room where police officers found his body later. The next day, President Trump called the incident “an act of pure evil” and studiously avoided any references to ‘terror’ and ‘terrorism’ (“Remarks”). Meanwhile, Scott Shane wondered in *The New York Times* “What to Call the Las Vegas Attack?” and discussed in his article whether it was possible to label the shooting a case of ‘terrorism.’

Shane's ruminations on the issue are noteworthy, given that when he was writing (in collaboration with his colleague David Johnston) about the Fort Hood shooting a few years earlier, he appears to have been more easily convinced that Hasan's actions constituted an act of 'terrorism' while he clearly had some doubt about the term's applicability in the case of the Las Vegas shooting. Given that more than four times as many people were killed and more than 44 times as many injured in the Las Vegas shooting compared to the incident in Fort Hood as well as the fact that both perpetrators had used the same kind of weapon, this inconsistency in labeling the incidents acts of 'terrorism' is remarkable since it suggests that usage of the term is conditioned by additional, hidden connotations and meaning components. Indeed, in his article on the Las Vegas shooting, Shane quoted various acknowledged 'terrorism' scholars on the history and use of the term and noted that "beyond that academic analysis, in political debate in a polarized country, the word 'terrorism' is also a verbal weapon, freely wielded – especially when the accused is Muslim." By all accounts, Paddock was not Muslim, but, importantly, Hasan's actions had been thoroughly explained as motivated by his faith in Islam. This clearly suggests, then, that religious affiliation impacted the categorization of an incident of violence as 'mass shooting' as opposed to 'terrorism' in these two cases.

Yet, while Shane remained ambiguous about whether it was appropriate to call the Las Vegas shooting an act of 'terrorism,' other groups affected by the incident had made up their minds decisively. For instance, Sheriff Joseph Lombardo, the head of the police team investigating the shooting, said during the presentation of the final report that "I would personally call it a terrorist act" despite recognizing that "[t]he shooting d[id] not meet the federal definition of a terrorist attack" (qtd. in Turkewitz and Medina). Likewise, MGM, the company owning the hotel out of which Paddock conducted the shooting, also argued that the incident constituted "an act of terrorism" (qtd. in Oppel). This formed part of a larger legal strategy meant to protect MGM from law suits by victims of the shooting. By appealing to the SAFETY Act, which was passed after the 9/11 attacks and sought to insulate providers of security from liability should an act of 'terrorism' occur despite the use of their products and services, lawyers for MGM hoped that "a federal court [would] rule that it [could] not be held liable for the shooting" (Oppel), aware that

they were setting a legal precedent. However, the applicability of the SAFETY Act hinged on the question whether the Las Vegas shooting *did* constitute ‘terrorism,’ making debates about the issue contentious as various groups sought to protect their interests.

As these examples demonstrate, then, the term ‘terrorism’ is a powerful political tool whose application has real-life social, economic, and legal ramifications. Yet, it is not entirely clear what the term actually *means*. As in the cases of the Fort Hood shooting and, particularly, the tragedy in Las Vegas, its usage is at times contested. This is not surprising, though, when considering the multitude of definitions of ‘terrorism’ which have been circulating for decades. For instance, *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research*, edited by Alex Schmid and published in 2011, contains an appendix, compiled by Schmid in collaboration with Joseph Easson, of over 250 different definitions of ‘terrorism.’ Schmid and Easson list definitions of ‘terrorism’ from the 18th and 19th century until today and a first glance at the pages already reveals the distinct degrees of complexity with which the quoted authors approach their topic. Some definitions, like the one provided by Michael Walzer in 2004, are just a few sentences long while others, such as the one developed by J. B. S. Hardmann in 1936, cover a third of the page or even more (144, 100). ‘Terrorism’ clearly means different things to different people. Indeed, no single author (or institution) has held the definitional monopoly over the term, meaning that many different voices have made public knowledge claims about the issue, further muddying the waters. What is more, some scholars, like Brian Crozier, appear two or more times in Schmid and Easson’s list because they adapted their original definition at a later point in time (e.g. 101, 106), indicating that not only is there no widely accepted (and used) definition of ‘terrorism,’ the meaning of the term is also regularly subject to change.

We find this reflected in the cases I discussed at the very beginning. The King David Hotel bombing was widely treated as an act of ‘terrorism’ while the “Mad Bomber,” who was active at roughly the same time and who relied on the same kind of weapon, was not. For one thing, this implies that in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the American public overall did not perceive itself as victim of ‘terrorism.’ ‘Terrorism’ rather happened in other, far-away places and not at home. It also suggests that the term ‘terrorism’ was used in fairly specific circumstances at the time. The conflict in Mandatory Palestine took

place in a colonial setting, so it is likely that this contributed to a conceptualization of ‘terrorism’ as a form of violent protest aimed at driving a colonial power like Great Britain out of the country. By contrast, George Metesky’s bombing spree in the 1940s and 1950s, while terrorizing the people of New York City, was not framed as ‘terrorism’ because it simply did not fit the meaning of the term as it was used then. Most importantly, it was not perceived as expression of political conflict and rather characterized as the work of a “publicity-seeking jerk” and a “crackpot” (“Homemade” 28, “Bomb in Music” 1).

However, decades after the activities of the ‘Jewish terrorists’ in Palestine and the “Mad Bomber” in New York City, the meaning of the term had clearly shifted once more. While categorizations of the Fort Hood shooting as ‘(Islamic) terrorism’ remained relatively unquestioned, the more contentious debates about whether the Las Vegas shooting also constituted ‘terrorism’ indicated that, at this point in time, a perpetrator’s religious beliefs were an important meaning component inherent to ‘terrorism.’ Likewise, political and economic interests also significantly impacted this more recent conceptualization of the term as demonstrated by the arguments between different interest groups involved in the Las Vegas shooting. These debates actually testify to an increasingly expansive understanding of what ‘terrorism’ supposedly means. Clearly, nowadays the term is applicable to a wider variety of situations than in the past and it is less focused on the perpetrators’ political motifs. The term also generally marks that the violence in question is illegitimate and often discounts possible reasons for a ‘terrorist’ attack as irrelevant and non-existent.

These debates also attempt to frame the term conclusively, to determine its meaning by establishing its conceptual boundaries. In that process, ‘terrorism’ is not only described positively, e.g. by saying that a certain action is a form of ‘terrorism,’ but also negatively, by stating what it is not. However, these conceptual boundaries are not stable and rather contingent on the speaker’s status, the social, political, and cultural context out of which he or she speaks, and the precise historical moment in which the knowledge claim is made. Thus, debates about ‘terrorism’ actually function as sites in which complex negotiations of power take place. Arguments about the topic of ‘terrorism’ become contentious struggles about who gets to speak on the subject and whose voice is discredited, marginalized, or even silenced.

1.1 Project Description

As the discussion above has shown, ‘terrorism’ means different things at different times to different people and these distinct conceptualizations have palpable, significant effects on American politics, economy, media, and culture. However, so far, to the best of my knowledge, no one has attempted to chart how understanding of the issue has developed over time and what consequences these distinct conceptualizations of ‘terrorism’ have had on American politics and culture. While there are a few books (more on that below) which have examined the importance of ‘terrorism’ at a particular historical moment in the United States, there is no study available yet which takes a broader scope and traces how ‘terrorism,’ understood as a far-reaching discourse, both affected political, academic, media, and cultural debates in the United States about violence as well as being shaped by these debates in turn.

This dissertation project therefore aims to close a gap in the existing research by tracing and examining the turns and developments of the discourse on ‘terrorism’ in the United States from the 1940s and 1950s onward until the present day. In order to chart the trajectory of the discourse, I analyze and discuss a variety of texts by different discursive actors, namely the U.S. government, the academic field of ‘terrorism’ studies, the news media, and, finally, cultural productions like novels, TV series, and films. These agents, just like the texts about ‘terrorism’ they produce, engage in *cultural work*, a concept developed by Jane Tompkins, meaning that they are not only influenced and shaped by knowledge claims made by the discourse on ‘terrorism.’ They also actively contribute to the discourse and mold it in turn in order to achieve a specific political end. Hence, another objective of this project is to investigate what ‘terrorism’ actually means to these different discursive actors and why a certain conceptualization of ‘terrorism’ is dominant at a particular historical moment.

One crucial realization underpinning the entire project is that the Middle East is central to the discourse on ‘terrorism’ – and the story about the discourse itself which I tell in this project. In both narratives, the Middle East not only functions as a geographic space, a region which one can study and know. The Middle East also operates as a

cultural imaginary in both the discourse itself and the narrative about it, meaning that U.S. culture and politics has continuously imagined and constructed a representation of the Middle East colored by its own anxieties and desires.⁵ This imagined Middle East, discursively constructed in much the same manner as ‘terrorism,’ functions as a space onto which American culture projects its fears and aspirations, through which it expresses its fascination with the Middle Eastern Other. It constitutes a space onto which one can map out what it means to be an American, predominantly by expressing what one is *not* – Middle Eastern. The imagined Middle East, much like the geographic one, is a space in which the U.S. performs its power. As Melani McAlister has remarked in her study *Epic Encounters*, “representations of the Middle East have been and continue to be a site of struggle over both the nature of U.S. world power and the domestic politics of race, religion, and gender” (xiv).

Indeed, in some ways, the bombing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem in 1946, with which I opened this chapter, marked the moment in which the American cultural imaginary began to focus on the Middle East as a region which not only experienced but actually *produced* ‘terrorism.’ Over the course of several decades, incidents of violence involving the Middle East in some form or other were increasingly framed as ‘terrorism’ in discourses in the United States. Yet, depending on the historical moment in which these incidents took place, they were categorized and framed differently. The King David Hotel bombing, for instance, was called ‘Jewish terrorism,’ a concept which was frequently used at the time and, as the analysis in the next chapter shows, evaluated in neutral or even positive terms. After the foundation of Israel, the discursive focus slowly shifted towards ‘Middle Eastern terrorism,’ specifying the concept with a geographical marker and giving the concept an increasingly negative and pejorative connotation. The 1980s, in turn, established ‘Arab terrorism’ as predominant threat, redirecting the attention to the perpetrators’ ethnicity and nationality. This conceptualization was adapted once more in the 1990s into ‘Islamic terrorism,’ i.e. an approach which stressed the perpetrators’ (assumed) belief as motivation for their actions. The events of September 11, 2001 and

⁵The notion of the “cultural imaginary” was first developed by Winfried Fluck in his 1997 study *Das kulturelle Imaginäre: Funktionsgeschichte des amerikanischen Romans 1790-1900* (‘The Cultural Imaginary: A Descriptive History of the American Novel 1790-1900’).

the “war on terror(ism)” have only cemented this notion. Hence, the Fort Hood shooting was quickly framed as ‘Islamic terrorist’ attack since the perpetrator not only stemmed from an immigrant family from the Middle East but was a devout Muslim, thus seemingly confirming that validity of the ‘Islamic terrorism’ paradigm. By contrast, Stephen Paddock, responsible for the Las Vegas shooting, was a white American without clear religious affiliation, making the application of the ‘terrorism’ label to this case more contentious.

This project, then, considers how different discursive actors imagined the Middle East and how they drew on these constructions to produce a certain kind of knowledge about ‘terrorism.’ One such important discursive actor is the U.S. government and I examine how it, through presidential statements and official reports, slowly constructed ‘terrorism’ in and from the Middle East as considerable threat to U.S. interests at home and abroad while also adapting the term’s meaning to the political exigencies of the moment. As Figure 1.1 illustrates, over the course of several decades, ‘terrorism’ became an increasingly significant staple in presidential rhetoric. The numbers are taken from a search in the online database of *The American Presidency Project*, conducted on September 24, 2018, and show how ‘terrorism’ rarely featured in presidential statements before the mid-to late 1970s. Indeed, the year 1979 marks a first high point in the graph as President Carter mentioned ‘terrorism’ in 29 statements. A year later, the president rang in the new decade by referring to the issue 68 times, i.e. a surge of 134 %. The increased importance of ‘terrorism’ for the U.S. government in the 1980s is also reflected in the higher average for the decade: Presidents Carter, Reagan, and Bush spoke about ‘terrorism’ roughly 40 times per year. These numbers suggest that not only had the issue become more visible, it had also attracted the attention of the U.S. government which, in turn, had begun to construct it as a serious problem requiring heightened presidential attention.

The upwards trend then continued into the 1990s and early 2000s. On average, Presidents Bush and Clinton spoke about ‘terrorism’ 86 times per year, more than doubling presidential commentary compared to the previous decade. Similarly, for the first decade of the new millennium the database records an average of 155 statements per year containing the word ‘terrorism.’ Clearly, the issue of ‘terrorism’ had become a central topic on which presidents commented regularly. It also signaled the dominance of the discourse itself as

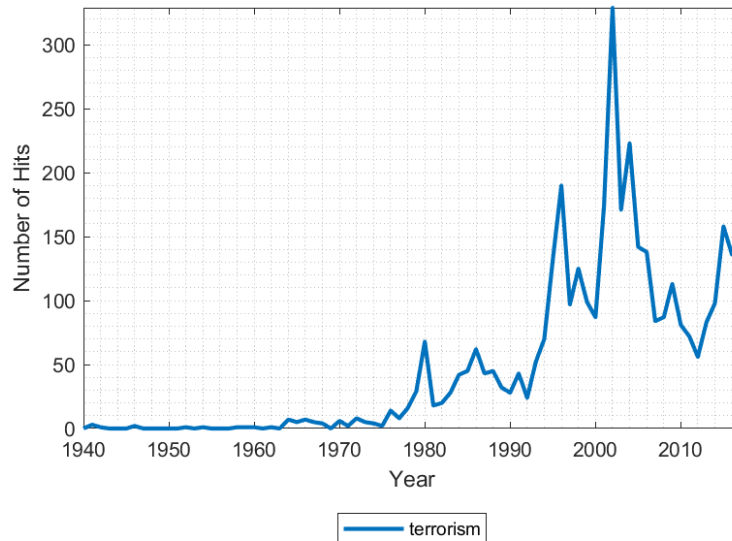


Figure 1.1: Presidential references to ‘terrorism,’ 1940-2017

U.S. presidents could not avoid talking about ‘terrorism’ to their constituents who had come to expect their leaders to make pronouncements on the issue and to provide context and meaning for it.

Another central agent to the discourse on ‘terrorism’ in the United States is the academic field of ‘terrorism’ studies. Growing out of insurgency studies in the 1950s and 1960s, the scholarly approach to the issue of ‘terrorism’ has significantly contributed to the discourse by developing knowledge about it and legitimizing and spreading it in the process. However, the knowledge produced by scholars working in this particular field has often circulated under the suspicion of having been politicized or willfully misconstrued. One reason for these charges are the traditionally strong ties between the political establishment and ‘terrorism’ scholars in the United States, not only through funding of research projects, but also because experts on ‘terrorism’ have switched back and forth between working in academia and taking on positions in the government where they actively shaped anti-‘terrorism’ policy.

Over the course of several decades, a core group of scholars has formed who are generally accepted and acknowledged as the field’s leading experts. These include, among others, Yonah Alexander, Martha Crenshaw, Bruce Hoffman, Brian Jenkins, Walter

Laqueur, Ariel Merari, Alex Schmid, Michael Stohl, and Paul Wilkinson.⁶ Their names will reappear throughout this study, illustrating the plurality of voices in the academic discourse on ‘terrorism.’ What is also noticeable about this list is that ‘terrorism’ studies has been (and will likely remain so in the foreseeable future) a field dominated by male researchers. Apart from Martha Crenshaw, all other significant ‘terrorism’ scholars are men, a dynamic which has not changed in any way since the inception of the field in the 1950s. Even more troubling, members of the field do not appear to perceive this as a problem at all; in fact, it is not addressed or mentioned in any significant manner by those participating in the field itself. Likewise, ‘terrorism’ studies is dominated by researchers from Western nations, especially the United States, further tilting the balance in favor of a particular perspective on ‘terrorism’ which privileges the knowledge claims made by male scholars from ‘the West’ over all other voices. The academic field of ‘terrorism’ studies is therefore an important and powerful contributor to the discourse on ‘terrorism’ which is why I investigate it in more detail in this project.

A third agent participating in the discourse on ‘terrorism’ is the U.S. news media. First and foremost, it functions as distributor of knowledge about ‘terrorism’ produced by politicians and scholars and familiarizes the American public with it. In that sense, the news media connects the various fields engaged in creating information about ‘terrorism’ and facilitates the exchange of ideas about it. At the same time, the U.S. news media also contributes actively to the discourse by making meaning, i.e. selecting and framing knowledge claims about ‘terrorism.’ It also has the power to amplify certain voices, to privilege some conceptualizations of ‘terrorism’ over others, and to marginalize and even silence some speakers and their claims about the issue.

In order to illustrate the workings of the U.S. news media in the production and distribution of the discourse on ‘terrorism,’ I have chosen to discuss the reporting of *The New York Times* in greater detail throughout this study. *The New York Times*, renowned for its high-quality journalism, is regularly lauded as “the newspaper of record in the United States and one of the world’s great newspapers” (“New”). It is one of the most widely read newspapers not only in the United States, meaning that its reporting,

⁶This list is adapted from Schmid et al. and therefore not complete.

particularly the writing on ‘terrorism,’ reaches a global audience. Its reporting carries additional weight because of the cultural capital of *The New York Times* and its preeminent discursive standing. How *The New York Times* frames instances of ‘terrorism’ matters therefore immensely and impacts the discourse on ‘terrorism’ in significant ways.

As part of my research into how *The New York Times* reports on ‘terrorism,’ I searched the archives of the newspaper via the online search function on its official website. I counted the amount of hits a particular search term generated per calendar year (January 1 to December 31) and conducted the online search for all the data used and discussed in this project on December 6, 2018. Each hit linked to an article which had appeared in the newspaper during the given time period and which contained the search term in the text at least once. (I have included a table with all my data in the appendix of this study.) Hence, the data I compiled this way gives us a good insight into how popular a certain term was at any given point in time while also allowing conclusions about the contexts in which it was used. Apart from this quantitative analysis, I also provide a more qualitatively oriented interpretation of the news journalism on ‘terrorism’ by doing close readings of articles and opinion pieces published in *The New York Times* during specific historical events. This leads to a nuanced reading of how ‘terrorism’ became a staple in U.S. news reporting and reflects the media’s active role in the process.

Generally speaking, then, reporting on ‘terrorism’ in the U.S. news media has grown considerably over the course of the last several decades. As Figure 1.2 shows, ‘terrorism’ was not a particularly prominent concept to describe incidents of violence and political conflicts in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. The first time that there were over 1,000 articles per year containing the word ‘terrorism’ was the year 1973, marking the beginning of a trend which became permanent only from the late 1970s onwards. Coverage of incidents framed as ‘terrorism’ then increased steadily throughout the 1980s and 1990s, culminating in a remarkable spike in the early 2000s in response to the attacks of September 11, 2001 and the ensuing “war on terror(ism).” More recent years have seen a decrease in the amount of writing in *The New York Times* which mentions ‘terrorism,’ but the overall numbers continue to be high, suggesting that ‘terrorism’ has become a fixture in American journalism in a way it had not been before.

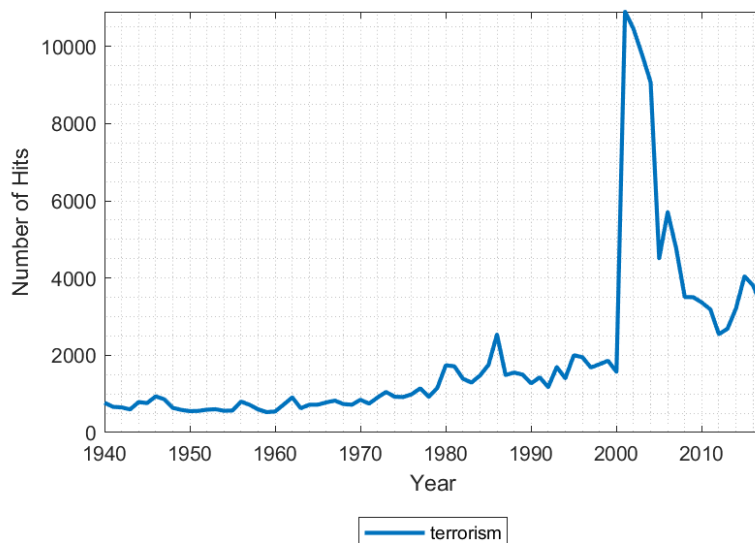


Figure 1.2: Reporting on ‘terrorism’ in *The New York Times*, 1940-2017

The final discursive agents I consider in this project are popular responses to the discourse on ‘terrorism.’ Contemporary popular texts engaging with the issue of ‘terrorism’ not only reflect but actively rework and shape the meaning of the term ‘terrorism.’ I follow Jane Tompkins’ assertion that literary texts “offer powerful examples of the way a culture thinks about itself, articulating and proposing solutions for the problems that shape a particular historical moment” (xi). These cultural productions, she argues, engage in cultural work and “provid[e] society with a means of thinking about itself, defining certain aspects of a social reality which the authors and their readers shared, dramatizing its conflicts, and recommending solutions” (200). I agree with Tompkins’ view that cultural texts both “expres[s] and shap[e] the social context that produced them” (200). Hence, I argue that the cultural texts under investigation here have the power to popularize particular conceptualizations of the issue while marginalizing others. What is more, films and TV series visualize ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorists,’ evoking an emotional response from audiences which, in turn, can serve a political purpose. Similarly, novels and other written fictional texts tap into their readers’ imagination when describing ‘terrorists,’ ‘terrorism,’ and the fight against it.

‘Terrorism’ in popular texts is always more than a mere plot device meant to create conflict and tension which is resolved in the end. Rather, these popular narratives do

important cultural work by actively making meaning. By representing ‘terrorism’ in a fictional space, these texts make it appear controllable, suggesting that the arbitrary violence of ‘terrorism’ really follows a larger logic which can not only be understood but actually managed. Hence, in this project I also analyze fictional texts which engage with the issue of ‘terrorism,’ understanding these cultural productions to be both distributors of central claims of the discourse on ‘terrorism’ as well as active participants in it. I examine novels, Hollywood movies, and contemporary TV series in order to provide a fuller picture of how U.S. society at a given historical moment imagined ‘terrorism’ and what purposes these constructions fulfilled.

Indeed, it is important to keep in mind that these four pillars – politics, academia, news journalism, and popular culture – interlink and continuously influence each other. They all function as each other’s mirrors, reflecting and popularizing the others’ ideas about ‘terrorism,’ but are also active discursive agents whose framings follow a political and ideological agenda. Figure 1.3 visualizes the interconnectedness of all four discursive agents. Political agents provide not only research material (e.g. in the form of the official annual government reports on ‘terrorism’) to ‘terrorism’ scholars but also validate and legitimize their knowledge claims about ‘terrorism.’ A similar dynamic is at play in the relationship between political actors and the news media as government officials and documents frequently provide sources for journalists writing about ‘terrorism.’ Discursive agents from the political field also indicate to artists and other producers of cultural texts which issues are important and thus provide inspiration for narratives about ‘terrorism.’ Overall, discursive actors from the political realm signal to the other three fields which framings and meaning components are currently particularly relevant in political debates about the topic, thus predetermining to a considerable extent what kind of knowledge is produced in academia, news media, and culture.

In turn, the academic field of ‘terrorism’ studies provides crucial knowledge claims about ‘terrorism’ to politicians and government officials who then develop and execute political policies based on these ideas. Moreover, ‘terrorism’ scholars often function as sources for ideas and information about the issue to journalists; they are regularly interviewed and quoted by the news media as designated experts on ‘terrorism,’ meaning

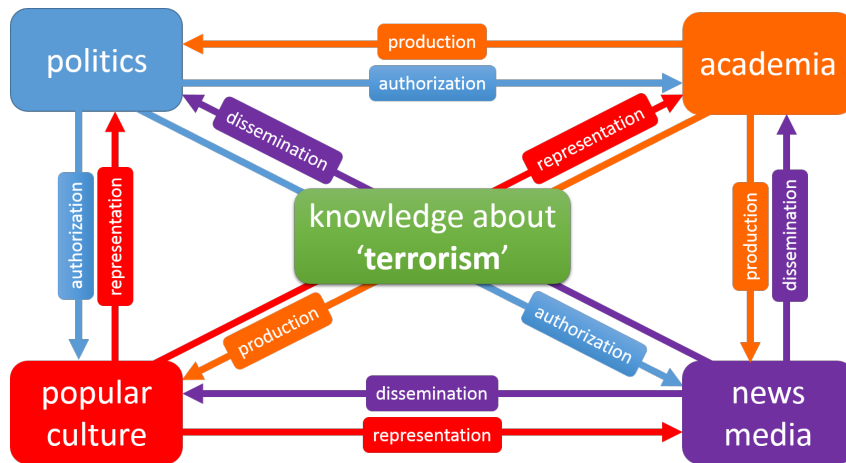


Figure 1.3: Knowledge production of the discourse on 'terrorism'

that their claims carry significant discursive weight. Cultural productions equally benefit from the knowledge produced by 'terrorism' scholars and the character of the 'terrorism' expert regularly appears in Hollywood movies and TV series in order to explain to the other characters and the audience how 'terrorism' works.

The news media provides a public space both for government officials and 'terrorism' experts alike to introduce their knowledge claims about the topic to a wider audience. Likewise, the news media amplifies and legitimizes certain ideas while silencing others, thus functioning as powerful 'selector' and curator of the discourse. It confirms and reaffirms the 'expert' status of both politicians and scholars alike. Journalistic writing on 'terrorism' also includes reviews and discussions of cultural products, thus institutionalizing certain representations of 'terrorism' as 'authentic' and spreading particular cultural concerns and anxieties among a larger audience.

Lastly, cultural texts engaging with the threat of 'terrorism' not only visualize and narrativize knowledge claims about the issue produced by political and academic actors, they also represent the threat scenarios reported on by the news media. They significantly emotionalize the conceptualization of 'terrorism' by characterizing (and humanizing) perpetrators and victims as well as depicting the consequences and aftermaths of 'terrorist' attacks. Furthermore, cultural texts offer spaces within which fictionalized representations of political, academic, and journalistic agents can act out their roles in a particular manner, thus fortifying and legitimizing these discursive positions.

Ultimately, then, this dissertation project breaks new ground with its multi-pronged approach to analyze the discourse on ‘terrorism’ in the United States. It examines a multitude of actors and brings to the fore how, as Figure 1.3 illustrates, these different interest groups interact with and influence each other, pointing to the constructed nature of the concept and its context-dependent meaning. What is more, this study takes a diachronic perspective and traces the growth and development of the discourse over the course of over six decades, allowing it to both provide detailed analyses of distinct historical moments while also sketching more long-term evolutions. This enables the project to develop a more nuanced understanding of what ‘terrorism’ means at different times and why particular conceptualizations are more successful than others while, in the process, correcting common misconceptions about the term’s meaning and function in American politics and culture. What emerges is, hopefully, a fuller picture of how the discourse on ‘terrorism’ operates in the United States, where these ideas come from, and why they have proven so resilient.

1.2 Theoretical Background

Underlying all these considerations is an understanding of ‘discourse’ in a Foucaultian sense. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Michel Foucault defines ‘discourse’ as “sometimes [...] the general domain of all statements, sometimes [...] an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes [...] a regulated practice that accounts for a certain number of statements” (80). The notion of discourse, then, not only refers to a collection of utterances about a topic but also denotes a practice through which a particular subject matter is constructed and constituted. Following Foucault’s theory about discourse as both a space and a practice which bring a concept into existence, I take a constructivist approach to the study of the ‘terrorism’ discourse and treat ‘terrorism’ as an inherently flexible signifier which responds to political, economic, cultural and historical developments in a particular society at a specific moment in time. What is more, the discourse on ‘terrorism’ also describes a variety of practices in which questions of ideology and power are acted out and negotiated by different discursive participants.

Importantly, to say that ‘terrorism’ is a discursive construct is not to deny the real-life consequences of violence; it is also not a way to absolve the perpetrators of their responsibility and blame for their actions. It is, however, an approach which lays bare the ideological forces at work which underpin conceptualizations of incidents of violence as ‘terrorism.’ It allows us to acknowledge that it is a highly politicized term which has been, time and again, exploited for specific purposes and hands us the tools to interrogate this expression of power. This is also why I have chosen to put the word ‘terrorism’ and its derivations into single quotation marks throughout the text, admittedly an uncommon practice for works about this topic. However, I think that this is necessary because it allows me to mark the term’s constructed nature and reminds myself and readers alike to continuously question its usage and meaning.

In that sense, the discourse and its diverse practices and formations problematize ‘terrorism.’ The notion of “problematization,” as developed by Foucault, explicitly “doesn’t mean representation of a pre-existing object, nor the creation by discourse of an object that doesn’t exist. It is the totality of discursive or non-discursive practices that introduces something into the play of true and false and constitutes it as an object for thought” (*Politics* 257). ‘Terrorism’ thus becomes “an object for thought,” growing out of political, historical, and cultural developments, about which true and false, accepted and disapproved claims can be made. What is more, the ‘terrorism’ discourse is also considerably influenced by what Foucault has termed “eventalization.” It stresses the importance of “the singular event” for the development of a discourse whenever “there is a temptation to invoke a historical constant” (“Questions” 77, 76). Thus, “events” take on a critical importance for discourses when they create ruptures and breaks; these “events” force us to question “those self-evidences on which our knowledges, acquiescences and practices rest” (76). In my view, then, the ‘terrorism’ discourse is significantly shaped by crucial events which, in a Foucaultian sense, disrupt previous ways of making sense of – or rather, problematizing – ‘terrorism’ in order to establish new ideas and knowledge claims about the issue as ‘self-evident.’

From understanding and approaching ‘terrorism’ as a discursive practice underwritten by the effects of problematization and eventalization follows that the

knowledge and truth claims produced by the discourse and its participants are equally constructed. This means that there is no ‘objective’ and ‘neutral’ knowledge about ‘terrorism,’ rather; as Foucault put it himself, “there is no knowledge without a particular discursive practice; and any discursive practice may be defined by the knowledge that it forms” (*Archaeology* 183). Hence, knowledge claims about ‘terrorism’ are informed by the speaker’s position within the discourse (which is in turn influenced by his or her gender, race, class, age, education, etc.) and the historical moment within which he or she speaks. Moreover, these knowledge claims are shaped by the interplay of power and ideology, marking them as distinctly political, social, and cultural constructs.

As a consequence, the ‘terrorism’ discourse not only regulates who can speak about what, it also designates certain knowledge claims as ‘true’ and acceptable and privileges them over other, alternative approaches which are then deemed ‘false.’ In this regard, Foucault has unequivocally stressed that “in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers” (“Order” 52). Indeed, in his view, “not all regions of the discourse are equally open and penetrable; some of them are largely forbidden [...] while others seem to be [...] put at the disposal of every speaking subject, without prior restrictions” (62). This means not only that discourses distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate knowledge based on ideological forces, but also that these practices of knowledge production are influenced by delicate configurations of power.

Nevertheless, it is also important to be aware that this strict separation between a legitimate, powerful discourse on ‘terrorism’ and marginalized alternative approaches is, to a considerable extent, artificial. Even Foucault himself has acknowledged that dividing “a world of discourse [...] between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one” is too rigid (*Will* 100). He notes that discourses are marked by “a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies” (100), meaning that there is also always room for dissent and criticism. As the analysis in this study shows, throughout the period under investigation here, voices challenging the dominant conceptualizations of ‘terrorism’ existed and made themselves heard. Without overstating their effect in undermining the *status quo*, it is vital for a fuller

understanding of how the ‘terrorism’ discourse operates in American politics and culture to acknowledge these interrogations of power.

1.3 State of the Art

In the endeavor to chart the trajectory of the ‘terrorism’ discourse in American politics and culture since the late 1940s, this dissertation project could draw on the work already done by other scholars in the field. One such vital reference point is Lisa Stampnitzky’s superbly researched *Disciplining Terror: How Experts Invented “Terrorism.”* In her 2013 study, Stampnitzky analyzes how the academic field of ‘terrorism’ studies developed from the 1950s and 1960s, when it grew out of insurgency studies, until the “war on terror(ism)” years. She offers a fascinating reading of how experts came to constitute the field as well as its subject matter, tracing the changing academic conceptualizations of ‘terrorism’ throughout the decades. Notably, Stampnitzky understands ‘terrorism’ as “not a stable or fixed category” but rather as a term which marks violence as illegitimate (4). In her view, ‘terrorism’ is a social construct which actively participates in the practices and processes of making meaning (6).

Stampnitzky’s work is particularly useful for my project because of her complex constructivist approach to the subject matter. However, she focuses exclusively on the academic discourse on ‘terrorism’ and does not include more perspectives as well as the cultural and political context within which the academic community operated, leaving open the question of whether and, if so, how her findings can be applied to other contexts. Moreover, I disagree with her analysis of the post-9/11 years. Her focus on the constraints experienced by researchers after 9/11 loses sight of how the meaning of ‘terrorism’ evolved and how ‘terrorism’ scholars actively contributed to this process. It also does not consider the establishment of “Critical Terrorism Studies,” the first time a more critical approach to the academic production of knowledge about ‘terrorism’ became organized. Here my own analysis offers a more nuanced reading which takes these developments into account and explains how the meaning of ‘terrorism’ adapted in the post-9/11 climate.

Another important scholarly appraisal of the ‘terrorism’ discourse is Carol Winkler’s 2006 study *In the Name of Terrorism: Presidents on Political Violence in the Post-World War II Era*. Winkler traces how U.S. presidents have spoken about ‘terrorism,’ charting the term’s development since the 1950s until the early post-9/11 years. The first study to take a diachronic account of the presidential discourse on ‘terrorism,’ Winkler posits that “terrorism functions as a symbolic marker of the culture” and stresses that “the term does perform ideological work within the culture” (7). Unfortunately, however, her analysis is often imprecise, too descriptive, and does not properly demonstrate the ideological work performed by the discourse. Upon closer scrutiny, some of her findings are not borne out by the available evidence and my own readings regularly differ from hers. Nevertheless, her work offers a point of departure on how to contextualize presidential statements on ‘terrorism’ over the course of several decades.

Apart from these more general studies which trace a particular aspect of the ‘terrorism’ discourse over time, there also exist a few analyses which focus on one particular historical moment. In February 2018, for instance, Adrian Hänni published his book *Terrorismus als Konstrukt: Schwarze Propaganda, politische Bedrohungsängste und der Krieg gegen den Terrorismus in Reagans Amerika* (‘Terrorism as Construct: Black Propaganda, Political Threat Anxiety, and the War against Terrorism in Reagan’s America’). Hänni is the first scholar to put forth a detailed investigation of how the Reagan administration constructed ‘terrorism’ as a threat emanating from a ‘terror’ network organized and sponsored by the Soviet Union. He analyzes in great detail how different members of the administration as well as various committees and government agencies, aided by journalists and scholars, argued that ‘terrorist’ groups all over the world had joined in an international network to do the bidding of the USSR. The threat of Soviet-sponsored ‘terrorism’ against the United States thus became another element in the Cold War narrative, politicizing the concept further and establishing it as central issue in U.S. politics.

Hänni’s work is important because it ventures into virtually unstudied territory and he presents a multi-faceted picture of how the ‘terrorism’ discourse operated in the 1980s, discussing how academic, political, and cultural actors created and spread claims about

Soviet-organized ‘terrorism.’ I expand his approach to the topic by considering voices resisting this narrative and by explaining how and why the narrative of a Soviet-sponsored ‘terror’ network fell out of favor again in the mid-1980s. Another difference between his analysis and mine is that I systematically read the subject matter through the lens of conspiracy theory – an analytical approach which contextualizes the narrative and provides greater insight into how it could operate so successfully. Hence, my own analysis aims to draw a more nuanced picture of this period, complementing and adding to Hänni’s assertions.

One of the first studies to extensively examine the ‘terrorism’ discourse in the 1990s is Chin-Kuei Tsui’s *Clinton: New Terrorism and the Origins of the War on Terror* (2017). Tsui analyzes Clinton’s language and concludes that “President Clinton rhetorically framed and created so-called ‘new terrorism’, or ‘catastrophic terrorism’, which is defined not only by its borderless character, but also by the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) utilized by terrorists and rogue states” (7). Tsui’s study is valuable in that it stresses the discursive continuity from the Reagan administration via the Clinton presidency to George W. Bush’s “war on terror(ism).” It is the first book-length investigation of how the Clinton administration’s conceptualized ‘terrorism.’ My own project seeks to build on Tsui’s work by contextualizing Clinton’s statements further. It also broadens the view by including Clinton’s direct predecessor, George H. W. Bush, and his contributions to the ‘terrorism’ discourse in the analysis. Overall, my own approach aims to provide a complex reading of how the ‘terrorism’ discourse operated in the 1990s by expanding on the insights put forth in Tsui’s study.

By contrast, the period after the September 11, 2001 attacks has been much more diligently investigated by scholars. Two studies in particular stand out. The first one, Sandra Silberstein’s *War of Words: Language, Politics and 9/11*, which appeared already in 2002, analyzes how the Bush administration exploited the 9/11 attacks by discursively constructing them as ‘terrorism’ which needed to be fought militarily. In the ensuing climate of hyper-patriotism, fear, and control, the administration not only secured its power but also re-defined what it meant to be American post-9/11. Silberstein complements her analysis of presidential rhetoric with discussions of how the media framed the attacks

as well as the U.S. war in response. She also addresses how voices criticizing the Bush administration and the war effort fared. *War of Words* is therefore an indispensable first look at how American society responded to the attacks. Silberstein's study, however, does not focus exclusively on 'terrorism' in relation to 9/11 and rather examines more broadly how the Bush administration capitalized on the incident. Moreover, she limits her investigation to the immediate aftermath of the attacks and the build-up to the beginnings of the war in Afghanistan, meaning that the subsequent years of the "war on terror(ism)" remain unaddressed.

Richard Jackson's book *Writing the War on Terrorism: Language, Politics and Counter-Terrorism* (2005), the second central analysis of the post-9/11 era, seeks to remedy this gap. Jackson analyzes the political discourse which formed after the 9/11 attacks, how it characterized the perpetrators and the act itself, how it legitimized the "war on terror(ism)," and how 'terrorism' was generally framed as an existential threat to American society. His work has quickly become a standard text because of its forceful and richly-sourced argument. But *Writing the War on Terrorism* is not without problems. Most prominently, Jackson does not actually discuss how he conceptualizes 'terrorism' and how he employs it in his study, leaving the theoretical framing incomplete. His discussion also ignores the aspect of race, or ethnicity, in constructions of perpetrators and victims and he barely acknowledges Silberstein even though he clearly builds on her previous work. Lastly, Jackson does not consider resistance to and criticism of the discourse; in his portrayal, the discourse on 'terrorism' is an all-powerful, monolithic entity. My own analysis, however, shows that this is not the case. Hence, notwithstanding the groundbreaking work produced by these two scholars, it is time for an updated reappraisal of this important time period in recent U.S. culture.

Finally, Melani McAlister's *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East since 1945*, which appeared in a second edition in 2005, and Douglas Little's *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945* (a third edition was published in 2008) constitute two excellent studies which examine American engagement in the Middle East from a historical, political, and cultural point of view. Both authors have rightfully stressed the importance of the Middle East, both as imagined

and geographical space, for U.S. politics, history, economy, and culture. My own project therefore seeks to add to their analyses by outlining how the issue of ‘terrorism’ has shaped American perceptions of and involvement in the region and contributed to American identity constructions.

1.4 Project Outline

My own analysis of the discourse on ‘terrorism’ since the 1940s and 1950s until today is organized into this introduction, four chapters, and a conclusion. Each of the topical chapters analyzes how the four main discursive contributors, i.e. U.S. politics, the academic field, the news media, and popular culture, have shaped the discourse with their claims and ideas about ‘terrorism’ at a particular moment in time. The individual chapters not only trace these developments, they also examine what functions these different conceptualizations of ‘terrorism’ fulfilled and why some constructions were more successful than others. The chapters explore as well how these four discursive agents interacted with each other and what consequences these linkages had. Ultimately, the aim is to offer a more detailed and nuanced explanation of why and how the discourse on ‘terrorism’ has dominated (and continues to do so) political and cultural debates about the meaning of violence in the United States and from where these knowledge claims stem.

Chapter 2, entitled **“Americans Are Suffering from International Terrorism’ – The Emergence and Rise of the Discourse on ‘Terrorism’ from the 1950s to the 1970s,”** looks at the beginnings of the discourse on ‘terrorism’ and investigates its roots and relations to other concepts of political violence. It shows how ‘terrorism’ went from relative obscurity in political, academic, media, and cultural debates in the 1940s and 1950s to slowly become more central to analyses of political violence and conflicts in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s. Importantly, however, early usages of the term make clear that ‘terrorism’ enjoyed a neutral and at times even positive connotation. In contemporary understanding, ‘terrorism’ described a strategy or tactic used by rebelling forces predominantly in a colonial setting such as the struggles for national liberation in Mandatory Palestine and Algeria. Commentators expressed a certain degree

of sympathy and understanding for the ‘terrorists’ and their grievances even when they did not condone their methods. Moreover, ‘terrorism’ was used to describe the repressive actions by states, first and foremost Stalin’s regime in the Soviet Union.

While the ‘terrorism’ discourse in those early years had only limited reach and influence, this would change significantly in the 1970s. Hence, the chapter then turns to the impact of several key events which occurred in the 1970s, namely the Black September attack on the Israeli team during the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich and the Iranian hostage crisis from 1979 to 1981, which brought the issue to the forefront in American society and legitimized the concept as valid interpretative frame for incidents of violence. These two crises also shifted the evaluation of the perpetrators from romanticized ‘rebels’ to dangerous ‘terrorists’ and worked to significantly change the connotation assigned to ‘terrorism’ to a markedly negative one. Moreover, it linked notions of ‘terrorism’ firmly to the Middle East as space which supposedly produced ‘terrorism’ and turned it into an all-encompassing identity role instead of a tactic any politically-minded actor might use at one point in a conflict.

Next, Chapter 3, **“This Is [...] the Work of a Confederation of Terrorist States” – The 1980s, ‘Terrorist’ Networks, and the Reagan Administration’s ‘War against Terrorism,’**” discusses how the discourse fared in the 1980s under the Reagan administration. Still clearly influenced by the traumatic experience of the Iranian hostage crisis, ‘terrorism’ continued to be characterized as ‘international,’ meaning that it was not only seen as posing a grave threat to the global community, but that ‘terrorists’ were generally thought to operate across state borders and that groups were linked in international structures and networks. The other main knowledge claim about ‘terrorism’ derived from the hostage crisis was that while states were no longer conceptualized as actively engaging in ‘terrorism’ themselves they could nevertheless ‘sponsor’ ‘terrorist’ groups to attack other nations. At the beginning of the decade, these ideas were first put forth in a conspiracy theory which posited that the Soviet Union ‘sponsored’ an international network of ‘terrorists’ to attack and destabilize the United States as part of a Soviet masterplan to win the Cold War.

This narrative fell out of favor once Cold War tensions began to fade and the mid-to late 1980s then saw an increased focus on ‘Arab terrorism’ as main villains and, to a lesser extent, ‘Muslim terrorists’ as well. Following previous discursivizations of the term, these ‘Arab terrorists’ were conceptualized as working in international networks with the sole aim to fight and destroy the United States as representative of ‘the West’ and its supposedly superior values. During those years, the concept of ‘terrorism’ was further moralized as an “evil scourge” plaguing humanity and the discourse also became markedly more militarized, a development which became openly visible when President Reagan eventually proclaimed a first ‘War against Terrorism’ in 1985. This chapter thus also provides a different, more theorized and nuanced reading as a development of Adrian Hänni’s earlier work.

Chapter 4, called “**We Are Confronting the Emergence of New Kinds of Terrorist Violence**’ – ‘**New Islamic Terrorism**’ in the 1990s,” investigates how the discourse changed after the end of the Cold War. In the early years of the new decade, the ‘terrorism’ discourse was actually struggling to remain relevant as the peaceful, non-violent ending to one of the most serious and long-standing conflicts in history was widely seen to signal no further need for knowledge about ‘terrorism’ and political violence. In the wake of this threat to its dominance, agents participating in the ‘terrorism’ discourse began to claim that post-Cold War ‘terrorism’ differed significantly from previous manifestations, popularizing knowledge claims which mixed old, familiar assertions about ‘terrorism’ with new ideas. Accordingly, this ‘new terrorism’ in the 1990s was overwhelmingly conceptualized as being more deadly than before, relying on modern technology (particularly “weapons of mass destruction”), and operating in international networks financed and organized (i.e. ‘sponsored’) by wealthy individuals or antagonistic regimes.

Most importantly, however, the discourse postulated that these ‘new terrorists’ were religious zealots, driven by their fanatical belief in Islam. Here, the ‘terrorism’ discourse clearly tapped into and exploited central tenets of Orientalist debates about a “Clash of Civilizations,” a notion developed by Bernard Lewis and popularized by Samuel Huntington. It posited that Muslims were irrational, hateful, violent, and unable to handle the challenges of modernity and globalization and therefore supposedly lashing out against

the United States as principal representative of ‘the West’ and its values. These ideas not only invigorated the ‘terrorism’ discourse in the 1990s, they became firmly entrenched in American politics, academia, news reporting, and popular culture when a series of high-profile attacks against the U.S. were successfully discursivized as instances of ‘new Islamic terrorism’ targeting the United States.

The last topical chapter, Chapter 5, named “‘**Terrorism against Our Nation Will Not Stand**’ – 9/11, the ‘War on Terror(ism),’ and the ‘Terrorism’ Discourse at the Beginning of the New Millennium,” addresses how the experience of the attacks on September 11, 2001 and the ensuing ‘War on Terror’ impacted the discourse on ‘terrorism.’ It stresses that the discursivization of 9/11 as ‘Islamic terrorists’ attacking the United States in an act of war and out of irrational, religiously motivated hatred was clearly indebted to the ‘new Islamic terrorism’ discourse of the 1990s which provided the main interpretative frame through which politicians, scholars, journalists, and creative artists made sense of what had happened. Already the dominant discourse in debates about political violence in the United States at the end of the previous decade, 9/11 and the ensuing “war on terror(ism)” in its aftermath cemented the ‘Islamic terrorism’ discourse in its hegemonic position to an unprecedented extent. Indeed, while criticism regarding the conduct of the “war on terror(ism)” grew louder from the mid-2000s onward, the framing of ‘terrorism’ as ‘Islamic’ in nature and requiring a war in response was never questioned, indicating that the discourse entered the new millennium more stable and powerful than ever before.

Finally, the **Conclusion**, entitled “**The ‘Terrorism’ Discourse in the 21st Century**,” not only reviews the narrative about how the ‘terrorism’ discourse has changed and developed since the 1940s and 1950s but also offers an outlook on its manifestations and impact in more recent years. I analyze how ideas about ‘Islamic terrorism’ continued to influence the Obama administration as well as the reporting in *The New York Times* and suggest that, despite their political and ideological differences, Presidents Bush and Obama actually conceptualized ‘(Islamic) terrorism’ in a markedly similar manner. Clearly, then, ‘terrorism’ continued to be the dominant paradigm through which American politics and culture made sense of political violence and discursive actors during the Obama

era proceeded to focus on the perpetrators' religious beliefs (in Islam) in explanations of the phenomenon. Lastly, I turn to the first year(s) of the Trump presidency and its conceptualization of 'terrorism' which, it appears, may well be beginning to reconstruct the meaning of 'terrorism' to foreground racial markers over religious labels once more, indicating that the 'terrorism' discourse remains dynamic and powerful to this very day.

Chapter 2

“Americans Are Suffering from International Terrorism” – The Emergence and Rise of the Discourse on ‘Terrorism’ from the 1940s to the 1970s

On April 15, 2013, a good four hours into the Boston Marathon, two bombs went off near the finish line, killing three people and injuring 264 people more. Survivors described a scene of pandemonium and panic as people fled in all directions, fearing more bombs would explode, while police and first responders frantically tried to restore security and provide first aid to victims. The next morning, President Obama addressed the press, saying, “[t]his was a heinous and cowardly act. And given what we now know about what took place, the FBI is investigating it as an act of terrorism. Any time bombs are used to target innocent civilians, it is an act of terror” (“Remarks on the Terrorist”). He merely cautioned, “[w]hat we don’t yet know, however, is who carried out this attack, or why, whether it was planned and executed by a terrorist organization, foreign or domestic, or was the act of a malevolent individual. That is what we don’t yet know.” While it was still unclear who the perpetrators were or what their reason for setting off these bombs was, the interpretation of the event as an act of ‘terrorism’ against the United States was already in place. Indeed, it appeared to be the obvious interpretation of what had happened.

But this particular discursive choice was, in fact, neither self-evident nor natural. It was, rather, the result of a long chain of changing conceptualizations of ‘terrorism’ which both reflected and actively shaped central political, social, and cultural concerns in the United States across decades. As I show in the course of this study, the ‘terrorism’ discourse continuously developed over the years to eventually become the powerful discursive paradigm with which we are familiar today, manifesting itself in interpretations of events like the Boston Marathon bombing as an ‘obvious’ case of ‘terrorism.’ Accordingly, this first chapter returns to the roots of the ‘terrorism’ discourse and sets out to explain how ‘terrorism’ emerged from relative obscurity in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s to increasing

prominence in the 1970s, consolidating distinct approaches and conceptualizations of the issue into one homogeneous discourse along the way.

What is especially noticeable when exploring these beginnings is how drastically the understanding of ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorists’ differed from our present-day conceptualizations of the issue. One such basic difference is that the terms ‘terror’ and ‘terrorism’ were used considerably less frequently in the 1950s and 1960s than today, suggesting that the discursive standing of the concept developed over the span of several decades. The two terms were also used more or less synonymously. Another important difference between the meaning of ‘terrorism’ then and now is the depiction of ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorists’ in neutral and even considerate, positive terms, meaning that ‘terrorists’ were accorded a certain amount of respect and generally treated as rational, intelligent actors whose motifs could be understood although their means were not condoned. Moreover, ‘terrorism’ in the 1940s to 1960s was overwhelmingly conceptualized as a tactic in a larger political struggle, one strategy among others in the larger field of political violence. As such, it could be wielded by non-state and state actors alike. ‘Terrorism’ thus meant something quite different in the 1940s to 1960s than it does today, making an investigation into the roots of the discourse about it all the more indispensable. Lastly, the issue of ‘terrorism’ was, from the very beginning, connected to the geographical region of the Middle East and its different populations and religions. Even though, as I show in the course of this study, the focus on who was seen as ‘terrorist’ perpetrator shifted, the region (both as an imagined and a geographical space) remained a central concern for discursive agents shaping the discourse on ‘terrorism.’

Let me illustrate these assertions using a prominent example, Leon Uris’ bestselling 1958 novel *Exodus*. Set in the immediate post-war years, *Exodus* tells the story of the foundation of the State of Israel as a democratic utopia modeled after the United States to the backdrop of the romantic love story between Ari Ben Canaan, a tough and smart Israeli, and Katherine “Kitty” Fremont, a beautiful American nurse who comes to Palestine to work with Jewish children who were orphaned and traumatized by the Holocaust in Europe. The struggle for a Jewish homeland is waged against a predominantly Arab (and Muslim) population as well as the British armed forces who rigorously enforce British

rule, including control over the Jewish immigrants in Palestine. Ultimately, the Jewish community prevails and through much suffering and hardships founds the State of Israel and begins the arduous task of nation-building. Ari Ben Canaan and Kitty Fremont find themselves on the forefront of this struggle and must learn to reconcile their duties to the State with their own feelings of love for one another.

Upon its release, the novel immediately became a bestseller in the U.S. and remained so for almost five months; advance paperback orders reached an unprecedented 1.5 million copies (Silver 5). Maxwell Geismar, in a contemporary review of the novel, called *Exodus* “enlightening, horrifying, and heroic. It is a novel of social history and a social cause in the tradition of *The Grapes of Wrath* and *The Wall* – a tradition which has been missing in our literature of the 1950s” (22), thus indicating the cultural importance *Exodus* obtained from the very beginning for its readers. What is more, in 1960, a highly successful film version was released, directed by Otto Preminger and starring Hollywood superstars Paul Newman and Eva Maria Saint in the leading roles. It is therefore safe to assume that the novel (and later the movie) resonated with American audiences because it channeled commonly held views about America and Israel into one coherent, idealized narrative.¹

Much has been written already about Leon Uris, his novel *Exodus*, and its influence on American post-war perceptions of the Middle East in general and Israel in particular.² One aspect, however, has remained unstudied, namely the novel’s understanding of ‘terror’ and ‘terrorism,’ most notable in how it employs these terms to describe the activities of the Jewish resistance fighters. In the novel, it is the Jewish rebels who are labeled ‘terrorists’ and not the Arab population or the various individual Arab and Muslim villains who violently oppose the Jewish quest for a homeland (as most readers in the 21st century would expect). *Exodus* ostracizes and vilifies these characters but through different means and without referring to ‘terrorism’ at all.

Instead, *Exodus* depicts the members of the violent Jewish group “the Maccabees” as “terrorists.” In the universe of the novel, the Jewish resistance consists of two distinct groups: There are the Haganah, the quasi-legitimate Jewish militia in Palestine, and

¹On the influence on *Exodus* on the American perception of Israel, see Breines; A. Kaplan; Mart, *Eye* and “Tough,” McAlister; Mearsheimer and Walt; and Silver.

²See additionally Cain; Christison, “Arab” and *Perceptions*; Furman; Gonshak; Loshitzky; Nadel; Orfalea; Salt; and R. Weissbrod.

the Maccabees, a splinter group which forms after internal disagreement among different factions of the Haganah over the Jewish policy of restraint against the British occupying forces and the Arab population in Palestine.³ The omniscient narrator in *Exodus* describes the Maccabees as “terrorists” throughout the text (e.g. 314, 387, 402, 413), their actions are referred to as “terror tactics” (e.g. 269, 290), and their “terrorist raids [...] rocked the Holy Land from one end to another” (359). In one of their daring acts, the Maccabees blow up the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, which the British forces use as main headquarters (304).⁴ The Maccabees also target the British oil refinery in Haifa and assassinate the British general Haven-Hurst in retaliation for his increasingly severe measures to counter and curb Maccabee ‘terrorism.’

The novel’s application of the concept of ‘terrorism’ also follows the historical developments I sketched above in other ways. Hence, the way the term ‘terrorism’ is used in *Exodus* also points to a distinct evaluation of the actions it describes, meaning that the Maccabees’ “terror tactics” are not seen in a negative light – rather the opposite. For instance, in *Exodus*, Maccabee ‘terrorism’ is supported widely by large segments of the Jewish community and the narrator in the novel reports that “many of the Yishuv [the Jewish community in Palestine] were happy over the Maccabee actions” (274). The Maccabees may be relatively small in numbers, but they do not constitute a fringe movement at the margins of Jewish society. They actually represent the majority opinion of the Jewish community which actively condones the Maccabee’s “terror tactics,” suggesting that ‘terrorism’ at the time the novel was written did not carry the stigma it does today.

Moreover, *Exodus* depicts Jewish ‘terrorism’ as a necessary and noble means in the fight for Israeli freedom and statehood. Akiva, the leader of the Maccabees, is described as “the spiritual force behind the terrorists” (413), a phrasing which implies that the Maccabees are more than merely violent, desperate men, but driven by religious and political principles derived at after careful deliberation, a rhetorical choice which ennobles Maccabee ‘terrorism.’ The novel also references the Holocaust and familiar narratives of

³The Maccabees in the novel are a fictionalized construction based on the historical groups Irgun Zvai Leumi, the Haganah, and the Stern Gang. See the classic Bell, *Terror*; and, more recently, Suárez.

⁴This echoes the real-life bombing of the King David Hotel by the Irgun on July 22, 1946 which killed 91 people and injured 46. In the novel, the Maccabees warn the British beforehand to evacuate, but they do not listen. Only the building is destroyed. For a discussion of the historical event, see Bell, *Terror*; and Suárez. For a discussion of the novel’s complicated relationship with historical fact, see Orfalea and Salt.

continued Jewish suffering, suggesting that the Jews have earned a *carte blanche* of sorts for their actions in Palestine since they have suffered unspeakably since the beginnings of history: “Nothing we do, right or wrong, can ever compare to what has been done to the Jewish people. Nothing the Maccabees do can even be considered an injustice in comparison to two thousand years of murder” (271). This kind of relativizing argument works to construct the Maccabees as brave fighters who finally stand up to and defend their community against the oppressors.

Exodus ultimately legitimizes ‘terrorism’ as a valid tactic in a larger political struggle. Thus, the Maccabees’ “terror tactics” are depicted as daring and successful means to force the undesired colonial power Great Britain out of the country and to protect the Jewish community against harassment and violence from the Arab population. Shortly before the outbreak of World War II, the British issue a “White Paper,” which limits Jewish immigration from Europe into Palestine and prohibits Jews from buying land in Palestine (290). In the novel, the White Paper is described as “the most staggering blow they [the Jewish community] had ever received” since it means the death of the Jews in Germany and, later, in the Nazi-occupied territories as well (290). The novel explicitly states that it is “[t]he White Paper [which] brought Jews into the Maccabees by the hundreds. They lashed out in a series of raids, bombing a British officers’ club in Jerusalem and terrorizing the Arabs. They raided a British arsenal and they ambushed several convoys” (290). The novel depicts this political move by the British as crass betrayal, grounded in historical reality.⁵ Maccabee ‘terrorism’ then becomes the only means left to the otherwise powerless Jewish community to fight against this injustice. This not only positions the British forces as antagonists in *Exodus*, it also casts the Jewish ‘terrorism’ as legitimate, justified tactic in a highly contentious political struggle. Moreover, it depicts the Maccabee ‘terrorists’ as rational actors with a clear grasp of the conflict, the major parties in it, and a plan on how to achieve their objectives.

Following that same logic, once these political objectives have been achieved (with the help of ‘terrorism’), these “terror tactics” are no longer needed. The narrator takes a clear position in this regard:

⁵For more on the history of the British in Palestine as well as the founding years of the State of Israel, see, e.g., Asseburg and Busse, Golani, M. Kelly, Matthews, and Suárez.

Once the British were gone, terror tactics lost their usefulness and the Maccabees appeared unable to accept the discipline that a field army required. Thus their value as a fighting force was seriously qualified. [...] The Maccabees were activists with great individual courage but by their very nature they rebelled against any authority. [...] they remained as an angry, defiant, political group whose basic tenet was that force conquered all problems. (547)

Now that the Jewish struggle for a homeland has been successful, *Exodus* dismisses ‘terrorism’ as no longer effective and rejects it as a tool in the political arena. This suggests that ‘terrorism’ in the 1950s had a fairly limited meaning and applicability, focusing predominantly on colonial settings where colonized groups wanted to overthrow the oppressive foreign regime. It also indicates that since the term was conceptualized as a tactic and strategy, it was seen as prudent and even logical to abandon it again if it did not fit the situation or did not have the desired outcome. In *Exodus*, ‘terrorism’ constitutes one stage in a larger developmental process of political groups and the Maccabees, in their unwillingness to leave ‘terrorism’ behind once it is no longer useful, are now depicted as a political group which has missed its chance to develop and grow into a serious political contender in the new democratic Jewish state.

This conceptualization of ‘terrorism’ also explains why *Exodus* does not apply the concept when describing the Arab villains: ‘terror’ and ‘terrorism’ are too positively connoted and thus do not carry the negative stigma with which we are familiar today. Instead, in order to denounce the ‘evil Arabs’ in *Exodus*, the novel relies on the classic Orientalist discourse which views the (Middle) East as different and inferior to an inherently superior ‘West.’⁶ Thus, the Arab populations in the novel are depicted as morally inferior and fulfill every negative cliché.⁷ Their “violent passions erupt” constantly (229), they are superstitious (e.g. 509), lazy (e.g. 263), ignorant and illiterate (e.g. 253), and Arab women “were held in absolute bondage, never seen, never heard, never consulted” (229). The Arab masses are whipped into hatred and frenzy by their unscrupulous leaders and their

⁶The *locus classicus* for Orientalism is, of course, Said and his 1978 eponymous study. For other early scholarship on Orientalism, see N. Daniel and Rodinson. For criticism on Said and his ideas put forward in *Orientalism*, see the superbly researched and thorough study by Varisco which contains discussions of and references to all major scholarship in response to Said. Other excellent sources on Orientalism and Said include Hentsch and Macfie.

⁷Over the years, many different scholars have criticized Uris and his novel for its negative portrayal of ‘the Arabs,’ rightfully pointing to the racist and biased views that come to the fore in the text. For examples, see Christison, “Arab” and *Perceptions*; A. Kaplan; Mart, *Eye* and “Tough;” McAlister; Orfalea; Salt; and Silver.

violent outbursts are always directed against the entire Jewish community in Palestine. They murder indiscriminately and the narrator makes it clear that they are primitive and evil: “When an isolated and unarmed Jew was found [by Arab gangs] his murder was always followed by decapitation, dismemberment, eye gouging, and the most primitive brutalities” (274). Importantly, however, all these malevolent actions do *not* constitute acts of ‘terrorism.’

As these examples from *Exodus* show, then, in the 1950s and 1960s ‘terrorism’ had a very distinct meaning. ‘Terrorism’ described first and foremost a tactic in a political struggle, meaning that the ‘terrorists’ were seen as rational and even honorable actors who had relatable political goals. In the next section, I turn to the early media coverage of ‘terrorism,’ using the reporting of *The New York Times* as case study in order to demonstrate that the conceptualization of ‘terrorism’ put forward in *Exodus* is not an aberrant example. Then I examine the academic roots of the ‘terrorism’ discourse in the 1950s and 1960s. As the analysis in the second half of this chapter shows, the decade of the 1970s proved to be pivotal for the discourse on ‘terrorism’ as several incidents, particularly the killing of the Israeli athletes during the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich and the hostage crisis in Iran between 1979 and 1981, were constructed as decisive, discourse-changing Foucaultian events which problematized ‘terrorism’ to an unprecedented extent. In the two corresponding sections, I discuss the impact of the “Munich Massacre” on American politics, academia, news reporting, and popular culture as the experience and its aftermath not only homogenized the discourse and created a more coherent narrative about ‘terrorism’ but also increased its reach and influence. Finally, the last section in this chapter examines the Iranian hostage crisis which was soon constructed as the first major instance of ‘terrorism’ against the United States, thus establishing a particular understanding of ‘terrorism’ which would be influential for decades to come.

2.1 Jewish “Terrorist Band[s]” and Soviet “Terror and Sabotage” – The ‘Terrorism’ Discourse in U.S. News Media in the 1940s to 1960s

Cultural productions in the 1940s to 1960s were not the only agents participating in the emerging discourse on ‘terrorism’ by popularizing a conceptualization of the term as a positively-connoted strategy and tactic used by rational actors. Another important discursive agent involved in early attempts to construct ‘terrorism’ was the American news media. In this section, I examine in more detail how *The New York Times* reported on ‘terrorism’ in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s and I analyze data derived from searches of the newspaper’s online database. The numbers given and discussed throughout this study refer to the amount of hits a search with a particular search term generated in the online search mask on the website of *The New York Times*. As time periods, I chose full calendar years from January 1 to December 31.

In the early 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, ‘terrorism’ as a concept already appeared relatively regularly in journalistic writing, often in conjunction with other terms from the broader field of political violence. Figure 2.1 outlines the general trend in reporting on ‘terrorism’ in *The New York Times* for the 1940s to the 1960s. In the 1940s, for instance, there were on average 726 articles per year which contained the word ‘terrorism,’ i.e. almost two articles per day. A decade later, in the 1950s, the database of *The New York Times* lists 608 pieces per year (1.6 pieces per day) while there were on average 731 articles per year (and two articles per day) in the 1960s which contained the term. However, given the development of the reporting on ‘terrorism’ in *The New York Times* in later decades (see again Figure 1.1 in the previous chapter), it is clear that these early years saw the lowest amount of writing on ‘terrorism’ overall. In the 1970s, for instance, there were on average 961 articles per year which contained the term; in the 1980s, that number increased by 71% to 1,645 pieces per year, making the upward trend visible and putting the numbers for the early years into perspective. Nevertheless, as the data indicates, from the beginning, reporting on ‘terrorism’ appeared fairly regularly in *The New York Times*.

It is informative to take a closer look at the particular contexts in which the term was used in the writing of *The New York Times* because it allows us to draw conclusions

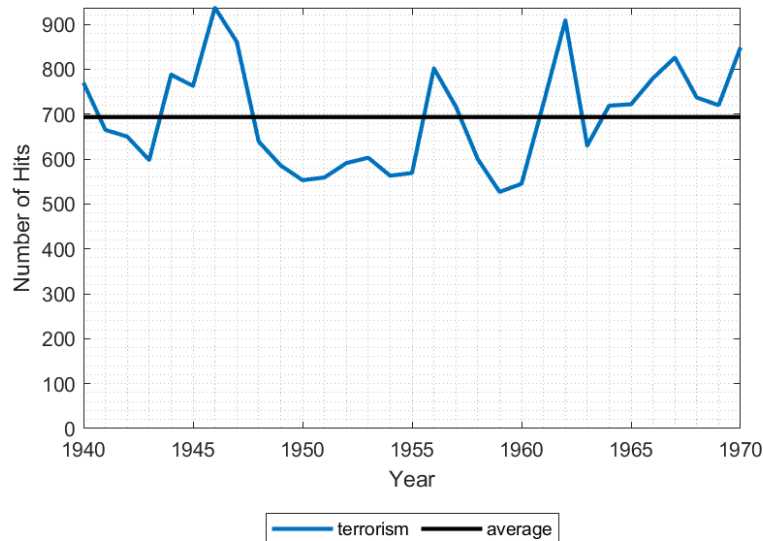


Figure 2.1: Reporting on 'terrorism' in *The New York Times*, 1940-1970

with regard to how the term was used and understood by reporters and, by extension, readers of the newspaper in these early decades. Figure 2.2 traces the popularity of certain kinds of 'terrorism,' meaning a variety of compounds which specify the (supposed) perpetrator behind or the geographical location of the 'terrorism' in question. What becomes immediately evident is that the term 'terrorism' appeared in the context of a wide variety of international conflicts. Certain combinations, like 'Arab terrorism' and 'Jewish terrorism,' peak at specific historical moments and constitute the majority of reporting on 'terrorism' at that time, suggesting that the term was mainly applied to fairly specific conflicts and issues and that 'terrorism' became one of the central concepts in explaining these events.

Overall, as Figures 2.1 and 2.2 show, the blue graph describing the general reporting trends for 'terrorism' spikes significantly at certain historical moments. Thus, the issue of 'Nazi terrorism' clearly dominated reporting on 'terrorism' in the 1940s. In 1940, for instance, 37% of all articles on 'terrorism' also referred to Nazi crimes and violence; a year later, that number rose to 39% and peaked in 1942 at 40% of the overall journalistic output on 'terrorism' in *The New York Times*. After the end of the war in 1945 and the defeat of the Axis powers, 'Nazi terrorism' ceased to be a concern in the United States

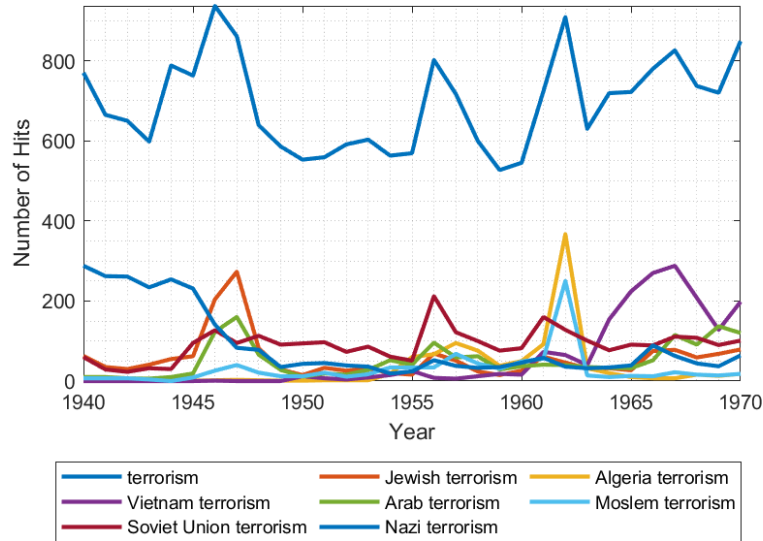


Figure 2.2: Reporting on different kinds of ‘terrorism’ in *The New York Times*, 1940-1970 and *The New York Times* equally reduced its writing on the topic, reporting dropping sharply from 30 % in 1945 to 15 % a year later and 10 % in 1947.

A second high point in the reporting on ‘terrorism’ in *The New York Times* occurred almost immediately after the end of World War II in 1946 and 1947. As Figure 2.3 presents in more detail, this can be explained as a response to the political conflict in Palestine over plans to form an independent Jewish as well as an equally independent Arab state in the British Mandate. For 1946, *The New York Times* database lists 204 articles on ‘Jewish terrorism’ which amounts to 22 % of the overall reporting on ‘terrorism’ that year. For 1947, there were 273 articles discussing ‘Jewish terrorism’ in some form or other, meaning that 32 % of all reporting on ‘terrorism’ actually focused on ‘Jewish terrorism’ specifically. Meanwhile, in 1946, there were 123 pieces on ‘Arab terrorism’ (13 % of the overall ‘terrorism’ reporting that year), a number which rose to 160 articles (19 %) a year later. A search with the terms ‘Palestine terrorism’ generated comparable results: 204 articles (22 %) for 1946 and 287 hits (33 %) for 1947, indicating that the conflict in Mandatory Palestine was regularly linked to ‘terrorism.’

Of course, some articles are likely to appear in more than one search if they contain more than one of these search terms, so these results have to be taken with a measure of caution. They do, however, indicate a general trend, i.e. that the violence erupting

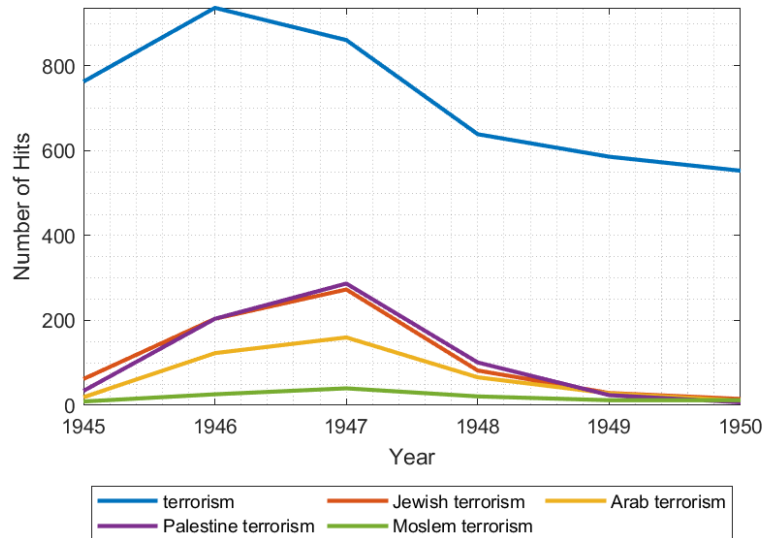


Figure 2.3: Reporting on ‘terrorism’ in the Palestine conflict in *The New York Times*, 1945-1950

in the conflict over Palestine was predominantly understood as ‘terrorism’ by *The New York Times*. What is more, both sides of the conflict were linked to this ‘terrorism,’ albeit not equally. As the comparison between the respective lines makes clear, there were continuously more articles on ‘Jewish terrorism’ than ‘Arab terrorism’ in those early years, suggesting that the focus of *The New York Times* lay on the actions of the Jewish groups in Palestine, not the Arab ones, and that those actions were more likely to be framed as ‘terrorism.’ Likewise, the strikingly similar developments of the graphs for ‘Jewish terrorism’ and ‘Palestine terrorism’ imply that the concept of ‘Jewish terrorism’ was intimately connected to the conflict over Palestine. By contrast, Islam and ‘terrorism’ were not at all connected in the reporting of *The New York Times* in those early years, thus firmly foregrounding the political aspects of the conflict and its ethnic dimensions, not (potential) religious ones.

Indeed, as the data for these early years indicates, the term ‘terrorism’ appeared in two distinct situations: On the one hand, it was used to describe the actions of a hostile regime, i.e. Nazi Germany, with which the United States was at war in the 1940s. On the other hand, the term was also applied in the conflict in Mandatory Palestine to characterize the violent behavior of the Jewish groups, meaning non-state actors who, just a few years

earlier, had actually been the most prominent victims of ‘Nazi terrorism.’ This suggests that ‘terrorism’ in the writing of *The New York Times* in the 1940s could refer to both types of perpetrators regardless of whether it was an independent state or a non-state group. Likewise, the application of the term to two so disparate actors (Nazis and Jews) at roughly the same time implies that a perpetrator’s ideology or religion did not particularly influence whether he or she was labeled a ‘terrorist,’ indicating that the term first and foremost described a practice or tactic instead of conferring a permanent characteristic or identity trait onto a ‘terrorist.’

These discursivizations of ‘terrorism’ remained active in later decades as well. Figures 2.1 and 2.2 record another notable, above-average spike in the reporting on ‘terrorism’ in *The New York Times* in the early 1960s and the available data suggests that this increase in journalistic output may, at least in part, be related to the conflict in Algeria. While the number of articles on ‘terrorism’ in Algeria as well as pieces on ‘terrorism’ in connection to being ‘Moslem’ (in those years the most typical spelling of the word) peaked only comparatively modestly in the 1950s, the early 1960s saw a marked rise in articles in *The New York Times* which were tagged with these terms. Figure 2.4 illustrates these developments in more detail. In 1957, *The New York Times* published 95 articles on ‘terrorism’ in Algeria (i.e. 13 % of the overall reporting on ‘terrorism’ that year); in 1962, this number increased to 367 pieces, a 286 % increase. In 1962, reporting on ‘terrorism’ in Algeria constituted 40 % of all writing on ‘terrorism’ in *The New York Times*. A similar pattern is discernible for ‘Moslem terrorism’: for 1957, the database lists 68 articles (i.e. 9 %); in 1962, there were 250 pieces, constituting an upsurge of 268 % which made up 28 % of all articles on ‘terrorism’ that year. These numbers clearly relate how central the conflict in Algeria was to reporting on ‘terrorism’ in the early 1960s.

The more detailed graphs in Figure 2.4 also suggest that many articles appeared in both searches, indicating how strongly connected the conceptualization of the violence in the Algerian War of Independence as ‘terrorism’ was to its geographical and religious markers. The reporting on ‘terrorism’ in *The New York Times* in the early 1960s focused predominantly on the conflict in Algeria, framing it as ‘terrorism’ and locating it in a specific geographic space. It further categorized this ‘terrorism’ as ‘Moslem’ in nature, another

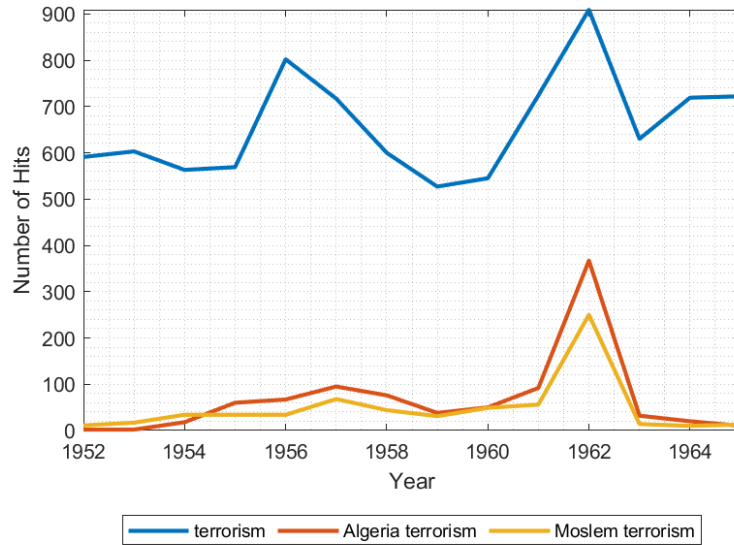


Figure 2.4: Reporting on ‘terrorism’ in the Algerian War of Independence in *The New York Times*, 1952-1965

specification indicating an increased awareness of the cultural and religious background of the actors involved in the conflict. This is noteworthy because, as Figure 2.2 shows, this peak constitutes a singular moment in the overall graph for ‘Moslem terrorism’ in the early decades. It suggests that references to ‘Moslem terrorism’ reflected the general framing of the struggle in Algeria as not only a colonial but also a religious conflict. It did not, however, (yet) work as a universal marker for ‘terrorism’ as it would in later decades (see especially Chapters 4 and 5), but instead was only applied to this specific political and historical situation.

Towards the end of the 1960s, the overall amount of reporting on ‘terrorism’ increased slowly and steadily. But this time, as Figure 2.2 indicates, the concerns had shifted once more, and the journalistic focus lay instead on the war in Vietnam and, less importantly, ‘Arab’ and ‘Jewish terrorism’ in the wake of the Arab-Israeli war. Figures 2.5 and 2.6 present this development in more detail. In Figure 2.5, the graphs documenting the number of articles in *The New York Times* on ‘Vietnam terrorism’ and ‘Vietcong terrorism’ (a term already widely in use at the time) develop similarly, indicating that violence against the American troops and allies in Vietnam was coded as ‘terrorism.’ While there were only 40 articles in 1963 (i.e. 6% of all articles on ‘terrorism’ that year) connecting Vietnam to

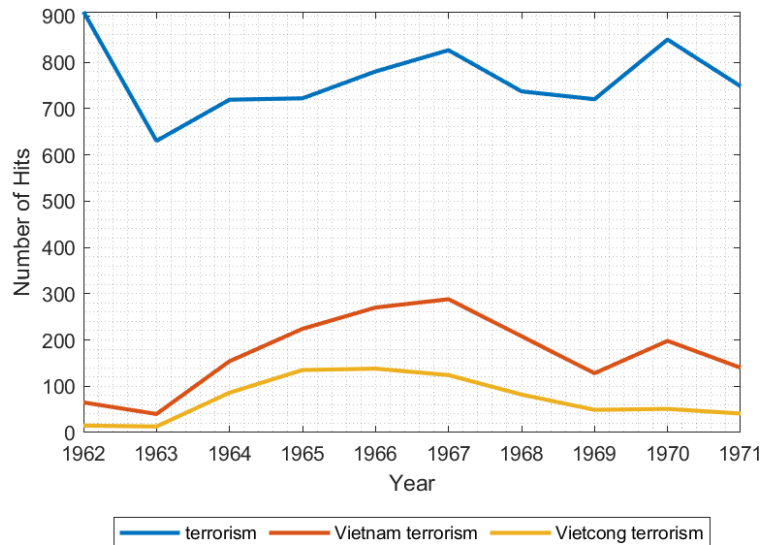


Figure 2.5: Reporting on ‘terrorism’ in connection with the Vietnam War in *The New York Times*, 1962-1971

‘terrorism,’ that number rose to 224 pieces in 1965 (31%), 270 articles in 1966 (35%), and 288 pieces (again 35%) a year later. Slightly less popular, articles mentioning ‘Vietcong terrorism’ in *The New York Times* went from 13 pieces (i.e. 2%) in 1963 to 135 (19%) in 1965, 138 articles (18%) in 1966, and 124 pieces (15%) in 1967.

To a lesser extent, the conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbors also continued to occupy reporting on ‘terrorism’ in *The New York Times* in the late 1960s. As Figure 2.6 shows, while there were only 32 articles mentioning ‘Arab terrorism’ in 1965 (i.e. only 4% of the overall reporting on ‘terrorism’ that year), this number rose to 115 pieces (14%) in 1967 and peaked at 137 articles (19%) in 1969. The close alignment of the graphs for ‘Arab terrorism’ and ‘Arab Israel terrorism’ in Figure 2.6 suggests that most articles tagged under the former label in *The New York Times* database dealt with the conflict with Israel, meaning that Arab violence in this conflict was predominantly framed as ‘terrorism.’ Interestingly, journalists also reported on ‘Jewish terrorism’ in this context, but the concept was less often used than ‘Arab terrorism,’ an evident reversal of reporting trends in the 1940s. In comparison, there were only 27 articles on ‘Jewish terrorism’ in 1965 (i.e. 4%), 78 pieces (9%) in 1967, and 68 articles on the issue in 1969 (again 9%), indicating that the notion of ‘Jewish terrorism’ was becoming less relevant to journalistic

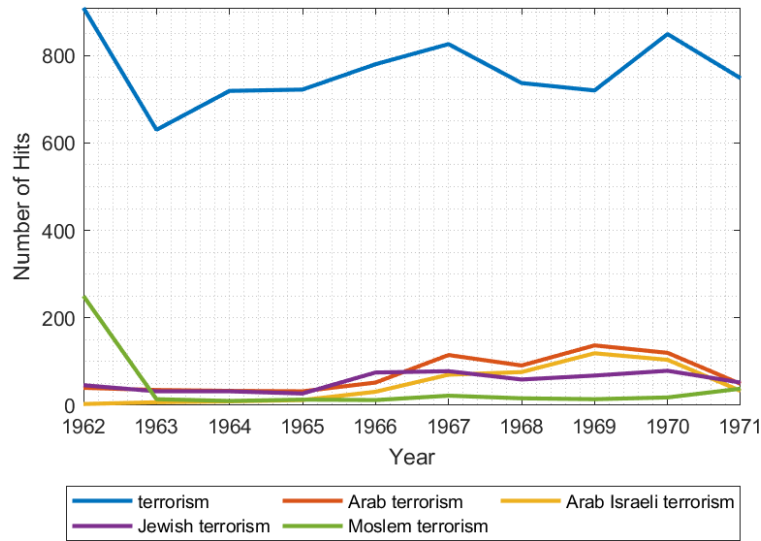


Figure 2.6: Reporting on different kinds of ‘terrorism’ in and from the Middle East in *The New York Times*, 1962-1971

writings on the conflict. Moreover, as the graph in Figure 2.6 also makes clear, ‘Moslem terrorism’ did not feature significantly in reporting on the conflict as articles mentioning the term only made up between 2% and 3% of the overall reporting on ‘terrorism’ in those years. As these examples show, then, ‘terrorism’ became an important concept in reporting on political conflicts worldwide in the journalism of *The New York Times*.

Lastly, one central theme recurring throughout the reporting on ‘terrorism’ in *The New York Times* in these early decades is the notion of ‘Soviet Union terrorism.’ As the graph in Figure 2.7 shows, journalistic writing on ‘terrorism’ in connection with the Soviet Union consistently made up 13% of all reporting on the issue between 1940 and 1970. In the early 1950s, the output was above average, going from 51 articles in 1955 (i.e. 9% of the overall writing on ‘terrorism’) to 212 pieces a year later (26%), a staggering increase of 316%. In 1957, there were still 122 articles on ‘Soviet Union terrorism’ (17%) and a year later, *The New York Times* published 100 pieces containing the term (also 17%). Similarly, the early 1960s marked another high point with 160 articles in 1961 (22%), 128 pieces in 1962 (14%), and 101 articles a year later (17%). These numbers suggest that, generally speaking, ‘terrorism’ in relation to the activities of the Soviet Union constituted

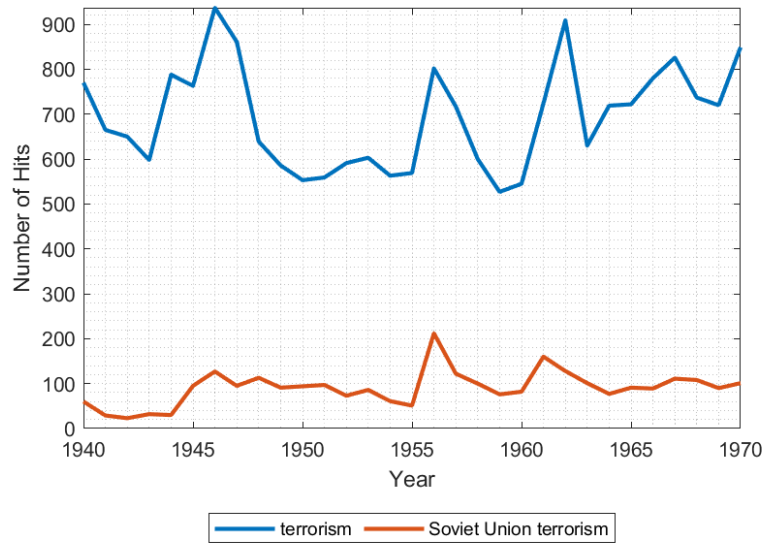


Figure 2.7: Reporting on ‘terrorism’ in connection with the Soviet Union in *The New York Times*, 1940-1970

a permanent journalistic concern which was present already from the very beginning of the Cold War between the USSR and the United States.

Ultimately, comparing all these different instances of increased ‘terrorism’ reporting in *The New York Times* allows us to draw a few important conclusions about the term’s meaning in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. Indeed, the consistent application of the term ‘terrorism’ in a wide variety of international conflicts suggests that *The New York Times* predominantly relied on the concept of ‘terrorism’ in cases where non-state actors attempted to violently fight what they saw as an oppressive colonial power standing in the way of independence and self-government by the colonized people, a conceptualization which fits in the cases of Palestine in the late 1940s and Algeria in the 1960s. This notion of ‘terrorism’ evolved slightly in later years to include violence by non-state actors against what the United States deemed to be legitimately formed governments, mainly meaning Israel and itself as it became more and more entangled in Vietnam. At the same time, to a lesser extent, ‘terrorism’ was also used to describe the actions of regimes considered to be antagonists of the United States. Hence, the activities of Nazi Germany during World War II were often labeled ‘terrorism’ while the behavior of the Soviet Union during the early phases of the Cold War was similarly framed. This indicates that *The New York*

Times applied the term in its writings to describe a certain set of activities and actions instead of focusing only on a perpetrator's nationality, ideology, religion, or other marker of identity.

As such, 'terrorism' in *The New York Times* was framed as one tactic in the political struggle among several others, meaning that articles often also referred to 'terrorism' alongside other forms of violence. For instance, in 1946, Gene Currivan reported from Palestine on more violent acts by the Irgun Zvai Leumi and the Stern Gang, describing the former group as "going in for extreme terrorism and the Stern group [as being] concerned with assassinations" (11). Similarly, Benjamin Welles wrote in a 1956 special to the newspaper that "[f]or the past nine months Cypriote extremists have waged a mounting campaign of terrorism against the British administration of the island" (E5). On March 20, 1962, Paul Hofmann wrote in another special to *The New York Times* about the escalating violence in Algeria, commenting that "[t]errorism and shootings this afternoon marked a new surge of violence in the two biggest cities of Algeria" (1). Roughly one month later, on April 26, Henry Tanner reported from Algiers that "[s]ecret Army Organization terrorists were able to provoke Moslem crowds into retaliatory attacks on Europeans for the first time here today" ("Algiers Moslems" 1). As all these different examples show, 'terrorism' was regularly linked to acts of violence like assassinations and shootings and did not yet operate independently. In these early years, a sole reference to 'terrorism' was not enough to establish what had happened; rather, journalists writing for *The New York Times* tended to name 'terrorism' in conjunction with another type of violence in order to describe events more precisely.

Equally noticeable when reviewing the reporting on 'terrorism' in *The New York Times* is how most conflicts which were covered by the newspaper under this concept were set in the Middle East, or rather countries typically associated with the Middle East in the American cultural and political imaginary. This journalistic focus mirrored and also enhanced increasing American political and cultural interest in this particular geographical space, its people and their cultures. Melani McAlister has shown how cultural texts "helped to make the Middle East an acceptable area for the exercise of American power" and "a stage for the production of American identities – national, racial, and

religious” (3). The journalism of *The New York Times*, I argue, contributed significantly to this project since it introduced American readers to representations of the region and, from the very beginning, depicted it as conflict-prone and its people as likely to engage in ‘terrorism’ and other forms of violence. It also positioned the United States as benevolent power intervening in ‘terrorism’-laden conflicts and, later, as fighters of ‘terrorism’ in the Middle East and beyond.

What is a little harder to generalize in this context is how *The New York Times* actually evaluated ‘terrorism’ and the ‘terrorist’ perpetrators. In the case of the conflict in Palestine in the late 1940s, articles tended to describe the Jewish and Arab ‘terrorists’ in neutral terms, avoiding moral condemnations and judgments. Clifton Daniel, for instance, wrote in a special to *The New York Times* on June 10, 1947 about the kidnapping of two British police officers by a Jewish “terrorist band” (1). The article recounted how “twelve armed Jews, including one woman,” stormed “the luxurious new swimming pool north of Ramat Gan” (1). Notably, the description focused on the sequence of events and did not include evaluations or commentary, even when relating how “one policeman tried to resist and was struck on the head with the gun” by one of the Jewish invaders (1). Here, Daniel’s continuous use of passive sentence structures (“the two policemen were marched off,” “[t]wo smoke bombs were hurled”) put the focus on the chain of actions leading to the kidnappings and not on the identity and motivations of the perpetrators. Moreover, early into the article, Daniel referred to the “the dissident’s terroristic operations against the British” (1), a phrasing which stressed that ‘terrorist’ was not the main identity component describing the perpetrators. Instead, it framed their reliance on ‘terrorism’ as a tactic in the struggle against the British government. The term “dissident” further cast the conflict as political in nature and even conferred a certain amount of legitimacy and respectability onto the actors, suggesting that they had to rely on “terrorism” in order to make their disagreement with British policies in Palestine heard.

In the case of escalating violence between France and Algeria in the 1960s, *The New York Times* employed a somewhat more judgmental tone than previously, but overall maintained similar levels of respect for the perpetrators. A special by Henry Tanner from May 6, 1962, at the height of the conflict, discussed “two particularly gruesome terrorist

attacks [which occurred] this week” and which were committed by the French paramilitary group, the Secret Army Organization (OAS) (“Algerian Secret” E4).⁸ In this context, the word “gruesome” passed judgment on the attacks and evaluated them as horrific, but this assessment did not color the rest of the article which devoted a considerable amount of space to explaining the objectives of the OAS in Algeria – mainly the “partition of Algeria into a Moslem hinterland and two European coastal areas around Algiers and Oran” (E4).

What is more, Tanner explained that the power of the OAS had diminished considerably and that “their operations [we]re confined to entirely destructive sabotage and terrorism” (E4). This presented the OAS “terrorists” as intelligent actors with a clearly identifiable, perhaps even relatable, goal who had turned to “sabotage and terrorism” out of desperation. In this view, ‘terrorism’ constituted a strategy of last resort, a sign for the increasing weakness and desperation of the actors. Similarly, Tanner also referred to the OAS “terrorists” as “insurgents” and “commandos,” further underlining that they were seen as political groups with clear goals and an agenda, even if their methods (“sabotage and terrorism”) were at times deplorable. Importantly, this also meant that the “gruesome” violence meted out by the OAS “terrorists” served a clear political purpose; as Tanner put it, the “aim [wa]s to provoke the Moslem masses to descend on European neighborhoods, where the Army would have to open fire on them, and to cause the cease-fire to break down into a general bloodbath” (E4). By contrast, Tanner described “the frustration and anger of the Moslem masses and their leaders, hunted by terrorists and killed by the score, straining under a policy that forbids them to strike back and waiting for the day when they may even the score” (E4), suggesting that (the expected) counter-violence by “the Moslem masses” was merely revenge (and not ‘terrorism’) and as such automatically intolerable and reprehensive.

This framing of ‘terrorism’ also largely holds for the reporting on ‘Vietcong terrorism’ during the Vietnam War. Thus, articles referred to “Vietcong terrorism” and “Communist terrorists” who committed “[t]errorist incidents” and “Vietcong acts of terror” (Bigart 1), but also called the opposing side “a Communist guerrilla force” and warned of the dangers of “serious Communist subversion and sabotage” (Reuters 2) as well as “increased guerrilla

⁸For more on the conflict in Algeria and the role of the OAS, see, e.g., Harrison and Horne.

warfare” (Robinson 4). This indicates that ‘terrorist’ was not the main label used to identify and construct the perpetrators, but rather one among several others available to describe them. It presented the perpetrators as political beings with an ideology, communism, and a political goal, the establishment of a communist state. Moreover, reporters writing for *The New York Times* noted the humanity of the “Rebel Guerrillas,” commenting in one incident that “[m]any of the dead [Vietnamese ‘terrorists’] were young boys who lay slumped in the water. All wore the black garb of the South Vietnamese peasant” (Reuters 1, 2), suggesting that these ‘terrorists’ were to be pitied and mourned despite their political affiliation.

By contrast, when the ‘terrorist’ perpetrator was not an individual actor or group but rather an entire state, the evaluation of the ‘terrorism’ in the writings of *The New York Times* was markedly less neutral. For instance, in its reporting on ‘Nazi terrorism’ in the 1940s, journalists for the newspaper often described the methods used by the Nazi regime as “terror” and “terrorism,” suggesting that the distinction between these two terms was not yet established.⁹ On September 10, 1940, for instance, *The New York Times* published a piece which opined that “Winston Churchill was wise to have have warned his people last week that the attacks against them might be doubled and trebled before the Nazi terror had reached its fullest fury” (“Terror” 22). The article then proceeded to describe the nightly bombings of London by the German army as “indiscriminate death [which] was hurled from the night sky at almost every section of the great city” (22), painting a terrifying scene for readers by indicating that the entire civilian population of London, representing Great Britain as a whole, was the explicit target of this ‘Nazi terror(ism).’ In the view of this article, these tactics clearly constituted ‘acts of terrorism’ which were used by the Nazi regime as a strategy to win the war: “Where world domination is the prize, no methods of terrorism are too brutal if they will help to win” (22). ‘Nazi terrorism’ was thus clearly evaluated in negative terms as exceptionally violent, indiscriminate, and ruthless, and, since the objective was “world domination,” also a serious threat to the U.S. and its allies and friends.

Similarly, journalists writing for *The New York Times* also regularly used references to ‘terrorism’ to describe actions and activities by the Soviet Union and to mark them as

⁹See, e.g., “Asks,” “Invasions,” and “Ukraine.”

repressive and illegitimate. On December 31, 1949, for example, an article related that the government of Yugoslavia had “accused the Soviet Union today of sending terrorist squads” into the country in order “to commit acts of ‘terror and sabotage’” (“Yugoslav” 3). Likewise, a piece published in the newspaper on December 28, 1951, warned of the dangers of “Communist terrorism” by the Soviet Union which it described as “spreading out and turning against the democracies and their citizens, either to collect ransom [...] or to terrorize democratic critics into silence and subservience” (“Long” 20). As these examples show, ‘terrorism’ was predominantly used in these instances to characterize Soviet policies and politics as grounded in illicit violence, clearly carrying a negative connotation. This suggests that, generally speaking, whenever violence was perpetrated by a regime hostile or antagonistic to the United States, mentioning the concept ‘terrorism’ enabled *The New York Times* to characterize this violence as unlawful and excessive. In this context, references to ‘terrorism’ revealed the repressiveness of the (fascist or communist) system since it did not hesitate to use ‘terrorism’ to control its own citizens through fear and violence and to extend its powers into other regions, thus portraying these nations as (potentially) dangerous for the United States and its allies.

Overall, then, ‘terrorism’ in *The New York Times* was used in a notably different manner in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s compared to today. Articles on the topic tended to acknowledge explicitly or implicitly the humanity of the actors and framed them as rational and intelligent human beings with political goals which could be identified, understood, and discussed. Outright condemnation of ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorists’ as morally reprehensible was rare. ‘Terrorism’ itself was predominantly conceptualized in general terms as a strategy and tactic used in a larger political conflict by weaker non-state groups who also had other methods like bombings and assassination in their arsenal. As such, ‘terrorism’ was closely linked to other concepts from the broader field of political violence such as ‘insurrection,’ ‘rebellion,’ and ‘guerrilla warfare,’ meaning that ‘terrorists’ were also described as ‘rebels,’ ‘insurgents,’ and ‘guerrillas’ as the same time. Moreover, ‘terrorism’ was already predominantly located in the geographic and imaginary Middle East, effectively establishing a discursive connection which would only strengthen in coming years. However, whenever the ‘terrorist’ perpetrator was an enemy state, references to ‘terrorism’ served

to stress the illegitimacy and ‘evilness’ of the regime. As the discussion above showed, in these cases, ‘terrorism’ had a more negative connotation and marked the violence as illegitimate and oppressive, revealing the ‘true’ nature of the regime as dictatorial.

These findings thus add to our understanding of how ‘terrorism’ was framed in these early post-war decades in the United States, underwriting conceptualizations made popular as well by Leon Uris’ bestselling novel *Exodus*. The American news media, as exemplified by *The New York Times*, established itself in those early decades as another important discursive agent who reflected and actively shaped the understanding of ‘terrorism’ at the time and disseminated this particular ‘knowledge’ into wider parts of American society, introducing readers to the concept and working to stabilize a certain set of meaning components. In the next section, I discuss how the academic community approached the issue of ‘terrorism’ and developed a variety of theories aimed at making the phenomenon knowable and thus controllable. Early scholars also provided other discursive agents with input and ideas on how to approach ‘terrorism,’ infusing the emerging discourse with vitality and developing narrative elements which would become central in later decades.

2.2 “Rebels,” “Enemies,” and “Terrorists” – The ‘Terrorism’ Discourse in U.S. Academia in the 1950s and 1960s

As an analytical concept, ‘terrorism’ circulated not only in the American news media in the 1940s to 1960s. In a similar development, the term was also used by the academic community and in this section, I examine how ‘terrorism’ was turned into an object of academic scrutiny about which scholars could produce a certain kind of knowledge and make certain truth claims. In this endeavor, it is also important to look at the discursive agents themselves, i.e. the scholars researching ‘terrorism’ and other related concepts, since it tells us with which kinds of ideas, theories, and methods they approached the issue of ‘terrorism’ in those early decades. These particular intellectual and discursive roots significantly shaped the way ‘terrorism’ was understood and used within early discourses on (political) violence in the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁰

¹⁰Lisa Stampnitzky has argued in her 2013 book *Disciplining Terror* that until the 1970s the discourse on ‘insurgency’ provided the dominant frame of interpretation for hijackings, bombings, and other forms of (political) violence (49-50). I do not completely disagree with her claim, but I would take a broader

Many of those scholars who would become influential in the following decades and who contributed significantly to eventually making the study of ‘terrorism’ its own, independent discipline, first approached the issue via their work on ‘insurgency,’ but also relied on other concepts like ‘revolution’ and ‘war.’ Thomas P. Thornton, for example, wrote an article on “Terror as a Weapon of Political Agitation.” His article formed part of Harry Eckstein’s anthology *Internal War* (1964), itself the result of “a symposium of social scientists” at the Center of International Studies at Princeton University in 1961 where these scholars were asked to apply different social theories to the problem of “internal war” and write papers on their findings (Eckstein 4). Thornton’s article, however, is the only one of eleven in Eckstein’s anthology to address ‘terrorism,’ already signaling that ‘terrorism’ was seen as not overly relevant for the study of “internal war.” Similarly, Roger Trinquier’s influential 1961 study *La guerre moderne* – translated as *Modern Warfare* in 1964 – focused conceptually on ‘war’ and drew on his experience as officer in the French army during the 1940s and 1950s. In turn, Peter Paret and John W. Shy’s 1962 study *Guerrillas in the 1960’s* argued that “war may assume different forms” and focused specifically on the dangers of “guerrilla warfare” (4, e.g. 13). As these examples show, ‘terrorism’ did not feature prominently in academic work on ‘war’ and ‘insurrection,’ indicating that it was not the dominant conceptual frame for discussions of political violence, but rather subordinate to other models.

Not all scholars who would make a name for themselves in later years were established social scientists either. Indeed, some of them had backgrounds in the liberal arts and humanities. Brian Crozier, for instance, author of the classic study *The Rebels*, originally studied Music at Trinity College in London and worked as journalist and war time reporter before turning to the study of ‘terrorism’ and ‘insurrection.’ Robert Payne, another important ‘terrorism’ scholar in the 1950s and 1960s, actually taught English literature and naval architecture and wrote novels and poetry. He engaged with the issue of ‘terrorism’ primarily as author of biographies about important historical figures. These examples show

stance here. In my view, the early scholarly attempts to understand and explain ‘terrorism’ originated from many different fields and ‘insurgency’ was not the only analytical concept which was used. Likewise, the scholars who relied on ‘terrorism’ in their work came from disparate backgrounds, meaning that the beginnings of the discourse on ‘terrorism’ were more diverse and less unified than they appear in Stampnitzky’s analysis.

that scholars interested in the study of ‘terrorism’ in the immediate post-war decades came from multifarious backgrounds and had little of what we would consider today adequate formal training to support their research and analyses. This also indicates that the study of ‘terrorism’ constituted a niche at the time since only a few scholars actively worked with the term and contribution to its study was hardly regulated or controlled.

Notably, many of these scholars active in the American academic community also had foreign backgrounds. Brian Crozier (1918-2012) was Australian by nationality but lived most of his life in England. Robert Payne (1911-1983) was British, but eventually took U.S. citizenship in 1953 and lived and worked in New York City. Harry Eckstein (1924-1999) was German and Jewish, but escaped Nazi persecution to the United States as a boy to become a noted political scientist in the U.S. As in many other fields at the time,¹¹ the United States did not yet have enough ‘home-grown’ scholars working on the topic and ended up importing European expertise and experts, another sign pointing to the rather divergent beginnings of ‘terrorism’ studies and the lack of institutional structures and boundaries to guide research and the production of knowledge and expertise.¹²

Mirroring this diversity in the scholars’ backgrounds and training, the academic community developed a variety of approaches to ‘terrorism’ itself, establishing links and connections which would influence the discourse for decades to come. Early attempts at theorizing ‘terrorism’ illustrate this dynamic well. In his 1950 study *Zero: The Story of Terrorism*, Robert Payne linked ‘terrorism’ to nihilism and the first Russian revolutionaries of the 19th century, most notably Sergei Gennadiyevich Nechayev (1847-1882), whom Payne called “the founder of modern terrorism” (2). Ten years later, Brian Crozier published his seminal study *The Rebels* (1960) in which he defined ‘terrorism’ as “the threat or use of violence for political ends” (159). Crozier understood ‘terrorism’ as a first step in a larger political process which ultimately culminated in ‘rebellion’ and ‘insurrection.’ According to Crozier, ‘terrorism’ was usually followed by ‘guerrilla warfare’ and full-scale war and

¹¹For the beginnings of Middle East or Area Studies, see Lockman, *Contending*. For the beginnings of Soviet Studies in the United States, see Engerman.

¹²Another poignant example for this dynamic is Roger Trinquier’s book *Modern Warfare*, discussed in more detail below. During the Vietnam War in the 1950s and 1960s, the United States imported experts in ‘counterinsurgency’ from France who brought Trinquier’s book with them and used it when teaching their American counterparts, thus slowly turning it into a ‘classical’ text which, to this day, is freely available on the internet. See Riegler, *Terrorismus* for more information.

the main purpose behind ‘terrorism’ was “to make life unendurable for the enemy” (160). In 1964, Thomas Thornton wrote a contribution for Harry Eckstein’s anthology *Internal War* in which he attempted to outline a first theory of ‘terrorism.’ Thornton conceived of ‘terrorism’ as a form of ‘internal war’: “in an internal war situation, *terror is a symbolic act designed to influence political behavior by extranormal means, entailing the use or threat of violence*” (73). In a similar vein, Roger Trinquier defined ‘terrorism’ as “a *weapon of warfare*” (16). Again others, like Eugene Walter or J. S. Roucek, understood ‘terrorism’ simply as “a type of violent action [...] designed to make people afraid” (Walter 5) and “a means of social control” (Roucek 165). As these examples demonstrate, ‘terrorism’ was linked to a number of different concepts and theories from a wider ideological spectrum.

But despite these diverse conceptualizations and definitions, many of these scholars shared, perhaps surprisingly, some core assumptions about ‘terrorism.’ As the examples above demonstrate, ‘terrorism’ was connected to already established concepts of analysis like ‘rebellion’ or ‘war(fare)’ and thus incorporated from early on into discourses on political violence. This meant that ‘terrorism’ was overwhelmingly framed as vaguely ‘political’ in outlook and aim, to be distinguished, for example, from violence for profit. Scholars also conceptualized ‘terrorism’ as a strategy used by non-state actors against a state or colonial power, most often in struggles for national liberation which, according to these scholars, would eventually culminate in ‘revolution,’ ‘rebellion,’ ‘insurgency,’ ‘insurrection,’ or a form of ‘war(fare).’ ‘Terrorism’ was thus generally framed as one important step on the road to escalating political violence.

This particular construction of ‘terrorism’ had consequences for how the act itself was evaluated. Similar to the reporting practices of *The New York Times* in those years, most scholars tended to distinguish between a ‘good,’ acceptable, relatable, even honorable form of ‘terrorism’ and a ‘bad,’ unacceptable ‘terrorism’ which they condemned. Indeed, how ‘terrorism’ was judged depended largely on how the scholar in question viewed the ‘terrorist’ actors themselves. For instance, in *The Rebels* Crozier discussed the actions of the Haganah, the Irgun Zvai Leumi, and the Stern Gang in Palestine/Israel as an example of “Terrorist Successes” where ‘terrorism’ proved to be a “decisive instrument of rebellion” (182). He stressed that these Zionist groups enjoyed wide public support for

their agenda: “Thus, for nearly half the terrorist period, these terrorists enjoyed an alliance with the militant mass organisation [the Haganah], and therefore the active support of the Jewish population; for the remainder of that time they enjoyed at least a measure of passive support and immunity from betrayal” (185). He defended the Jewish resistance’s resort to ‘terrorism’ by pointing out that “[t]he more blood-curdling methods of terrorism – such as torture or mutilation – seem to have been avoided; and the terrorist activities were not, or virtually not, directed against the terrorists’ own side” (184). The phrase “blood-curdling methods of terrorism” implies a value judgment and the existence of ‘good’ and ‘bad terrorism’ at the same time. In the discussion of ‘Jewish terrorism’ in Palestine, it functions to elevate the status of the ‘Jewish terrorists’ to ‘good terrorists’ and romanticizes them as rebels nobly fighting for national liberation and statehood.¹³ Moreover, it presents these ‘terrorists’ as rational actors with a clearly identifiable, relatable, and honorable objective, suggesting that the resort to ‘terrorism’ in this struggle was justified.

Crozier’s approach stands in stark contrast to Roger Trinquier’s 1964 analysis *Modern Warfare*. Trinquier, a French officer who served in Algiers during the Algerian War for Independence (1954-1962), conceptualized ‘terrorism’ as a form of what he called “*modern warfare*” (in italics throughout his entire study) on which clandestine guerrilla groups relied in order to overthrow the government and establish their own regime (6). As an official government representative, Trinquier exhibited a clear bias in favor of governmental power and against non-state actors like the National Liberation Front (Front de Libération Nationale, FLN) in Algiers. Where Crozier idealized “the rebels,” Trinquier consistently spoke of “enemies,” a term which abounded in his study and which evoked the dualistic antagonism between army and opponent, between an ‘us’ and a ‘them.’ It also worked to militarize the issue by linking ‘terrorism’ to warfare. As Trinquier argued, ‘terrorism’ was “the basic weapon that permit[ted] our enemies to fight effectively with a few resources and even to defeat a traditional army” (16). This kind of language bolstered the threat emanating from ‘terrorism’ and similar tactics and constructed it as dangerous, ‘bad,’ and requiring a forceful response by the state.

¹³This kind of white-washing is reminiscent of the depiction of the Maccabees in Leon Uris’ *Exodus* and introduces a problematic racial component to the evaluation of the perpetrators by these scholars.

The importance of *who* engaged in ‘terrorism’ for the evaluation of ‘terrorism’ as a strategy is most obvious in the case of the Russian revolutionaries. Scholars discussing the Russian anarchists and nihilists of the 19th century generally took an idealizing approach, similar to Crozier’s romanticizing of the Jewish resistance in Palestine. Robert Payne, for instance, wrote extensively on Nechayev and his contemporaries. Indeed, Payne’s academic writings, which describe these ‘terrorists,’ their lives and motivations, reveal a certain degree of fascination with their methods. For example, in *Zero*, Payne acknowledged Nechayev, author of “The Revolutionary Catechism,” as “the first to draw up a code of revolutionary laws which represented [...] the romantic protest against the age of reason” (39). In *The Terrorists* (1957), Payne maintained that “[t]he terrorists who emerged in Russia in the second half of the last century were men who saw that the dynasty could be overthrown only by terror” (xiii). He portrayed them as desperate, but inherently rational men, driven by a political ideology which demanded more equality and freedom than Tsarist Russia was prepared to give them: “These terrorists did not enjoy terrorism. They resorted to terrorism because they were outnumbered, and in the hope of opening the way for a peasant revolt” (xv).

By contrast, scholars analyzing the communist regime of the USSR and its ascent to power described the ways the Soviet regime consolidated its power under Lenin, Stalin, and even Trotsky as ‘terrorism’ of the reprehensible kind and condemned its use. In *The Terrorists*, Payne called Stalin “the greatest terrorist of all” and credited him with the introduction of ‘mass terrorism,’ meaning “the murder of countless people for no reason except that they stood in the path of the dictator or appeared to stand in his path” (350, 348). Mirroring the journalistic practices of the time, calling Stalin’s actions ‘terrorism’ enabled Payne to denounce the USSR in a way in which ‘terrorism’ became a marker of dictatorship and totalitarianism. Payne argued that in order to understand the rise of Soviet communism, one needed to look at its origins, i.e. the oppressive Tsarist regimes against which the 19th century ‘terrorists’ fought. His distinction between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ ‘terrorists’ indicates that the term ‘terrorism’ itself maintained a considerable conceptual and evaluatory fluidity, allowing scholars like Payne to apply it to an array of widely different cases.

What is more, these early scholarly analyses also introduced and established two important themes which would become central to the discourse on ‘terrorism’ at various points in later decades. One of these was the location of ‘terrorism’ in the Middle East (geographical and imaginary), the other was the link between ‘terrorism’ and communism, mainly using the USSR as example. In the works of scholars like Brian Crozier or Roger Trinquier, countries and peoples associated with the Middle East in the American cultural and political imaginary were already connected to the issue of ‘terrorism.’ Both authors represented two ways of evaluating ‘terrorism’ – Crozier romanticized and justified it while Trinquier condemned it as major threat to the established (colonial) order – yet they both depicted the Middle East as a contested space in which violence dominated the political process. As the rest of the chapters in this study show, these early discursive connections would become fortified and adapted in later decades.

It is predominantly in the case of these early discursive connections between ‘terrorism’ and communism that we can already observe an increasing politicization of the knowledge about ‘terrorism’ that these scholars produced. Take, for instance, Feliks Gross’ study *The Seizure of Political Power in a Century of Revolutions* (1958). In Gross’ view, ‘terror’ and ‘terrorism’ constituted a tactic used in revolutions which, in turn, symbolized violent transfers of power. With regard to the Soviet Union, Gross maintained that both Lenin and Stalin desired unlimited power “as the means to establish a state founded on violence and terror” (6). He drew a sharp distinction between a superior Western ‘us’ and an inferior Soviet ‘them’ based on the different political systems and how power was supposedly transferred in each: “Among nations which have accepted the Western democratic pattern, the transfer of power is a peaceful and orderly process, according to definite rules, rigorously enforced” (33). Gross then spent the rest of his study analyzing in detail how power changed hands in Russia only through different types of revolutions and the use of ‘terror(ism).’ The clear implication was that this way of effecting political and social change was inferior to the American political system. Similarly, Robert Payne, discussed extensively above, framed what he deemed the Soviet use of ‘terrorism’ as a marker of distinction between the communist Soviet Union and the United States as benevolent democracy. Analyzing the two political systems through the lens

of ‘terrorism’ made the difference absolute and validated the Cold War as necessary and important. ‘Terror’ and ‘terrorism’ became another aspect through which authors could prove American superiority over the USSR.¹⁴

Importantly, these early discursive links became the foundation which the ‘terrorism’ discourse could (and would) exploit successfully, allowing it to grow in power and reach over the decades while recycling and developing many of the major themes established in these early decades by different discursive agents like popular culture products (especially novels and films), the American news media, and the academic community. The emerging discourse on ‘terrorism’ also received a significant boost at the beginning of the following decade, the early 1970s, by offering an attractive and seemingly novel interpretative frame which could be applied to make sense of what were generally seen to be decisive political (and discursive) events, shaping their construction as acts of ‘terrorism’ (and not, say, ‘insurrection’ or ‘internal war’). In the next section, I turn to these moments of change which precipitated, as becomes clear in retrospect, the ascent of the discourse on ‘terrorism’ to a hegemonic position in the discursive arena in the United States.

2.3 “A Definite Turning Point” – The ‘Terrorism’ Discourse in U.S. Politics and Academia in the 1970s

As the discussions in the previous sections showed, in the early decades after World War II, ‘terrorism’ was generally not perceived to be a serious social and political problem. This was reflected in conceptualizations of the term in neutral and at times even positive ways as a strategy and tactic, and its embedment in larger discourses on ‘insurgency,’ ‘insurrection,’ and ‘war(fare).’ In the 1970s, however, this changed dramatically: ‘terrorism’ slowly became the dominant explanatory paradigm for particular instances of political violence and in the course of this process also adapted its meaning to the shifting discursive requirements. The 1970s thus functioned as an important period of transition in which the discourse on ‘terrorism’ slowly grew out of its earlier conceptual roots to increased influence and heightened visibility. Indeed, a series of historical events became *events* in

¹⁴I discuss the notion that the Soviet Union plots to destroy the United States and the rest of ‘the West’ by using terrorist techniques and supporting terrorist groups all over the world, regardless of ideology, in depth in Chapter 3 of this study.

a Foucaultian understanding of the term, meaning that they disrupted previous ways of problematizing ‘terrorism’ and constituted it as a different “object for thought” than before (Foucault, *Politics* 257).

Scholars have offered a variety of reasons for this development. Adrian Guelke, for instance, has pointed to the 1967 Six-Day War between Israel and a coalition of the United Arab Republic (i.e. Egypt and Syria) and Jordan as “a significant factor in loosening the media’s inhibitions over the use of the term [‘terrorism’]” (3). Lisa Stampnitzky, in turn, has argued that the discourse on ‘insurgency’ already began to lose power and influence in the late 1960s because of “the controversy that erupted over Project Camelot in 1965, and the perceived failure of counterinsurgency in Vietnam” (57).¹⁵ This, she has suggested, allowed the emerging discourse on ‘terrorism’ to become more central in discussions of political violence in the 1970s. Similarly, Adrian Hänni has generally named the early 1970s as the period in which ‘terrorism’ was constructed as a problem in the interspace of media, academia, and politics for the first time (*Terrorismus* 39).¹⁶ Lastly, Timothy Naftali has referred to “Skyjack Sunday,” the coordinated hijackings of four commercial airliners by members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) in September 1970 which, he has claimed, specifically targeted the United States and not ‘just’ Israel and indicated a change in tactics and outlook by Palestinian groups (*Blind* 42).

Where all scholars have agreed on, however, is the importance of what transpired during the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich, Germany, for the development of the discourse on ‘terrorism.’ When a group of Black September fighters sneaked into the Olympic village and stormed the Israeli quarters, killing two Israeli athletes before taking nine members of the Israeli team hostage, it left a global audience stunned and helpless.

¹⁵The goal of “Project Camelot” was “to determine the feasibility of developing a general social systems model which would make it possible to predict and influence politically significant aspects of social change in the developing nations of the world” as well as “to identify [...] those actions which a government might take to relieve conditions which [...] giv[e] rise to a potential for internal war” (qtd. in Horowitz 4-5). The project was heavily funded by the government and drew some of the most esteemed scholars and biggest names in the field. However, controversy erupted when its intentions became public, leading the project to be accused of recruiting academics in order to further the American imperialist agenda. In the end, the project was canceled over the massive public outcry and an investigation by the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, lastingly “disrupting the prior seemingly stable relations between government and the social sciences in the United States” as well as stigmatizing the field of ‘insurgency’ studies (Stampnitzky 58). See Horowitz, Ellen Herman, Solovey, and Stampnitzky for more details.

¹⁶Since Hänni’s study is written in German, I paraphrase his arguments instead of citing them directly in order to avoid excluding non-German-speaking readers.

Black September operatives declared that they would kill one hostage every two hours unless their demands, i.e. the release of 234 Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails as well as members of the Red Army Faction (RAF) from German prisons, were not met. Tense negotiations ensued. Eventually, the kidnappers demanded a plane to Cairo and German officials agreed, seeing it as an opportunity to free the hostages. But the rescue attempt failed tragically because the German police was not experienced enough to handle the situation. In the ensuing shoot-out with the Black September group at Fürstenfeldbruck Airport, all nine Israeli hostages and all but two of the kidnappers as well as one German police officer were killed.¹⁷ International TV crews and news media, already on location in order to report on the Olympics, covered every little detail about the crisis “and because sustained broadcasting of live images from one side of the globe to the other was still a novel feature of commercial television, the Munich tragedy received unprecedented international attention” (Yaqub 92).

Analyses of the events in Munich have stressed the amplifying effect of international live broadcasting, giving what transpired an aura of immediacy and novelty which added significantly to its perception and construction as a watershed moment. Timothy Naftali asserted that “[t]he Palestinian assault on the Israeli team at the 1972 Munich Olympics shocked the consciousness of the world and finally defined the new menace of international terrorism” (*Blind* 54). Melani McAlister agreed that “[t]he massacre at Munich had an extraordinary impact in the United States,” primarily as a result of the extensive live media coverage of the events (180). She concluded that “[l]ive terrorist TV was born at the Munich Olympics” (180). Lisa Stampnitzky also maintained that “the massacre at the 1972 Munich Olympics [...] took on central symbolic significance in the history of terrorism” and called it “a definite turning point” (21, 22).

In my view, it was a combination of all these different events in the late 1960s and early 1970s which problematized ‘terrorism’ and brought it to the forefront of the political consciousness in the United States. The narrativization of what had happened in Munich as an instance of ‘terrorism’ made a changing discursive landscape visible and accelerated the process, but it was also not as clean a cut as it might appear in retrospect.

¹⁷For a history of the events, see Klein and Reeve, *One*.

Indeed, while ‘terrorism’ was the term frequently used to describe the Black September attack on the Israeli Olympic team, it was not the only concept in circulation. President Nixon, for instance, spoke to reporters about “this murderous action that occurred in the Olympic village in Munich” and called the perpetrators “international outlaws of the worst sort” (“Remarks”). When it became clear that none of the Israeli hostages had survived the ordeal, Nixon wrote to Prime Minister Golda Meir, telling her, “[t]his tragic and senseless act is a perversion of all the hopes and aspirations of mankind which the Olympic Games symbolize. In a larger sense, it is a tragedy for all the peoples and nations of the world” (“Message”). As these examples show, President Nixon did not use ‘terrorism’ to describe the events even though he condemned them in unequivocal terms. This indicates that ‘terrorism’ was not (yet) the dominant discursive frame through which these events were interpreted and made meaningful. It also serves as a poignant reminder to present-day scholars that there was nothing innate in the events of Munich that predetermined an interpretation of the events as ‘terrorism.’

Rather, the fact that important discursive agents began to construct the events in Munich as ‘terrorism’ in the days and weeks that followed sparked political developments and cultural responses which made the discourse on ‘terrorism’ more prominent and endowed it with more power and influence than before. Indeed, already a day after the attacks in Munich, *The New York Times* reported that “[t]he United States embarked today on diplomatic efforts throughout the world and new security measures at home to try to curb international political terrorism following yesterday’s killings of members of the Israeli Olympic team at Munich in the attack by Palestinian guerrillas” (Szulc, “U.S.” 1). Journalist Tad Szulc continued that “[a]cting on President Nixon’s instructions, Secretary of State William P. Rogers moved for consultations with foreign governments on formulating a collective security system against worldwide terrorism” (1), informing readers that the Nixon administration was developing strategies against ‘terrorism’ in direct response to the tragedy in Munich. Szulc further wrote that “[t]he revulsion over the Munich killings was reflected in the passage by the Senate and the House of Representatives, [sic] of identical resolutions urging the United States and other countries to cut off all contacts with nations providing sanctuary or support to terrorists” (19). This also told

readers that ‘terrorism’ had become a significant political problem practically overnight, eliciting responses and legal actions by all major political institutions in the United States.

These actions included the establishment of the Cabinet Committee to Combat Terrorism (CCCT) a few weeks later to address the growing anxieties of the American public about ‘terrorism.’ In a presidential memorandum, Richard Nixon tasked the CCCT to “consider the most effective means by which to prevent terrorism here and abroad, and [...] [to] take the lead in establishing procedures to ensure that our government can take appropriate action in response to acts of terrorism swiftly and effectively” (“Memorandum”). Indeed, its function was “largely symbolic,” as Lisa Stampnitzky has maintained (27). As Timothy Naftali and Salim Yaqub have argued independently of each other, in practice it was really the CCCT working group, comprising representatives from nine different agencies (including the FBI, the CIA, and the Department of State), which actively engaged with the issue of ‘terrorism’ over an extended period of time at this level of government (Naftali, *Blind* 59-60; Yaqub 98-99). Nevertheless, the establishment of the CCCT signaled to the American public that the president had identified ‘terrorism’ as a “worldwide problem” with the capacity to endanger the U.S. (“Memorandum”), and decided to confront and combat the threat by founding a special Cabinet Committee, indicating that ‘terrorism’ was perceived as a new kind of threat which also required a different kind of institutional response.

Other political initiatives to address the perceived threat of ‘terrorism’ included the foundation of the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS), also in 1972 and sponsored by the Department of Justice, which collected in its database material and information on issues such as crime and public safety. The CIA, in turn, compiled its first weekly report on ‘terrorism’ by September 15, 1972, ten days after the tragedy in Munich (Naftali, *Blind* 55). Moreover, in the early 1970s, the Departments of Defense, State, and Justice began to systematically fund research projects, predominantly with the RAND Corporation, to investigate the issue of ‘terrorism’ (Lockman, *Contending* 144-45; L. Weissbrod 46). The CCCT working group also funded a series of conferences and research projects and Congress even added a “Chronology of Terror” to the Congressional Record from 1973 onwards (Hänni, *Terrorismus* 45, 51). Starting in 1976, the CIA also

published annual reports on ‘terrorism’ and its political and economic consequences for the United States. Congressional Hearings into the nature of ‘terrorism’ and internal security abounded as well.

The U.S. government thus actively worked towards the creation of knowledge about ‘terrorism’ by investing in ‘terrorism’ research in the hopes of receiving policy suggestions and practical advice on how to respond to the perceived ‘terrorism’ threat.¹⁸ This has led Timothy Naftali to conclude that “[t]he Nixon administration would be the first in U.S. history to consider international terrorism a national problem” (*Blind* 33). I agree with this view, but would add that, in fact, all major American political bodies became interested in ‘terrorism’ as a problem and developed ways to collect and create knowledge about it.

Indeed, even President Nixon (just like his successors in later years) increasingly began to speak about ‘terrorism’ in his official statements. Two days after his “Memorandum” to establish the CCCT, for instance, President Nixon gave a statement in which he decried “the inhuman wave of terrorism that ha[d] been loosed on the world” and announced that “[t]he time ha[d] come for civilized people to act in concert to remove the threat of terrorism from the world” (“Statement about Action”). A year later, on March 2, 1973, he denounced “the acts of terrorism which took the lives of Ambassador Cleo A. Noel and Deputy Chief of Mission George Curtis Moore” in the Sudan and reaffirmed “the need for all nations to take a firm stand against the menace of international terrorism” (“Statement on the Slaying”). Hence, while presidents in the 1940s and 1950s spoke on average less than once per year about ‘terrorism’ to their constituents (see again Figure 1.1), these numbers increased in the following decades. In the 1960s, there were on average three presidential statements per year which used the term, a rise of 650 % compared to the 1950s. Then, in the 1970s, the average increased once more to 9.4 references per year, another boost of 213 % from the previous decade. While the actual numbers may still be relatively low, they nevertheless mark a distinct change: American presidents from Nixon onward had clearly begun to think of ‘terrorism’ as an international problem and threat to American national security and were not only increasingly starting

¹⁸See also Reid, “Evolution” and “Terrorism;” and Stampnitzky for a similar argument.

to frame issues as ‘terrorism’ but actually also developed policy specifically designed to combat it.

These changes in how ‘terrorism’ was slowly constituted as a problem by American politicians also carried over into the realm of academia. Now that ‘terrorism’ had become a central concern in American politics, it also followed that its solution required trained and knowledgeable experts. Nixon’s CCCT comprised the first group of politicians and scholars interested in tackling the issue of ‘terrorism.’ The working group met regularly between 1972 and 1977 and was “one of the first institutional locations from which a demand for terrorism expertise originated” (Stampnitzky 27-28). Members of the CCCT like Robert Kupperman used their membership in this government committee to position themselves as experts on ‘terrorism’ by authoring reports and speaking publicly on the issue. Other researchers like Brian Crozier or Brian Jenkins at RAND emerged as leading figures in the academic study of ‘terrorism’ and political violence. Scholars like Crozier already had a background in the study of ‘insurgency,’ ‘internal war,’ or ‘rebellion,’ which imbued them with discursive authority to speak about ‘terrorism’ as well. Between 1977 and 1979, three peer-reviewed journals dedicated to the study of ‘terrorism’ were founded; the number of publications about ‘terrorism’ rose exponentially (Reid, “Terrorism” 24; Stampnitzky 30).¹⁹ ‘Terrorism’ research thus slowly created the necessary structures to become an established field of scholarship, albeit with strong political ties and investment.

These structural developments also affected the content of the discourse, i.e. how ‘terrorism’ itself was understood, debated, and theorized in the academic community. While there was still no consensus on whether ‘terrorism’ constituted a form of political violence, ‘internal war,’ or ‘guerrilla warfare,’ the more neutral to noble conceptualizations of ‘terrorism’ as ‘rebellion’ or movement for national liberation I discussed in the previous section were absent from 1970s scholarship, eclipsed by the symbolic power of the ‘Munich Massacre.’ Instead, scholars started to recognize the complexity of the issue and developed typologies of different forms of ‘terrorism’ with the result that a multitude of concepts flooded the discourse. For instance, in her 1972 article “The Concept of

¹⁹The journals were *Terrorism: An International Journal* (1977-1991; then continued as *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*), *Conflict* (1978; merged with *Terrorism* in 1991), and *Terrorism, Violence, Insurgency* (1979-1999).

Revolutionary Terrorism,” Martha Crenshaw (one of the few female researchers in this otherwise male-dominated field) conceptualized ‘terrorism’ as a form of ‘internal war’ and spoke of “insurgent terrorism” and “revolutionary terrorism.” John Bowyer Bell proposed the concept of “transnational terror” in his 1975 book of the same title and distinguished between “psychotic,” “criminal,” “endemic,” “authorized,” “vigilante,” and “revolutionary terror.” In turn, Brian Jenkins referred to “pure terrorism” as well as “international terrorism” (*International*), while Paul Wilkinson coined the term “political terrorism,” a concept which he divided further into “revolutionary,” “sub-revolutionary,” and “repressive terrorism.”

Other attempts to create knowledge about ‘terrorism’ focused on setting up databases and writing chronologies. In 1972, under supervision by Brian Jenkins (who would go on to become an acknowledged ‘terrorism’ expert himself), RAND set up a “Database of Worldwide Terrorism Incidents” which collected information on incidents of ‘terrorism’ all over the world. Three years later, in 1975, Edward Mickolus developed ITERATE, “International Terrorism: Attributes of Terrorist Events,” another database, this time funded by the Office of Political Research at the CIA. Mickolus also published a series of chronologies as well as annotated bibliographies listing academic literature on ‘terrorism.’²⁰ These many different lists, chronologies, and typologies worked to impose a special kind of order onto both ‘terrorism’ as a concept and a discourse. They also presented ‘terrorism’ as a new kind of problem requiring extensive investigation, public interest, and government funding, effectively stabilizing and extending the discourse on ‘terrorism’ beyond its previously marginal status.²¹

These early academic efforts to conceptualize ‘terrorism’ and to impose discursive boundaries also came to the fore in debates over which issues were or were not classified as ‘terrorism.’ As in the decades before, domestic ‘terrorism’ within the U.S. was barely addressed, even though the actions by the Black Liberation Army and the Symbionese Liberation Army made headlines at the time.²² If it was acknowledged at all, it was usually dismissed as ‘not really’ constituting ‘terrorism.’ Bell, for instance, argued that there

²⁰See, e.g., his *Annotated Bibliography* (1976) and *International Terrorism* (1976).

²¹See Hänni, *Terrorismus*; and Stampnitzky for a similar argument.

²²For more information on the Black Liberation Army, see Rosenau. For a history of the Symbionese Liberation Army, see Malkki.

was a difference between “the committed revolutionary” and “the violent eccentric” and categorized these two American groups as a case of the latter because they “exist[ed] on the margin of rationality and c[ould] only function by resort to a violence that [wa]s ultimately self-destructive” (*Transnational* 10). This indicates that, as the discourse on ‘terrorism’ began to slowly gain in dominance, it also established which topics were acceptable and which types of knowledge would be excluded and silenced.

What is more, all these examples show that the academic discourse on ‘terrorism’ became increasingly professionalized and complex, but also that ‘terror’ and ‘terrorism’ remained fuzzy concepts whose exact meanings remained arbitrary and unfixed since there was no consensus on how to define the term properly. First attempts at producing knowledge about ‘terrorism’ focused predominantly on developing different typologies which ultimately competed with each other for discursive hegemony. As before, the terms (and many of its synonyms) were used to describe violence in the broadest sense committed by non-state actors against a state or government, usually deemed illegitimate, and never applied by Americans.

Notably, academic consensus existed only with regard to one particular aspect, i.e. who the main ‘terrorist’ actors were and which geographical region was considered to be the hotbed of ‘terrorism.’ Spectacular operations like the one in Munich in 1972 and similar ones directed American and European attention onto the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and brought the people as well as the region in which the conflict played out into focus. In the American academic community, this was reflected in the fact that ‘terrorism’ was increasingly evaluated in negative terms by scholars and especially Palestinian groups came to be seen as its prime representatives. John Bowyer Bell, for instance, opened his 1975 study *Transnational Terror* with a vivid description of the Rome Airport shooting on December 17, 1973 by a group of Palestinians, a rhetorical move which stressed the innocence of the victims, the brutality of the act, and, from the beginning, prejudiced the reader against ‘terrorism’ in general and against Palestinian ‘terrorism’ in particular. Walter Laqueur argued in *Terrorism* (1977) that “[t]he history of the Palestine resistance c[ould] be briefly recapitulated: Palestine militants did not accept the existence of a Jewish state and organized armed resistance against it” (191), a gross oversimplification of

the actual historical process which painted ‘the Palestinians’ uniformly as anti-Semites lashing out unjustifiably against Israel. Similarly, Edward Hyams maintained that “[t]he first practitioners of terrorism against both Jews and British in Palestine [...] were the Arabs” (144). In the wake of the events at Munich and other “spectacular terrorist dramas” like the Rome Airport shooting, ‘terrorism’ was increasingly perceived in negative terms only and the Palestinian groups became the most important actors in discussions of the phenomenon.

This discursive focus on Palestinian ‘terrorism’ was also mirrored in American politics where the emerging trope of the Palestinian ‘terrorist’ fused with general concerns over the Middle East as a region prone to ‘terrorism.’ These particular discursive constructions presented ‘terrorism’ as a serious threat to U.S. interests which required an extensive political response. One area where this framing of ‘terrorism’ became especially visible were the official government reports on ‘terrorism,’ published annually from the late 1970s onwards in an effort to get a better grasp on the problem.²³ In April 1976, a first research study entitled *International and Transnational Terrorism: Diagnosis and Prognosis* was published under the auspices of the CIA. The report aimed “to cast the problem of internationalized terror into clear perspective” and called ‘terrorism’ “a particularly controversial and complex phenomenon” (Milbank i). It broadly defined ‘terrorism’ as “[t]he threat or use of violence for political purposes” and further distinguished between “international” and “transnational terrorism,” where the former term described actions “carried out by individuals or groups controlled by a sovereign state” and the latter referred to ‘terrorist’ acts carried out by “basically autonomous non-state actors” (1).²⁴

In terms of conceptualization, this first definition of “international terrorism” is noteworthy since it maintained that states could actively sponsor ‘terrorist’ groups to further their own political agenda – an idea which would become central in American

²³The first report *International and Transnational Terrorism* (1976) was followed by the series *International Terrorism in...* which covered the years 1976-1979. Its successors were *Patterns of International Terrorism*, which analyzed the period 1980-1982, and *Patterns of Global Terrorism*, which ran from 1983-2003. Since 2004, it has been replaced by *Country Reports on Terrorism*, also published annually.

²⁴The full general definition of ‘terrorism’ used in the report was: “The threat or use of violence for political purposes when (1) such action is intended to influence the attitudes and behavior of a target group wider than its immediate victims, and (2) its ramifications transcend national boundaries (as a result, for example, of the nationality or foreign ties of its perpetrators, its locale, the identity of its institutional or human victims, its declared objectives, or the mechanics of its resolution)” (1).

politics the next decade and which was already introduced in the 1970s (see Chapter 3). This report also revealed how closely academia and politics were connected when it came to conceptualizing ‘terrorism.’ In the section discussing the theoretical framework of the study, the report referenced many important scholars of ‘terrorism’ and their works, most notably Brian Jenkins, Martha Crenshaw, Brian Crozier, Paul Wilkinson and even Thomas Thornton’s contribution to Harry Eckstein’s edited volume *Internal War* (which I discussed above). This first official government report on ‘terrorism’ was thus influenced by earlier academic conceptualizations of ‘terrorism,’ pointing to the close ties which existed between these two discursive fields which worked to reinforce and solidify the emerging discourse on ‘terrorism.’

In the summer of 1977, the CIA followed up on its initial research study and published the first volume of what would become an annual series, entitled *International Terrorism in 1976*, which summarized and analyzed events categorized as ‘terrorism’ in 1976. As the new title already indicates, the report simplified the theoretical framing. It discarded the concept of “transnational terrorism” entirely and only retained the concept of “international terrorism” which appropriated the all-purpose, broader definition of ‘terrorism’ of the previous report. ‘Terrorism’ was thus generally understood as violence used for political purposes exceeding national boundaries and with the aim to influence a certain group. This analytical shift also meant that the focus moved away from distinguishing between different types of actors (state or non-state) to questions of where it occurred. As a consequence, only certain regions, like the Middle East, came into focus as designated hotbeds for ‘terrorism.’ Conversely, the nationalities or ethnicities of the perpetrators became important as well. Thus, in the ensuing years, the reports increasingly constructed the Middle East as region associated primarily with ‘terrorism’ and the different nations and ethnic groups living there as ‘terrorists.’ Indeed, the official government reports focused on Palestinian groups and constructed them as instigators of ‘terrorism’ in the Middle East and beyond, effectively fusing the emerging discursive trope of the ‘Palestinian terrorist’ with notions of the Middle East as a region full of ‘terrorism.’²⁵

²⁵By contrast, Israel was regularly presented as *victim* of ‘Palestinian terrorism,’ presenting a clearly biased view on the conflict between the two groups.

International Terrorism in 1976 already showed the first traces of this particular discursive approach to ‘terrorism.’ For instance, the report claimed that “[t]he Palestinian issue continued to be at the heart of most terrorist incidents in or related to the Middle East” (3), suggesting that “[t]he Palestinian issue” caused ‘terrorism’ in the entire region and that the entirety of the Palestinian community engaged in ‘terrorist’ activities. Moreover, the report informed that “[a]s in 1975, direct governmental support of terrorist groups was most evident and most extensive with respect to small Palestinian splinter formations associated with the rejectionist wing of the fedayeen movement” (4). It also identified Iraq as “the principal patron of the Black June Movement” (4). Statements like these implied that ‘terrorism’ was wide-spread in the Middle East and, since it was often actively supported by sovereign states in the region, a systemic problem as well. By identifying distinct nations or ethnic groups as sponsors or perpetrators of ‘terrorism,’ the CIA reports introduced an ethnic and geographical marker to specify what counted as ‘terrorism’ and what did not.

The reports following these first publications became more explicit in their framing of the entirety of the Middle East as center of ‘terrorism’ and different ethnic or national factions as ‘terrorists.’ *International Terrorism in 1977* maintained that “[t]errorism in the Middle East stayed at relatively high levels and again transcended the Arab-Israeli conflict” (2), suggesting that ‘terrorism’ primarily and repeatedly occurred in all of the Middle East and involved the entire spectrum of nations in the region. The report for the year 1978 explained that “[m]uch of the increase [in terrorist incidents] c[ould] be attributed to the export of Middle Eastern conflicts to Western Europe” (1), again marking the Middle East as a region in which ‘terrorism’ had practically gotten out of control and spread to other regions. *International Terrorism in 1979* not only discussed the different Palestinian ‘terrorist’ groups, but also Syrian involvement and support for some Palestinian factions, and, most notably, the U.S. hostage crisis in Iran (discussed in more detail below). By subsuming variedly different cases under the category of ‘Middle Eastern terrorism,’ these government reports effectively eliminated the distinct factors which caused these incidents and suggested that there was a correlation between them based simply on relative

geographical proximity, thus moving away from earlier conceptualizations of ‘terrorism’ as a strategy or tactic.

What is more, these reports positioned the United States as popular target for ‘terrorist’ attack. The report *International Terrorism in 1977* predicted that “American personnel and facilities overseas will *continue* to be attractive targets” (i; emphasis added), a phrasing which insinuated that there already existed at this point a long history of ‘terrorism’ against the United States, presenting ‘terrorism’ as a significant political and societal problem. Similarly, *International Terrorism in 1978* stated that “[t]here were more attacks than the previous year, both in relative and absolute terms, on US citizens and property” and even provided a table to illustrate the trend (1). The report for 1979 claimed that “many more Americans were killed this year than before” (*International Terrorism in 1979* 1), implying that Americans regularly ran the danger of dying from ‘terrorism.’ Overall, the reports helped to construct a pervasive narrative of how ‘terrorism,’ especially in and from the Middle East, posed a significant threat to Americans and American interests worldwide.

The government reports on “international terrorism” constituted one important political initiative to create knowledge about ‘terrorism’ by attempting to quantify and measure its manifestations. Another significant political act which contributed to elevating the status of the discourse on ‘terrorism’ was the “Export Administration Act of 1979.” It tasked the Secretary of State to present an annual list of nations which were seen to “support terrorism” and which were then subject of economic sanctions (United States, *Export*). The first states officially placed on the list at its inception were Syria, Libya, Iraq, and South Yemen – all nations which were located in the geographic and imaginary Middle East for Americans. This further worked to firmly link the Middle East (and its peoples) to ‘terrorism’ and endowed the discourse on ‘terrorism’ with considerable legitimacy and political capital.

Overall, then, it becomes clear that the interpretation of the 1972 Black September attack on the Israeli athletes during the Munich Olympics as a case of ‘terrorism’ sparked diverse political responses which constructed ‘terrorism’ in predominantly negative terms as a form of political violence, ‘insurrection,’ or ‘war(fare).’ It also discursivized ‘terrorism’

as a new threat against the United States for which the nation was deemed not adequately prepared, leading to various political initiatives which attempted to manage and control ‘terrorism’ as a problem. In turn, the structural changes in U.S. politics after 1972 also affected the scholarship on ‘terror’ and ‘terrorism’ in lasting ways as the field was increasingly politicized and institutionalized. The discursive focus in these fields came to rest on Palestinian groups as predominant ‘terrorists’ perpetrators and then slowly extended to the rest of the Middle East, constructing the region as a hotbed of ‘terrorism.’ This effectively cemented a discursive claim about ‘terrorism’ which had already circulated in earlier decades and which claimed that ‘terrorism’ was intricately linked to the peoples and cultures of the Middle East. It effectively re-framed ‘terrorism’ as a marker of identity by categorizing ‘terrorists’ according to the geographical location in which they operated and/or their ethnicity or nationality. ‘Terrorism’ was no longer understood as a tactic any kind of political actor might use. In the next section, I discuss how the American news media and popular culture responded to this changing conceptualization of ‘terrorism’ in the 1970s.

2.4 “An Explosion of Entries” – The ‘Terrorism’ Discourse in U.S. News Media and Popular Culture in the 1970s

The 1970s were not only a turbulent decade with regard to how American politics and academia engaged with ‘terrorism’ as a problem. Just like the American news media, cultural productions also responded to the unfolding events and changed political outlook on ‘terrorism’ by adapting their understanding and representations of the issue, effectively contributing to the spreading of the discourse on ‘terrorism’ and the dissemination of its central claims more widely within the American public. Both the American news media, exemplified by the reporting in *The New York Times*, and popular novels reflected and actively shaped the discourse on ‘terrorism’ with the result that it became more homogeneous and coherent in its truth claims about ‘terrorism’ and also the increasingly hegemonic paradigm to discursivize instances of political violence. Along the way, these two discursive agents also helped to popularize notions of the Middle East as hotbed for ‘terrorism’ and its people as dangerous ‘terrorists,’ further re-conceptualizing ‘terrorism’ as

a marker of identity and no longer a strategy used in political conflict by rational, relatable actors.

The early 1970s proved to be a transition period for the news media with regard to how it reported on and framed incidents of political violence. As Ronald Crelinsten has shown in an often-cited 1989 article “Terrorism in the Media,” *The New York Times*, along with other major newspapers, began to categorize and index its reporting on political violence increasingly under the heading of ‘terrorism.’ *The New York Times Index*, a reference work in which *The New York Times* catalogs and groups articles published in the previous year according to certain topics, is a valuable indicator of change since it listed ‘terrorism’ as a category for the first time in 1970 (Crelinsten 172). This illustrates that the American news media had started to consider ‘terrorism’ a pertinent issue already before the events in Munich in 1972. Nevertheless, for the year 1970, the index only listed a total of four articles, suggesting that the category ‘terrorism’ had not yet become a significant journalistic fixture. Crelinsten concluded that “1970 mark[ed] a turning point in the way that terrorism was perceived” and that “[i]ndexers began to struggle with how to classify this phenomenon [‘terrorism’] and where to place the various articles” (173).²⁶

This dynamic became more pronounced in the following years. Crelinsten reported that in *The New York Times Index*, “in an explosion of entries,” there were 64 articles and three related headings in 1972 (173). Moreover, in 1972, *The London Times* and *The British Humanities* also added ‘terrorism’ as category to their respective indexes, alluding to the impact the Black September operation in Munich had on American and European conceptualizations of political violence. Crelinsten was aware of the constituting power of the news media, commenting that “[a]fter 1972, however, a greater homogeneity in framing occur[red],” meaning that before 1972, articles were significantly more likely to be cross-referenced under other, related headings (193). After 1972, ‘terrorism’ became the main (and often sole) heading under which articles were listed, suggesting that the

²⁶Crelinsten also claimed that “[t]here was obviously a time lag of several years following the critical year of 1968, where interest in terrorism first began” (173). His statement echoes one of the popular claims of the ‘terrorism’ discourse which selects 1968, i.e. the year after the Six-Day War as somewhat arbitrary beginning for ‘modern terrorism.’ This claim should be taken with a grain of salt because academic studies have also singled out other years and historical moments as starting points of ‘modern terrorism.’ Rather, this fixation with defining the precise moment when ‘terrorism’ began, constitutes a way to organize and control ‘terrorism’ as a problem and a discourse. See also Stampnitzky and Hänni, *Terrorismus*.

discourse on ‘terrorism’ had become more dominant and, in the process, marginalized other related interpretations of incidents as, for example, ‘bombing’ or ‘massacre.’ As this analysis shows, the American news media played a significant role in that process.

Crelinsten’s findings with regard to these newspaper indexes mirror other general reporting trends in *The New York Times*. ‘Terrorism’ as a term appeared in significantly more articles in the 1970s than in the preceding decades. Figure 2.8 illustrates this trend. As we saw earlier, between the 1940s and 1960s, the newspaper published between one and two articles per day which contained the word ‘terrorism.’ In the 1970s, however, this number rose to about 3 articles per day as the overall amount of articles on ‘terrorism’ published by *The New York Times* increased by 31% compared to the 1960s – a clear marker of the increasing awareness of ‘terrorism’ as a problem worth reporting on. The section of the graph depicting the developments during the 1970s is particularly telling in this regard. In 1970, there were 849 articles in *The New York Times* which mentioned ‘terrorism;’ for 1979, the database records 1,153 hits, an increase of 36% in nine years. What is more, the first time that there were more than 1,000 articles per year on ‘terrorism’ published by the newspaper was 1973 (1,050 articles), then again in 1977 (1,145 pieces), and from 1979 onward, there have never been less than 1,000 articles in *The New York Times* which contain the word ‘terrorism.’ Thus data thus suggests clearly that instances of political violence were increasingly framed as ‘terrorism,’ indicating that the discourse on ‘terrorism’ had become more dominant in the 1970s compared to previous decades, a trend which would continue to grow stronger in the decades to come.

Regarding the content of the articles on ‘terrorism,’ the data shows that one focus of *The New York Times* lay on ‘terrorism’ in connection to the Middle East, Palestinians, and ‘Arabs’ generally. Figure 2.9 illustrates these developments in more detail. Articles addressing ‘Arab terrorism,’ ‘Palestinian terrorism,’ and ‘Middle East terrorism’ made up a significant part of the overall reporting on ‘terrorism’ in *The New York Times*. Interestingly, all three graphs spike in 1972, suggesting that the events of that year, especially the tragedy in Munich, sparked increasing coverage of political events as ‘terrorism.’ Thus, while there were only 14 articles in 1971 on ‘Palestinian terrorism’ in *The New York Times*, the database lists 89 hits for the following year, i.e. a staggering 536% increase. What is

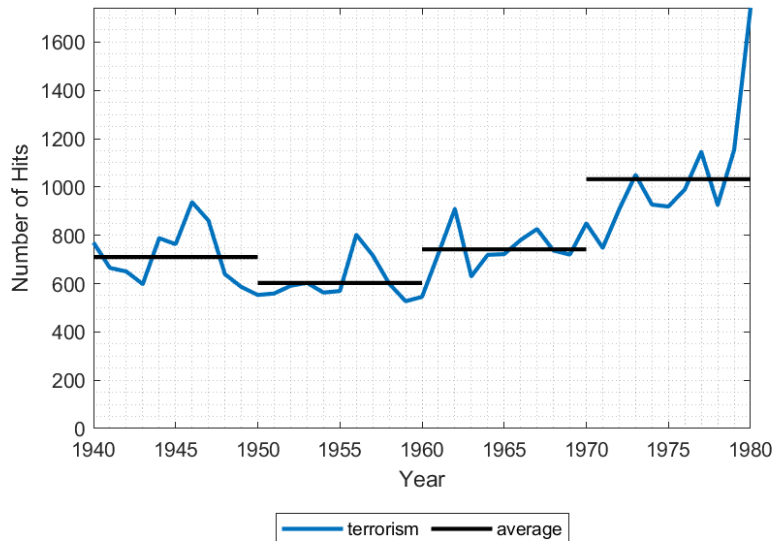


Figure 2.8: Reporting on 'terrorism' in *The New York Times*, 1940-1980

more, the graph for 'Palestinian terrorism' indicates that after 1972 *The New York Times* maintained this level of reporting, thereby slowly establishing 'Palestinian terrorism' as a fixed trope in American journalism after 1972 and a staple issue in the discourse on 'terrorism' in the 1970s generally.

Equally noteworthy, 'Palestinian terrorism' was actually not the most popular term in the writing of *The New York Times*. As the graphs in Figure 2.9 show, 'Arab terrorism' and 'Middle East terrorism' were consistently used more often than references to 'Palestinian terrorism' in the newspaper. Reporting on 'Arab terrorism' went from 49 articles in 1971 to 205 pieces a year later, a remarkable rise of 318%. Similarly, while there were 65 articles on 'terrorism' in relation to the Middle East in 1971, a year later this number had risen by 205% to 198 pieces. These findings suggest that news media reporting broadened the scope with which it approached the issue of 'terrorism' to focus on the geographical region of the conflict more generally. It also expanded the categorization of the social group(s) involved to the even bigger umbrella term 'Arab.' Overall, in 1972, articles on 'Palestinian,' 'Arab' and 'Middle East terrorism' made up 54% of the overall reporting on 'terrorism' in *The New York Times*, a trend which remained stable throughout the rest of the 1970s. This indicates clearly that the Middle East and its Arab populations

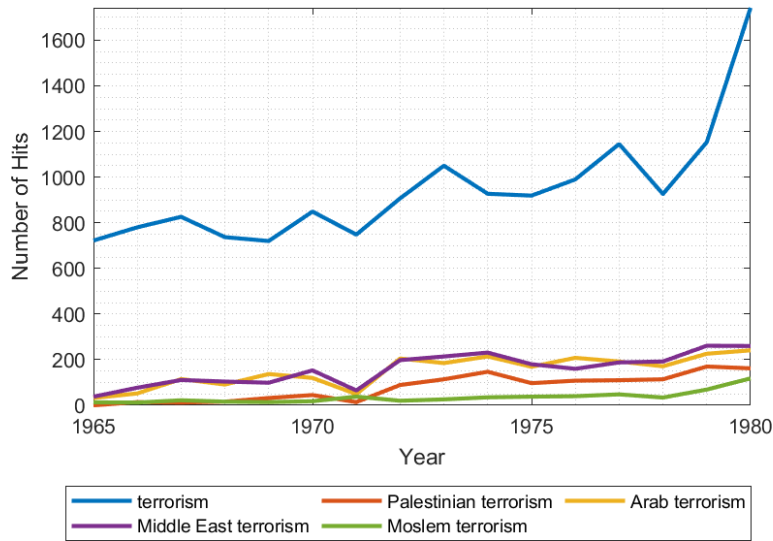


Figure 2.9: Reporting on different kinds of ‘terrorism’ in and from the Middle East in *The New York Times*, 1965-1980

(including the Palestinians) were increasingly linked to ‘terrorism’ in *The New York Times*, converting these terms into markers of ‘terrorism’ for its readers.

Of course, there is bound to exist some overlap between the different graphs in that articles may have been counted more than once if they were listed under more than one search term. This, however, also demonstrates the conceptual proximity between all terms and the extent to which the qualifiers ‘Arab,’ ‘Middle East,’ and ‘Palestinian’ were interconnected and ultimately referred to the same discursive construct: ‘terrorism’ as located in and originating from the (imaginary and geographical) Middle East. By contrast, the graph for ‘Moslem terrorism’ in Figure 2.9 shows that religion did not play a significant role in conceptualizing ‘terrorism’ in the 1960s and 1970s. The number of articles for ‘Moslem terrorism’ remained consistently low throughout most of the 1970s. Unlike all other graphs in Figure 2.9, it did not peak in any way in 1972. This reinforces the notion that markers of nationality/ethnicity and geographical origin dominated conceptualizations of ‘terrorism’ in the 1970s, but not references to religion.

Lastly, the data analysis for the reporting in *The New York Times* in the 1970s also reveals that ‘terrorism’ in connection with the Soviet Union continued to be a concern, albeit less centrally than in earlier decades. As Figure 2.10 shows, articles on ‘terrorism’

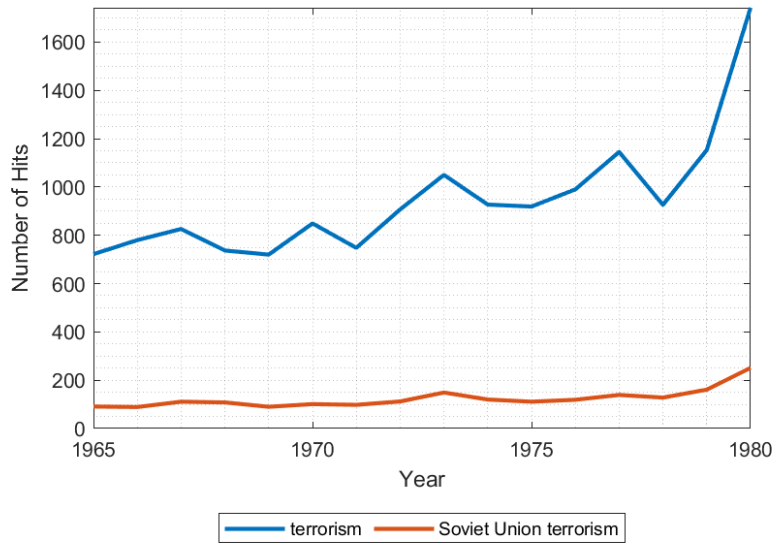


Figure 2.10: Reporting on ‘terrorism’ in connection with the Soviet Union in *The New York Times*, 1965-1980

and the Soviet Union consistently made up between 12 % and 14 % of the overall writing on ‘terrorism’ in *The New York Times* in the 1970s. Indeed, the newspaper database records marginally more articles on ‘Soviet Union terrorism’ than ‘Palestinian terrorism’ for the decade, indicating that the academic narrative about ‘terrorism’ in connection with the Soviet Union had not only crossed over into the news media, but actually thrived there and enjoyed a stable discursive presence. The next chapter of this study will address this particular conceptualization of ‘terrorism’ more fully, so suffice it to say at this point that reporting on ‘Soviet Union terrorism’ in *The New York Times* both reflected and amplified central political and social concerns during the Cold War. We thus find the two central narratives about ‘terrorism,’ i.e. one focusing on the Middle East and the other one on the Soviet Union as producers of ‘terrorism,’ which were already developed and circulated in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, still active and even strengthened in the 1970s.

These changes in how the American news media reported on ‘terrorism’ in the 1970s also come to the fore when examining how *The New York Times* actually wrote about the Black September attack on the Israeli team during the 1972 Munich Olympic Games. Indeed, *The New York Times* diligently covered the tragedy in Munich and its journalism both reflected and amplified many of the discursive changes with regard to ‘terrorism’

in the 1970s that I outlined above. First of all, while ‘terrorism’ may not have been the sole interpretative frame in circulation at the time – the headline for September 6, 1972 actually read “9 Israelis on Olympic Team Killed with 4 Arab Captors as Police Fight Band that Disrupted Munich Games” – it nevertheless appeared in all articles on the first page of *The New York Times* which discussed the events in Munich. Moreover, journalists variously quoted Golda Meir, from the statement of the International Olympic Committee, or the Democratic Presidential candidate George McGovern as denouncing “this senseless act of terrorism” (qtd. in Szulc, “Nixon” 18). This not only signaled to readers of *The New York Times* that influential discursive voices interpreted what had happened as ‘terrorism,’ it also imbued these claims with further authority simply because they were reprinted in the newspaper. Moreover, these claims merged with ostensibly ‘objective’ journalistic accounts of “the fate of the Israeli hostages seized by Arab terrorists in the Olympic Village” (“Reports” 1), which made the framing of the events in term of ‘terrorism’ appear coherent and omnipresent.

Equally noteworthy in the reporting of *The New York Times* is how journalists labeled and described the perpetrators themselves. Articles referred to the Black September group as “Arab terrorists,” but also as “Arab commandos” and simply “the Arabs” (Binder, “23-Hour” 1). Other terms appearing in articles in *The New York Times* included “Arab guerillas” (Smith, “Mrs. Meir” 1) and “Raiders” (Binder, “23-Hour” 18).²⁷ The one common conceptual link between all these terms is ‘Arab,’ meaning that the perpetrators’ (presumed) ethnicity was stressed in all writings on the issue in *The New York Times*. What is more, the description of the perpetrators as ‘Arabs’ instead of ‘Palestinians’ created the impression that the conflict was much broader: ‘Arabs’ attacking ‘the West’ and the spirit of the Olympic Games, which evoked long-standing Orientalist prejudices about the Middle East and its ‘Arabs’ as threatening ‘the West,’ effectively Othering the perpetrators even further.

Most importantly, however, this ‘Arab terrorism’ committed by “Arab commandos” was evaluated in different tones than before. Articles recounted how “the Olympic Village building [had been] invaded by the Arabs” (Binder, “23-Hour” 18), creating

²⁷More examples include M. Arnold; Binder, “Battle;” and Smith, “Arab.”

the impression of a strong paramilitary force of ‘Arabs’ overrunning unsuspecting victims – a reference which again tapped into existing Orientalist stereotypes about the Middle East. This impression was further enhanced by articles extensively discussing how two Israeli weight-lifting coaches were woken up by the noise and attempted to fight off the Black September operatives (e.g. Binder, “23-Hour” 18), contrasting the depiction of ‘evil Arabs’ with the trope of the ‘heroic Israeli,’ which, in turn, activated cultural discourses about the ‘special relationship’ between the U.S. and the Jewish state.²⁸ Other contributions humanized the victims by providing short biographies of the Israeli athletes who died (e.g. “Sketches” 19), further cementing the ‘evil Arabs’ against ‘good Israelis’ dichotomy.

Only one article that day attempted to explain the political context of the Black September raid. But Eric Pace’s contribution to *The New York Times* mainly listed other attacks and killings by Black September in past months and years (19), creating the impression that Black September was violent without specific political reasons. Pace wrote that “[t]he guerrillas’ ultimate aim [wa]s to bring about the dismantling of Israel somehow. They argue[d] that it was unjustly established on land that rightly belonged to the Palestinian Arabs” (19). The word “somehow” implied that the Palestinian factions did not have a sound plan on how to “dismantl[e]” the Jewish state; it even belittled their agenda. Moreover, Pace clearly distanced himself from the claim that the State of Israel was founded on contested territory by marking this statement as a claim made by Palestinian factions. Indeed, the word “argue” even suggested that this claim was debatable and not a fact; it allowed American readers to disagree and dismiss the Palestinian complaint without having to properly engage with it. Lastly, the description of the Palestinian community as “Palestinian Arabs” signaled a merging of different ethnicities under the umbrella term ‘Arab,’ further obscuring any historical and cultural differences as well as different political contexts.

This negative interpretation of the event and the perpetrators ultimately also reflected back on the concept of ‘terrorism’ itself. Since the context in which it was applied was condemned and denounced, it affected the meaning of the term itself as well. References to “Arab terrorists” (e.g. “Reports”) thus signaled to readers that the conceptual boundaries

²⁸For more on the special relationship between the U.S. and Israel, see, e.g., Bar-Siman-Tov; Bick; Grose; Mart, *Eye*; McAlister, Mearsheimer and Walt; Sarna; Sasson; and Schoenbaum.

were being redrawn because of the changed political context. Previous conceptualizations of ‘terrorism’ in more romantic terms as “rebels” and “insurgents” did not fit anymore. At the same time, ethnic markers to label the ‘terrorist’ perpetrators became more prominent, forging discursive links between the Middle East, its people(s), and ‘terrorism.’ Reporting on ‘terrorism’ in *The New York Times* in later years would build on this qualitative change in the conceptualization of the term, making more negative framings of ‘terrorism,’ especially the ‘Arab’ kind, more prevalent, enabling these constructions of ‘terrorism’ to spread further and cement their dominant discursive standing.

This changed conceptualization of ‘terrorism’ was also reflected in and advanced by the popular fiction of the time. Thomas Harris’ novel *Black Sunday* (1975) exemplifies this changed discursive approach to ‘terrorism.’ *Black Sunday* is a thriller about a group of Black September ‘terrorists’ who collaborate with deranged Vietnam vet Michael Lander to blow up the stadium in New Orleans during the Super Bowl when the U.S. president is present. Lander is to fly the Aldrich blimp over the stadium and explode it during the match, killing himself and as many other people as possible, including the American president. But the Israeli secret service learns of Black September’s plan to attack the U.S. and sends in a team of Israeli agents, led by protagonist and hero Major Kabakov, to prevent the attack and capture the ‘terrorists.’ In Harris’ novel, the threat of ‘Palestinian terrorism’ was turned into an effective fictional device to heighten the drama and sensational effect of the story. The success of both the novel and, especially, the movie two years later suggests that the American public had grown accustomed to the topic of ‘terrorism’ by the mid-1970s and that its portrayal of ‘Palestinian terrorism’ reflected widely-held views at the time.

The principal villain in *Black Sunday* is Dahlia Iyad, the Black September ‘terrorist’ sent to the U.S. to help Michael Lander to succeed in his plans. In its portrayal of Dahlia, *Black Sunday* also makes use of Orientalist stereotyping, a narrative choice which enhances her danger because she is both a dangerous Oriental *femme fatale* and a ruthless ‘Palestinian terrorist.’ Dahlia is an unscrupulous and effective killer, as demonstrated by her quick murder of the original blimp pilot before breakfast so that Lander can take his place during the Super Bowl (301). When Lander is drunk and becomes violent, she simply knocks him unconscious (90). She is depicted as an animalistic predator with eyes

“wide-set as a puma’s” and has “the steady, cool gaze of a cat” (34, 161). This suggests a certain aloofness in her character and she emanates an eroticized danger. Fittingly, then, she controls the men around her through the skilled use of her sexuality and femininity. For instance, Dahlia is the one to ‘cure’ Lander’s impotence, thus giving him the strength to continue his plans for an attack on the United States (e.g. 64). During the Israeli raid on the Black September compound, it is her beautiful naked body which makes Major Kabakov hesitant to shoot her: “The killer pointed his machine gun at her wet breast. His finger tightened on the trigger. It was a beautiful breast. The muzzle of the machine gun wavered” (19). Kabakov is initially blinded by Dahlia’s Oriental, sexualized body. As the wavering gun implies, his masculine potency is weakened and he does not recognize that she is the most menacing ‘terrorist’ of the group.

The novel makes it clear that her sexuality, and the power that comes with it, are extremely dangerous. Violence is sexually arousing to Dahlia. When she records the confessional tape in preparation for the attack on the Super Bowl in Beirut, she “become[s] visibly aroused as she talk[s] into the microphone” and her “face [i]s flushed and her nipples [a]re erect as she continue[s]” (16, 17). Similarly, the omniscient narrator describes her pubic hair as “a black explosion” (34), out to destroy the men who come close to it, especially Michael Lander. In this context, Philip Simpson has argued that Dahlia fuses “sexuality with the politics of terrorism” (54). I agree in that Dahlia’s representation in the novel follows well-known Orientalist stereotypes about eroticized, sexually available and dangerous female bodies. The fact that she is a ‘Palestinian terrorist’ enhances her danger.

Thus, in my view, *Black Sunday* fuses Orientalist discourses about the Middle East with contemporary notions about ‘terrorism’ to create Dahlia as an enemy who proves more dangerous to the Israeli hero than previous ones. After all, protagonist Major Kabakov dies in the attempt to steer the explosive laden blimp away from the Super Bowl Stadium. *Black Sunday*’s conceptualization of an Oriental enemy as ‘terrorist’ thus stands in stark contrast to the representation of heroic Jewish ‘terrorists’ and abominable Arabs in Leon Uris’ *Exodus* which I discussed at the beginning of this chapter. This illustrates that American popular culture fused Orientalist techniques to Other the enemy with the discourse on ‘terrorism’ in the 1970s, not only invigorating this particular kind of

stereotyping, but also working to stabilize negative conceptualizations of ‘terrorism’ and acquainting larger audiences with central tenets of the discourse on ‘terrorism.’

How pervasive the trope of the Palestinian ‘terrorist’ was in discourses on ‘terrorism’ in the 1970s also becomes evident when looking at who is not depicted as a ‘terrorist’ in *Black Sunday*. Michael Lander, the Vietnam veteran and former prisoner of war who initially developed the idea to explode a blimp over the Super Bowl Stadium, is represented in completely different terms. Even though it is his plan and he is the one to seek contact with Black September for help in its execution, he is not described as a ‘terrorist’ like his Palestinian co-conspirators. Instead, the novel portrays him as mentally unstable and disturbed. After his release to the United States, he is traumatized by his experience in Vietnam, but also stands accused of collaborating with the enemy during his time at a Vietnam prison, making his rehabilitation into civil society extremely tense and stressful. Interestingly, however, what pushes him over the edge into insanity is the moment he finds his wife Margaret in bed with a stranger who, to add injury to insult, knocks him unconscious while the two lovers escape (88). The novel describes the moment in which Lander’s mind finally cracks under the strain: “When pain and rage reach levels far above the mind’s capacity to cope, a curious relief is possible but it requires a partial death. Lander smiled an awful smile, a bloody rictus smile, when he felt his will die. [. . .] The relief came to him then. It was over. Oh, it was over. For half of him” (89). What remains is Lander’s deranged desire to kill and he begins to plan the attack on the Super Bowl.

Black Sunday, however, is careful to qualify Lander’s rage. Lander’s betrayal of and immense hatred for his country are born out of “injury and madness” and thus constitute a psychological aberration (131). In fact, the novel establishes early on that Lander was never a ‘normal’ American. Considerable space is given to his childhood memories which reveal that, while an intelligent child, he was bullied by other children and thus always felt left out. He never developed any social skills and suffered from a dominant, controlling mother and an effeminate father, internalizing the belief that he is a coward and inferior. Lander never learns to express his feelings of anger and frustration. The narrator sums the situation up as: “So he has no outlet. And he has swallowed his poison longer than most could have done” (70), implying that Lander is a victim of “poison” and not an aggressive

attacker himself. This reading is also supported by the fact that, in order for his plan to succeed, Lander relies on the help of the ‘Palestinian terrorists’ and especially Dahlia. Black September provides the necessary amount of explosives and Dahlia, understanding that she “needed to know Lander, [...] learned him very well, better than anyone else would ever know him” (66). This enables her to control and manipulate the deranged Lander and to prevent him from giving up on the task beforehand. The ‘real’ threat throughout the novel does not emanate from Lander, he is simply a tool in the hands of Dahlia and her fellow Black September ‘terrorists.’ Since Lander is clearly unhinged and lunatic and not Palestinian, he cannot be a ‘terrorist.’

Black Sunday was not the only fictional text to present ‘Palestinian terrorism’ as a major threat to the United States in the 1970s. In *The Aleph Solution*, written by Sandor Frankel and Webster Mews in 1978, ‘Palestinian terrorists’ take the United Nations Assembly hostage in order to force it to vote in favor of the dissolution of Israel and the foundation of Palestine in its place. To enforce the threat, the United States is shaken by ‘terrorist’ attacks, systematically executed by small groups of ‘Palestinian terrorists,’ which mimic the Ten Biblical Plagues. In the end, the Israeli elite team “Aleph,” with support by the American president, finally manages to free the hostages.

Another example for the proliferation of the notion of ‘Palestinian terrorism’ is Joan Hemingway and Paul Bonnacarrère’s 1974 novel *Rosebud* which was adapted for the screen a year later with some significant changes. The plot line of the movie remains essentially the same as in the novel: ‘Palestinian terrorists’ kidnap five wealthy teenage girls off the yacht *Rosebud* and hold them as hostages until their influential families fulfill their demands, which includes outing a Jewish family patriarch as avid supporter of Israel. While the novel imagines Europe as target of ‘Palestinian terrorism,’ the movie version presents the United States as the Palestinian terrorists’ objective. Thus, in the movie, Peter O’Toole, of *Lawrence of Arabia* fame and a major Hollywood star at the time, plays CIA agent Larry Martin who, under the cover of being a reporter for *Newsweek*, investigates the case and ultimately frees the girls. As these examples show, the idea that ‘Palestinian terrorism’ constituted a viable threat to the United States was reflected in cultural productions of the time.

Other novels also drew on the newly-established link between ‘terrorism’ and Orientalist depictions of the Middle East and expanded the roster of villains to not only include ‘Palestinian terrorists’ but also more generic, unspecified ‘Arab terrorists.’ Novels like *Thirty-Four East* (1974) or *The Fifth Horseman* (1980) feature multi-national ‘terrorist’ villains who either make trouble for the U.S. somewhere in the Middle East or attack the nation on its own territory. In *Thirty-Four East* (1974), written by Alfred Coppel, for instance, the Abou Moussa Commando of the Arab Front for the Liberation of Palestine kidnaps the Vice President of the United States during his visit to the demilitarization zone between Israel and Egypt. The Arab Front “had gathered together the shattered remnants of the old Arab and Palestinian guerrilla and terrorist organizations” which suggests that ‘terrorist’ groups are active all over the Middle East and they all unite to pursue similar goals (5). In the novel, the ‘terrorists’ are depicted following well-known Orientalist stereotypes. They are cruel, anti-Semitic, vicious, and amoral; they rape a captured Jewish female soldier and kill defenseless Christian monks as well as their poor, simple Bedouin helpers. The female leader of the group, Leila Jamil, “a beauty once, in the manner of Arab women” (6), is a lesbian, an additional marker for her lack of femininity and psychological aberration. *Thirty-Four East* presents the Middle East as a region full of ‘Arab terrorists’ who move freely and collaborate to attack the United States.

In the 1980 bestseller *The Fifth Horseman*, written by Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, Colonel Qaddafi threatens to annihilate New York City with a hydrogen bomb unless the U.S. government makes Israel return to its original borders and give the occupied territories to the Palestinians so that they can found their own country there. While the president tries to convince Qaddafi to give up on his scheme, the entirety of America’s law enforcement agencies organizes a joint, frantic search and combs through New York City to find the bomb as well as the three ‘Palestinian terrorists’ who hid it there in the first place. The novel represents Qaddafi as ‘terrorist’ mastermind, out to undermine ‘the West,’ here meaning the United States. As one of the advisers tells the president about Qaddafi, “[h]e’s been literally flooding this country with students taking nuclear courses. Over a fifth of the Libyans who’ve studied here since 1973 have been enrolled in some kind of nuclear program or other” (28), painting the Libyan population as devoted followers

of Qaddafi's plans to usurp world power. Qaddafi is depicted as leader of a professional 'terrorist' network which operates all over the globe under his orders:

The first chief of state in modern times to employ terrorism as an instrument of national policy had taken over the noble old dwelling in 1971. It was the headquarters from which Qaddafi directed the global activities of his terrorist network.

The Munich Olympic Massacre had been planned in its gracious sitting room; so, too had the assault on the Rome airport meant to kill Henry Kissinger in December 1973, the kidnapping of the OPEC oil ministers, the Entebbe skyjacking. The eucalyptus trees of the villa's gardens concealed the antennas that radioed Qaddafi's orders to IRA provos, West German students, Red Brigade dissidents, even Islamic zealots infiltrated into Tashkent and Turkestan. (110-11)

The Fifth Horseman thus constructs a world in which the Middle East is a space of unrest and violence, where the use of 'terrorism' is the norm, and which threatens peace and stability in Europe and the U.S. What these examples show, then, is that in the American cultural imagination of the 1970s, the Middle East as well as its peoples were increasingly linked to the issue of 'terrorism.'

While the finer details vary from novel to novel, the basic formula sets up the United States as threatened by a group of 'terrorists' from different nations in the Middle East. The threat is thwarted at the very end, but only narrowly, and often the *status quo* has changed. In *Thirty-Four East*, the president dies in an accident and the kidnapped vice president, unbeknownst to himself, becomes the new political leader of the United States while still in captivity. The vice president, as the novel makes clear, has a completely different, elitist, liberal approach to politics than his predecessor, suggesting that the new president will steer the nation into an uncertain future, not in the least because the kidnapping episode has brought the U.S. and the Soviet Union to the brink of war. 'Terrorism' in the Middle East, the novel suggests, can and does affect the United States and its standing in the world. In *The Fifth Horseman*, the president and his advisers discover to their dismay that Colonel Qaddafi has managed to get his hands on the latest secret CIA technological gadget, an eye scanner which detects whether a person is lying or not. Qaddafi then uses it successfully against the president during negotiations (312-13). Even more worrisome, Qaddafi has built a hydrogen bomb, meaning that the power balance in the Middle East has shifted dramatically. Both texts portray the United States as

vulnerable to ‘terrorism’ from the Middle East, mirroring the general sentiment of the decade.

What is more, these examples from American popular fiction of the 1970s also indicate that the understanding of what ‘terrorism’ supposedly meant and entailed, had changed. Not only did these fictional texts link Orientalist discourses about ‘Arabs’ (or ‘Palestinians’) to ‘terrorism,’ they also represented the issue in a different manner. Unlike in *Exodus*, with which I opened this chapter, these ‘terrorists’ are not heroic rebels and they do not use ‘terrorism’ as a tactic in a larger struggle for national liberation. Rather, these ‘Arab terrorists’ in and from the Middle East are predominantly driven by base sentiments, especially desire for revenge against as well as irrational hatred for the U.S. (and/or Israel). In that sense, ‘terrorism’ functions in these novels as marker of identity; it signals to readers that a character is unequivocally ‘evil.’ ‘Terrorism’ was thus no longer represented as response to a legitimate political problem or struggle; instead, depicting these villains as ‘terrorists’ became a way to dismiss the political context of the conflict and simplify it into a ‘good-evil’ binary with clearly assigned roles.

To sum up, then, the American news media as well as cultural texts of the decade engaged in important cultural work by carrying the discourse on ‘terrorism’ farther into the American public space. This not only amplified the discourse’s message and introduced a wider audience to its central claims, it also adapted the conceptualization of ‘terrorism’ itself in significant ways. Ultimately, the interconnectedness and cooperation between these different discursive agents, i.e. the American news media, cultural texts, but also the academic field as well as political voices, streamlined the ‘terrorism’ discourse over the course of the 1970s and made the narrative it proposed more coherent. It made the discourse on ‘terrorism’ more powerful and more popular than before. This newly-established influence and reach would be tested at the end of the decade when a group of Iranian students stormed the American embassy in Tehran and held the staff captive for 444 days, a central discursive event to which I turn in the next section.

2.5 “America Held Hostage” – The Iranian Hostage Crisis as a Case of ‘International Terrorism’ against the United States

In anger over President Carter’s decision to admit the recently-toppled Shah of Iran for cancer treatment into the United States, a group of Iranian students scaled the walls of the U.S. embassy in Tehran on November 4, 1979 and took its entire staff hostage.²⁹ After a few weeks, they released thirteen women and African Americans, but the remaining 53 hostages continued in Iranian captivity for 444 days,³⁰ accused of spying on the Iranian nation and conspiring to return the deposed Shah to the throne, as the CIA had already done once in 1953.³¹ While the Carter administration sought a diplomatic solution to the hostage situation, slowly mounting political and economic pressure on the post-revolutionary Iranian government, the American public quickly came to perceive the events as a national crisis. Footage of blindfolded and handcuffed American hostages went around the world, inciting anger and indignation over the degrading treatment of the captives. As Daniel Houghton has maintained, “[f]rom the very beginning, the hostage crisis had exerted a striking effect on ordinary Americans, who gradually became as obsessed as Carter with the fate of their countrymen” (2).

Over thirty years later, the Iranian hostage crisis still excites the general public and scholars alike. Ben Affleck’s recent, Oscar-winning movie *Argo* (2012), based on the secret escape of six embassy personnel with the help of the Canadian consulate in Iran, is evidence to this. In general, there has been a fresh surge in scholarship on the Iranian hostage crisis which, making use of recently declassified material, provides new analyses and interpretations of the events.³² What concerns me here, however, is not a historically accurate recounting of the events, but rather how the Carter administration chose to narrate the hostage crisis in Tehran and how it explained events to the general American

²⁹For a detailed account of the hostage crisis, see, e.g., Christopher et al.; McFadden et al.; Kreisberg; Taheri, *Nest of Spies*; and the report by the U.S. Committee of Foreign Affairs entitled *The Iran Hostage Crisis: A Chronology of Daily Developments*. For a history of American-Iranian relations, see Bill. For an analysis of how the hostage crisis affected the Carter presidency, see H. Jordan as well as Morris.

³⁰One of the hostages, Richard Queen, was released in July 1980 after falling seriously ill. He was later diagnosed with multiple sclerosis.

³¹For more on the secret 1953 CIA and MI6 operation which displaced democratically elected Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh in favor of the Shah, see Kinzer.

³²For a historical account of the events depicted in *Argo*, see Pelletier and Adams. For an analysis of *Argo* and its reception in Iran, see B. Edwards. Other works analyzing the hostage crisis, its build-up, and its aftermath include Bowden, *Guests*; Farber; and D. Harris.

public, namely as the first case of ‘international terrorism’ against the United States, thus turning the incident into a “singular event” which reshaped and influenced the discourse on ‘terrorism’ for decades to come (Foucault, “Order” 77).

From the very beginning of the crisis, President Carter linked what was occurring in Iran to ‘terrorism.’ For instance, Carter already declared on November 8, 1979, i.e. four days after the initial takeover, that “Americans [we]re suffering from international terrorism in being held against their will” (“Visit of Lynch”). On November 12, he stated that “we refuse[d] to permit the use of terrorism and the seizure and the holding of hostages to impose political demands” (“Oil”). Again three days later, Carter condemned the embassy takeover as “an act of terrorism – totally outside the bounds of international law and diplomatic tradition” and asserted that “the United States w[ould] not yield to international terrorism or to blackmail” (“American”).

This is also why I disagree with Carol Winkler’s analysis put forth in her 2006 study *In the Name of Terrorism*. Winkler claims that the Carter administration was initially undecided over how to classify the captors and concerned over bringing up debilitating memories of the disastrous Vietnam War (39). By January 1980, however, the administration had settled on calling the embassy takeover an act of ‘terrorism’ (40). This strategy, Winkler argues, meant that the Iranian government’s responsibility for the takeover was minimized and the takeover itself became “a criminal act of terrorism requiring the intervention of the international community” (41). Winkler then proceeds to read the hostage crisis and Carter’s leadership in it from a literary studies perspective as a classical tragedy and understands the embattled president as tragic hero in this narrative. While this may be a novel approach to interpreting Carter’s role in the hostage crisis, it does not actually advance our understanding of how the ‘terrorism’ discourse operated during this historical event, much less how it changed the discourse in the process. As the examples above show, the Carter administration relied much earlier on the ‘terrorism’ discourse to make sense of the events in Iran than Winkler acknowledges. This constitutes a clear sign of how influential the discourse on ‘terrorism’ had become over the course of the decade. It was immediately employed by the Carter administration and no important

discursive agent contested the framing, making it the dominant paradigm through which the hostage crisis was understood and managed.

The framing of the events in Tehran as “another exhibition of international terrorism” (Carter, “Visit of Thatcher”) carried significant political advantages. Most importantly, it enabled the president to arbitrarily distinguish between the Khomeini government, the larger Iranian population, and the actual hostage takers to respond flexibly to the ever-changing political situation. This vaguely defined, emotionally charged term allowed the president to include the Iranian government in the group of ‘terrorists’ whenever he deemed it advantageous. For instance, when announcing international economic sanctions against Iran, Carter talked about “kidnappers and terrorists, supported by Iranian officials” (“International”). By grouping the Iranian government with the ‘terrorists,’ he subtly justified the drastic sanctions to the international community and his American audiences, and characterized the situation in Iran as extraordinary in nature since official representatives of Iran were actively involved in it.

Similarly, on April 17, 1980, a good five months into the crisis, Carter charged that the Iranian “Government [wa]s now directly involved in continuing this act of international terrorism” (“President’s News” 17 April 1980). A day later, Carter reiterated that “the legitimate constitutional Government of Iran [was] officially condoning and even supporting this international act of terrorism” (“Interview”). These statements further escalated official Iranian involvement in the hostage crisis since, according to the president, it was now the entire government which engaged in ‘terrorism.’ In these and similar examples, the Carter administration consciously linked the new Iranian government led by the Ayatollah Khomeini to ‘terrorism’ and reaped ample benefits from this linguistic fusion. Not only did the American nation rally around its leader in this time of crisis – Carter’s approval ratings soared for a while – it also meant that there existed little interest in Iranian grievances and open criticism of American foreign policy.

Casting the Iranian hostage crisis in terms of ‘international terrorism’ also had other domestic political advantages. The Carter administration used the embassy takeover as a reason to further advocate the president’s energy policy and the need to become independent of foreign (now meaning Iranian) oil imports. In the same November 12, 1979

statement already quoted above, Carter addressed “the extreme importance of reducing oil consumption here in the United States” a mere eight days after the embassy takeover (“Oil”). Three days later, he warned the public that “our excessive dependence on foreign oil [wa]s a direct, physical threat to our freedom and security as Americans (“American”). The administration made good use of the already existing discursive link between the Middle East, oil, and ‘terrorism,’ employing it to push for further national reform and energy conservation by presenting it as a way to fight ‘terrorism’ against the United States.

President Carter and his administration were not the only ones to frame the hostage situation in Iran as an act of ‘terrorism.’ *The New York Times* also regularly linked the crisis in Iran to ‘terrorism.’ A special from November 11, 1979, for instance, opened by claiming that “[i]n the Twentieth Century, political terrorism ha[d] usually been disavowed by ruling authorities” (“Held” E1), in order to stress to readers that the Iranian political elite had precisely not done this, suggesting that what was happening in Tehran constituted ‘terrorism’ and that the Iranian government was complicit in it. James Reston’s contribution to that same edition of *The New York Times* discerned “a new kind of international warfare, with new weapons of publicity and destruction in the hands of fanatical minorities, requiring new methods of defense” (E21). According to Reston, ‘terrorism’ of the type occurring in Iran epitomized this “new kind of international warfare” and he concluded that “diplomatic blackmail and international terrorism [we]re increasing and the methods for dealing with them obviously ha[d] to be quite different” (E21). Moreover, *The New York Times* often reprinted Carter’s speeches and statements, thus circulating the president’s framing of events as ‘terrorism’ and suggesting to readers that this particular discursivization was deemed ‘correct’ by the newspaper.

However, despite intense negotiations and economic and international pressure, the Carter administration found itself incapable of freeing the hostages through diplomatic channels. On April 24, 1980, a military operation called “Operation Eagle Claw” was launched which put the U.S. ‘anti-terrorism’ unit Delta Force to the test. The mission failed even before it had properly begun. During the clandestine journey to Iran, a total of three helicopters broke down, leading President Carter to abort the mission. As the teams were preparing to leave again, one of the remaining helicopters crashed into another

transport aircraft, killing eight servicemen whose bodies were left behind in the desert by the retreating troops. The Iranian military later recovered the bodies of the dead American soldiers as well as the remaining helicopters, weapons, maps, and sensitive intelligence material.³³ In interviews and press releases, President Carter praised the soldiers for their valor, patriotism, and dedication, and stressed that the mission was necessary because of “the steady unraveling of authority in Iran and the mounting dangers that were posed to the safety of the hostages themselves and the growing realization that their early release was highly unlikely” (“Address”).

After the failed rescue attempt, President Carter was noticeably more careful in his labeling of the hostage crisis as ‘terrorism.’ In his address to the nation on April 25, one day after the failed mission, Carter did not mention ‘terrorism’ once. He merely insisted, “we continue to hold the Government of Iran responsible for the safety and for the early release of the American hostages, who have been held so long. The United States remains determined to bring about their safe release at the earliest date possible” (“Address”). Similarly, in his message for the memorial service for the eight soldiers who were killed in the accidents a few days later, Carter expressed his sorrow, saying that he “grieve[d] with you for eight fine men who died in the service of America” and praised the men’s “daring spirit” (“Rescue”). He did not mention ‘terrorism’ at all. Indeed, references to the hostage takers as ‘terrorists’ in this context could have been problematic since it could be seen to imply that the United States was unable to beat a group of ‘terrorists.’

In the context of the Iranian hostage crisis, Carter mentioned ‘terrorism’ again at the end of the month, namely on April 29 during a news conference. He defended the rescue mission as well as charges that the U.S. violated international laws by invading Iranian territory in secret and stressed the integrity of the soldiers during the mission by highlighting that “they [the U.S. soldiers] carefully released, without harm, 44 Iranians who had passed by the site and who were detained to protect the integrity of the mission” (“President’s News” April 29, 1980). Carter then contrasted this to “the ghoulish action of the terrorists and some of the Government officials in Iran, in our Embassy this weekend, who displayed in a horrible exhibition of inhumanity the bodies of our courageous Americans.” During

³³On “Operation Eagle Claw,” see Beckwith and Knox, D. Martin and Walcott, McAlister, and P. Ryan.

the round of questions with reporters following his statement, Carter reiterated this point, claiming that “the fact that the terrorists participated in the desecration [wa]s an indication of the kind of people they [we]re.” Here, the ‘terrorist’ label worked to depict the perpetrators as acting outside of the international community’s norms and passed a moral judgment on them.

In the end, however, the Iranian hostage crisis was not only shaped by the discourse on ‘terrorism,’ it also influenced the discourse in return. Carter’s particular framing of the concept introduced two new aspects to the discourse, one being the characterization of ‘terrorism’ as ‘international’ and the other the notion that states (like Iran) could actively sponsor ‘terrorist’ groups for political gain. Carter’s continuous references to ‘*international* terrorism,’ instead of, say, ‘Iranian terrorism’ or even ‘Islamic terrorism,’ avoided identifying the ‘terrorism’ with a specific social group or religion which could have made the administration vulnerable to charges of racism, religious discrimination, and the like. Moreover, framing the ‘terrorism’ as religiously motivated or based on geographical and ethnic markers could have alienated allies in the Middle East whose participation in the international embargo was vital to make it work. Rather, the notion that this particular kind of ‘terrorism’ was ‘international’ in nature suggested that this constituted a threat facing the entire global community and made it easier to forge strategic partnerships with other countries. It also implied that ‘terrorists’ now operated across state borders, enhancing the threat because local conflicts could easily become international issues involving many nations.

At the same time, even though Carter was generally careful about charging the Khomeini administration directly with ‘terrorism,’ he nevertheless regularly accused the Iranian government of *sponsoring* it. Early on into the crisis, he decried, for instance, how “kidnappers and terrorists, *supported by Iranian officials*, continue[d] to hold our people under inhumane conditions” (“International;” emphasis added). Similarly, on April 29, 1980, President Carter insisted during a news conference that “[t]he crime [wa]s being committed by terrorists who [we]re kidnapping innocent victims, *sponsored by and approved by Government officials* themselves” (“President’s News” April 29, 1980; emphasis added). Ultimately, this particular framing of ‘terrorism’ as international and sponsored by a

foreign government made it easier for the Carter administration to build an international alliance, especially through the United Nations, which not only condemned Iran for what was happening, but also agreed to put sanctions against it in place.

This notion that governments did not actively have to engage in ‘terrorism’ themselves but could instruct third parties to act on their behalf in international settings would become extremely influential in later years. When Ronald Reagan took over the presidency on January 20, 1981, the discourse on ‘terrorism’ became another way through which to frame the ongoing Cold War and the concept of ‘international terrorism’ sponsored by antagonistic governments became central to explanations of the conflict with the Soviet Union. Moreover, as the next chapter shows, it provided the discursive ‘glue’ to link ideas about the Soviet Union’s reliance on ‘terrorism’ to the discourse on ‘Arab’ and ‘Middle East terrorism,’ constructing the region and its peoples as dangerous and evil ‘terrorist’ agents in the intensifying Cold War.

Chapter 3

“This Is [...] the Work of a Confederation of Terrorist States” – The 1980s, ‘Terrorist’ Networks, and the Reagan Administration’s ‘War against Terrorism’

The experience of the Iranian hostage crisis influenced the American discourse on ‘terrorism’ significantly and motivated important and far-reaching changes in how ‘terrorism’ was conceptualized and discursivized in the decade that followed. Indeed, for the newly-elected Reagan administration, ‘terrorism’ became a central concern and its approach to the issue was determined by what were seen as key lessons from the crisis with Iran. It immediately became clear that the new administration would handle ‘terrorism’ differently than its predecessors. During his inaugural address on January 20, 1981, the same day that the hostages in Iran were finally released, President Reagan told the nation:

Above all, we must realize that no arsenal or no weapon in the arsenals of the world is so formidable as the will and moral courage of free men and women. It is a weapon our adversaries in today’s world do not have. It is a weapon that we as Americans do have. Let that be understood by those who practice terrorism and prey upon their neighbors. (“Inaugural”)

Not only was Reagan the first president to mention ‘terrorism’ in his inaugural address, he also ideologized the term’s meaning by framing it as the opposite of freedom and “moral courage,” which he in turn stylized as “weapons” which would guarantee the American nation victory over its “adversaries.” Moreover, his address already contained a thinly-veiled threat of retribution towards “those who practice[d] terrorism,” suggesting that the incoming administration would take a more militaristic stance towards the issue.

This approach differed noticeably from Carter’s and became more pronounced in the following days and weeks.¹ The American hostages returned from Iran to the United States on January 27, 1981 and were officially welcomed by President Reagan and his wife. Reagan, at that point a president for only seven and a half days, used the opportunity to issue a stern warning in the direction of the ‘terrorist’ perpetrators and potentially

¹By contrast, President Carter, responding to the fallout from the Watergate scandal, announced in his inaugural address four years earlier his intentions to “create together a new national spirit of unity and trust” and stressed the importance of human rights and global peace (“Inaugural”).

like-minded groups: “Let terrorists be aware that when the rules of international behavior are violated, our policy will be one of swift and effective retribution. We hear it said that we live in an era of limits to our powers. Well, let it be understood, there are limits to our patience” (“Remarks for the Freed”). His remarks were broadcast live on national radio and television, ensuring that his message was widely disseminated and discussed.

The president’s words signaled that a change in the conceptualization of ‘terrorism’ and the new administration’s approach to the issue was underway. Reagan’s remarks, especially the call for “swift and effective retribution,” indicated a militarization of the ‘terrorism’ discourse and contained an implicit promise to restore American power and honor in response to the perceived political and military failure in the Iranian hostage crisis. Reagan’s listeners evidently understood his statement in these terms. *The New York Times* concluded that in his speech Reagan “seemed to sketch the outlines of a new and more forceful policy as he addressed the crowd on the White House lawn” (Raines A14). It also reported that when Reagan spoke the above-cited three sentences, each of them “was greeted by a strong burst of applause” (A14), suggesting that Reagan’s show of strength against the ‘terrorist’ enemy was well-received. It was certainly condoned by the former hostages who, as Howell Raines noted, “expressed happiness with the tough tone of Mr. Reagan’s remarks” (A14). Raines’ observation not only linked Reagan’s statement on ‘terrorism’ explicitly to the Iranian hostage crisis, but also made it clear to readers that this rhetoric shift was endorsed by the former hostages who, as the most recent and prominent victims of ‘terrorism,’ could speak with authenticity and moral authority on the issue.

Reagan did not only speak about ‘terrorism,’ he also initiated policy reviews and changes, demonstrating to the American public that his administration considered ‘terrorism’ a central and serious political problem.² Just how much the Reagan administration considered ‘terrorism’ a top priority became apparent when the National Security Council held its first meeting on January 24, 1981, i.e. on the president’s fourth day in office. The meeting was convened in order to discuss the threat of ‘terrorism’ for the United States and was attended by some of the most powerful men in U.S. politics at

²For a historical analysis and evaluation of President Reagan’s ‘counter-terrorism’ policies, see Wills.

the time: President Reagan himself was present just like Vice President Bush, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, Secretary of State Alexander Haig, National Security Advisor Richard Allen, Attorney General William French Smith, FBI Director William Webster, CIA Director William Casey, NSA Director Bobby Ray Inman, and White House Chief of Staff James Baker (Hänni, *Terrorismus* 170, 177; Naftali, *False* 3n4). That such an illustrious group of high-ranking officials met this early into their tenure showed how much influence the issue of ‘terrorism’ carried in American politics and how central the discourse had become.

In the meeting, participants discussed how best to confront the threat of ‘terrorism.’ However, while experts of the intelligence community described the issue of ‘terrorism’ as a “manageable” problem, the politicians in the room openly disagreed (Hänni, *Terrorismus* 177). In fact, Secretary of State Alexander Haig escalated the rhetoric by insisting throughout the meeting that the most pressing threat facing the United States was ‘terrorism’ financed and organized by the Soviet Union (176). CIA Director William Casey agreed while lower-level analysts expressed their skepticism. But even though intelligence experts in the room voiced their doubts both about the magnitude of the ‘terrorism’ threat as well as Soviet involvement in it, as a consequence of the meeting, the CIA began advising its stations all over the world to put ‘terrorism’ at the top of their lists of “Essential Elements of Intelligence” (178). This constituted another clear sign that ‘terrorism’ was perceived as an important political problem.

In the days and weeks that followed, members of the administration introduced the American public to the changed approach to and understanding of ‘terrorism’ as a national security threat. Most importantly, on January 28, a mere four days after the meeting of the National Security Council, Secretary of State Alexander Haig held a press conference during which he confidently declared that “the greatest priority in human rights today [wa]s the problem of rampant international terrorism” (qtd. in Gwertzman, “Haig” A1). Haig also promised his audience that “[i]nternational terrorism w[ould] take the place of human rights in our concern because it [wa]s the ultimate abuse of human rights” (qtd. in Taubman 36; qtd. in Woodward 93). In this manner, Haig echoed and

reinforced the president's message about the threat of 'terrorism' for the United States and presented it as serious political concern.

But Haig not only identified 'terrorism' as the new administration's main foreign policy issue, he also used the press conference to openly accuse the Soviet Union of "training, funding and equipping" 'terrorist' groups around the world, unequivocally denouncing these practices as "international terrorism" ("Excerpts" A10). Haig was not alone. Two days later, *The New York Times* reported that a spokesman for the State Department, in an official statement, named "Russian financial support, training and arming of Palestine Liberation Organization guerrillas; the use of Cuban and Libyan surrogates as conduits to terrorist groups; support of guerrillas in El Salvador and South-West Africa, and broadcasts supporting the holding of the American hostages in Iran" as examples for "Soviet involvement in terrorist acts" (Gwertzman, "President" A3). These blunt accusations against the Soviet Union were widely noted and interpreted as putting an end to détente and "reignit[ing] the Cold War" (Paull 1). They also signaled to the wider American public that a reframing of 'terrorism' within the Cold War paradigm was under way. Indeed, even President Reagan claimed that the Soviet Union sponsored 'terrorism' against the United States. During a news conference in March 1981, he decried, for instance, "the infiltration into the Americas by terrorists" and claimed that "the Soviet Union and Cuba and those others that we've named" backed 'terrorist' groups in the region ("President's News"). Coming from the president himself, these accusations carried significant weight, endowing claims about Soviet sponsorship of 'terrorism' with legitimacy and ensuring their wide circulation.

After his press conference in January 1981, Haig tasked the intelligence community with compiling the necessary evidence for his claims against the Soviet Union and ordered the CIA to write up a "Special National Intelligence Estimate" (SNIE), fully expecting it to confirm his public statements about Soviet support for "international terrorism." To Haig's surprise, the CIA did not find any proof for Haig's accusations and actually contradicted and dismissed them. CIA Director William Casey, however, agreed with Haig that the Soviet Union was sponsoring 'terrorism' all over the globe against the U.S. and instead of backing up the work done by his agency actually rejected the SNIE as bad analysis.

Casey then ordered a second SNIE, this time written by a known Cold Warrior, Wynfred Joshua. The second SNIE, as expected, confirmed Haig's and Casey's beliefs, but was so badly compiled and written that Casey could not present it as official CIA analysis without losing face. In the end, Casey tasked the National Intelligence Council with producing a third and final SNIE. This intelligence estimate concluded that the Soviet Union did support a few so-called revolutionary movements, but not a network of 'terrorist' groups as described by Haig and the State Department (Hänni, *Terrorismus* 188-96; D. Martin and Walcott 51-56; Woodward 93, 124-29).³

Both Haig and Casey were angry and frustrated that the intelligence community seemingly refused to produce the desired results but had to give in eventually. As a final resort, the third and final SNIE was classified as 'top secret,' which limited access to it to only the highest-ranking members of the Reagan administration. As a consequence, Bob Woodward notes, in the eyes of the American public, "the Soviets still stood publicly branded by the Secretary of State as active supporters of terrorism. The record was never corrected" (129). This effectively made the fact that the Soviet Union was *not* sponsoring 'terrorism' against the U.S. a state secret (Hänni, *Terrorismus* 198). It also meant that the Reagan administration did not have to publicly retract these claims which would have been embarrassing and awkward, to say the least.

Undeterred by these findings, Haig continued to make public statements about Soviet sponsorship of 'international terrorism.' For instance, he declared in April 1981 that "Moscow continue[d] to support terrorism and war by proxy" ("Text" 4). Similarly, President Reagan regularly referred to the notion of a Soviet-sponsored 'terror' network in speeches and public appearances long after the composition of the third SNIE. For example, when Reagan addressed the nation during his State of the Union speech on January 26, 1982, he promised that "[t]oward those who would export terrorism and subversion in the Caribbean and elsewhere, especially Cuba and Libya, we w[ould] act with firmness"

³Recent archival research has shown that the Soviet Union did have *some* ties to *some* 'terrorist' groups. For instance, documents made accessible after the fall of the USSR reveal Wadi Haddad of the PFLP to have been an agent for the KGB (Naftali, *Blind* 124). Nevertheless, the Soviet Union never had the amount of control over these 'terrorist' groups as Haig and others claimed. See the works by Naftali as well as Hänni for more detail. See Stanik for a minority counter-view, i.e. the claim that "Sterling's controversial hypothesis about a functioning terrorist network [...] [was] [...] vindicated" because former Soviet satellite states "disclosed the true nature of the terror network" after the fall of the Soviet Union (38).

(“Address before a Joint”). Cuba and Libya, of course, had already been accused of acting as Soviet surrogates in the global network of ‘terrorist’ groups.

This raises the question of why the president and his Secretary of State (as well as other members of the administration) continued (to varying degrees) to insist upon the existence of a Soviet-sponsored ‘terrorism’ network despite knowing that their own agencies had dismissed these ideas as political fantasy. Even more pressing, where had the Secretary gotten the idea for this notion in the first place? Why were he and others like CIA Director Casey so convinced that their very own analysts were completely wrong to claim Soviet innocence in matters of ‘terrorism’?

The rest of this chapter sets out to answer these questions by examining the roots of these claims as well as how and why they spread as widely as they did through American society in the early 1980s. These ideas about ‘terrorism’ in the midst of the Cold War affected the discourse on ‘terrorism’ in lasting ways, consolidating a conceptualization of ‘terrorism’ as war waged by state-sponsored networks which circulates to the present day. I begin by discussing in detail the discursive roots of the accusations against the Soviet Union of sponsoring ‘terrorism’ against the United States in the late 1970s and early 1980s before analyzing these claims as a conspiracy theory in order to explain how it functioned and why it proved so popular for a few years. In the third section, I examine political, academic, and journalistic responses to the conspiracy theory. Then I turn in the fourth section to alternative discursivizations of ‘terrorism’ which became prominent from the mid-1980s onward and which drew on ideas about ‘terrorism’ developed by the conspiracy theory. In the last section, I focus on conceptualizations of the issue which were advanced by the American news media, using *The New York Times* as a case study, as well as cultural productions which reframed ‘terrorism’ in the mid- to late 1980s after the the Cold War with the Soviet Union had begun to thaw, making claims of Soviet sponsorship of ‘terrorism’ no longer tenable.

3.1 The Root of All Evil – The Intellectual Origins behind Claims of Soviet Sponsorship of ‘Terrorism’ in the Early 1980s

The claim that the Soviet Union organized and financed ‘terrorist’ groups all over the world and deployed them against the United States evidently enjoyed considerable popularity with members of the recently elected Reagan administration. As I have argued in the preceding chapter, discursive links between ‘terrorism’ and communism, particularly as ideology practiced by the Soviet Union, already existed in the previous decades. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, however, these concerns were taken up by a group of scholars, politicians, and journalists who warned their contemporaries of what they perceived as serious threat emanating from a (supposed) Soviet-sponsored ‘terrorism’ network. This section therefore looks more closely at the intellectual origins of this claim as well as the surge in popularity it experienced in the early 1980s.

The content of this particular narrative is fairly easily summarized: It posited as its central argument that the Soviet Union, with the help of its satellite states, had built an international network comprising all major ‘terrorist’ groups worldwide and provided funding, equipment, training, and advice to all of them, no matter their ideology and politics – it even gave these groups orders as to who should be attacked next. Most texts presenting this narrative also pointed to communist Cuba and the various Palestinian (‘terrorist’) groups as central Soviet proxies and particularly dangerous agents in this network. The main targets of this Soviet-sponsored ‘terrorism’ were the United States and the nations of Western Europe, i.e. its antagonists in the Cold War. Indeed, the Soviet Union supposedly relied on these ‘terrorist’ groups in order to lastingly destabilize ‘the West,’ win the Cold War, and spread communism around the globe. At the same time, the narrative warned that the nations of ‘the West,’ particularly the United States, had been dangerously unaware of these developments and therefore needed to be made to realize the ‘truth’ and act on it.

Importantly, this narrative about a global Soviet-financed and organized ‘terrorism’ network did not appear out of the blue, but emerged slowly and was continuously developed, honed, and refined by different writers and discursive agents attempting to expose

the allegedly secret Soviet plan to destabilize the United States through ‘international terrorism.’ Early texts which put forth a first version of the narrative I outlined above include Ovid Demaris, *Brothers in Blood* (1977), Stefan Possony and L. F. Bouchey’s aptly titled 1978 study *International Terrorism – The Communist Connection*, Robert Kupperman and Darrel Trent’s work *Terrorism* (1979), and Louis Beres’ account in *Apocalypse* (1980). These texts generally linked communism to ‘terrorism’ and pointed to the communist powers in China and the Soviet Union as dangerous enemy forces relying on ‘terrorism’ to spread their ideology.

This emerging narrative about a communist-controlled ‘terrorism’ network was significantly streamlined, propagated, and disseminated by an international conference on the issue of ‘international terrorism,’ held in Jerusalem between July 2 and July 5, 1979, and organized by the Jonathan Institute, an Israeli organization founded by Benjamin Netanyahu in the wake of his brother Jonathan’s death during the 1976 Israeli raid on Entebbe.⁴ The conference featured distinguished speakers mainly from the United States and Israel, including Benzion and Benjamin Netanyahu, Menachem Begin, described euphemistically as “leader of the underground organization Irgun Zvai Leumi prior to the establishment of the State of Israel” (Begin 39), Brian Crozier as acknowledged expert on ‘international terrorism’ (Crozier, “Soviet” 64), Ray Cline, the Deputy Director for Intelligence at the CIA, as well as George H. W. Bush, “an American diplomat and leading figure in the Republican Party” (“U.S.” 332). Given the high social and political standing and rank of most of the participants, the conference generated “significant media coverage” (Stampnitzky 112), meaning that the conference’s message was disseminated widely in the United States.⁵

Conference participants overwhelmingly agreed that the Soviet Union functioned as a major sponsor and coordinator of international ‘terrorism’ and used the conference as

⁴For a critical view of the Jonathan Institute, especially the charge that the Jonathan Institute functioned as a front organization for the Mossad, see Hänni, *Terrorismus*; Herman and O’Sullivan; and Landis, “Moscow” and “Robert.”

⁵The first text to point to the importance of the Jerusalem Conference for the discourse on ‘terrorism’ is Philip Paull’s final thesis written in 1982 as part of his studies for an M.A. degree in international relations. This constitutes the only significant contemporary analysis of the conference and its effects on public discourses on ‘terrorism’ and foreign policy. The importance of the Jerusalem Conference for the ‘terrorism’ discourse in the United States has only recently been re-discovered by scholars. See especially Hänni and Stampnitzky.

a platform to make their claims and accusations public. Taken together, the conference not only introduced the narrative about an international ‘terrorism’ network to a wider audience, but also repackaged it as easily consumable, straightforward story: The Soviet Union became the main foe as references to China and other communist powers were dropped and the links to established ‘terrorist’ groups in the Middle East, predominantly the Palestinian movements, were stressed, thus linking knowledge claims about ‘Middle Eastern terrorism’ and ‘communist terrorism’ from previous years to construct one homogeneous narrative (see again Chapter 2).

The Jerusalem Conference on International Terrorism was attended by more than 400 journalists who carried back to their home countries the news that the Soviet Union was financing and guiding practically all ‘terrorist’ groups in existence at the time (Hänni, *Terrorismus* 82; Herman and O’Sullivan 105). Similarly, the conference participants themselves not only understood the event as “an intervention to change the international discourse on terrorism” (Stampnitzky 113), but also saw it as their mission to educate politicians and their constituents at home and to actively work towards countering the perceived Soviet threat (Hänni, “Mastermind” 220). Thus, in the aftermath of the conference, a variety of influential publications appeared which further elaborated on the notion of a Soviet-controlled global ‘terrorist’ network and which ultimately greatly influenced the discourse on ‘terrorism’ in the United States.

Central figures among this group of disseminators included Robert Moss, a journalist, author, and “a major propaganda asset of American and British intelligence” who ended up writing a variety of articles (and even novels – more on that in the next section) in which he argued for the veracity of the narrative (Hänni, “Mastermind” 236). Likewise, his friend and colleague Arnaud de Borchgrave collaborated with him on several projects, particularly the editing of the journal *Early Warning* whose subscription cost \$1,000 per year and could be acquired by invitation only (Herman and O’Sullivan 124, “De Borchgrave”). De Borchgrave also published his own articles in academic and news journals, warning of the dangers of the ‘terrorism’ network.⁶ Both Moss and de Borchgrave not only depicted the

⁶For more on Moss’s and de Borchgrave’s ties to American and British secret services, see Hänni, *Terrorismus* and “Mastermind;” and Landis, “Moscow” and “Robert.”

Soviet Union as main antagonist, but also used references to and examples of ‘Palestinian terrorism’ to enhance the threat emanating from the ‘terrorism’ network.⁷

However, the most important text for the development of the narrative proved to be Claire Sterling’s 1981 book *The Terror Network* in which she detailed her investigations and ‘revealed’ the existence of a Soviet-controlled ‘terrorist’ network active all over Europe. Like her contemporaries, Sterling also stressed the importance of Palestinian ‘terrorist’ groups for the network and even suggested that Libyan leader Colonel Qaddafi was entangled with the Soviet ‘terror’ network, thus furthering the link between ‘terrorism’ in and from the Middle East and ‘communist terrorism.’ Sterling’s report, which a review in *Foreign Affairs* called “a landmark book, breaking much new ground and deserving of the care it takes to read it thoroughly” (Bundy), became a world-wide bestseller and one of the most-cited studies in the field of ‘terrorism’ research in the 1980s (Reid, “Terrorism” 34). Critics like Stampnitzky and Hänni thus rightfully stress the importance and influence of Sterling’s book for the development of the ‘terrorism’ discourse in the United States and the narrative about a Soviet-controlled ‘terrorism’ network in particular (Stampnitzky 117; Hänni, “Mastermind” 222-23).

Sterling’s revelations fell on fertile grounds. In the academic realm, her claims were discussed and confirmed by other recognized experts on ‘terrorism,’ leading to a wide array of publications which drew on Sterling’s *The Terror Network* and endorsed her findings.⁸ In response to Sterling, prominent American think tanks published their own studies which further spread the narrative of the Soviet ‘terror’ network.⁹ As we have seen, the allegations against the Soviet Union even seemed credible to powerful politicians like Alexander Haig or high-ranking government officials like William Casey at the CIA. Alexander Haig, for instance, repeatedly referred to Sterling’s book both during private meetings with analysts as well as during press conferences and, at one point, even distributed excerpts from the book to a congressional committee (Schmid et al. 103). Similarly, William Casey is reported

⁷Other important texts which argued for the existence of a Soviet-sponsored ‘terrorism’ network in some form or other include de Borchgrave, “Unspiking;” Kirkpatrick, “U.S.,” Ledeen, *Grave*; and Moss, “Terror.”

⁸Examples of such works include Barron; Goren; and Becker, *Soviet*

⁹Examples for studies by American think tanks include Francis (supported by The Heritage Foundation), Cline and Alexander (published by the Center for Strategic and International Studies). The CSIS also sponsored the anthology *Latin American Insurgencies* (1985), edited by Georges Fauriol, which features an article written by Y. Alexander and Kucinski on the alleged Soviet ‘terrorism’ network.

to have told a group of CIA analysts that “I paid \$13.95 for this [Sterling’s book] and it told me more than you bastards who I pay \$50,000 a year” (qtd. in Woodward 126). Both men were convinced of the veracity of Sterling’s claims about a Soviet-financed ‘terrorism’ network, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

Interestingly, the U.S. government was not the only discursive actor to believe, repeat, and spread claims about a Soviet ‘terrorism’ network. The legislative branch also began to investigate these allegations and eventually the Senate established the Subcommittee on Security and Terrorism (SST) in 1981, chaired by Jeremiah Denton (R-AL). The SST began to hold hearings in April 1981 and was active until 1986. All in all, the SST held a total of 37 hearings, invited as witnesses 32 U.S. government employees and elected officials, 18 “former members of terrorist organizations or [...] victims of terrorism,” seven “prominent advocates” of the Soviet ‘terror’ network conspiracy theory, including Stefan Possony, Claire Sterling, Robert Moss, and Arnaud de Borchgrave, as well as 18 other witnesses from a variety of related fields and occupations (Stampnitzky 122). The witnesses overwhelmingly confirmed the existence of a Soviet-controlled ‘terrorist’ network; dissident views (like the testimony by James H. Billington on June 11, 1981) were not considered or reframed as proving the conspiracy theory after all.¹⁰

By inviting the most prominent advocates of these claims to speak at the hearings, the SST provided a platform to further fix the meaning of ‘terrorism’ and to disseminate the discourse “in a generally unhampered way” (Gold-Biss 80). Indeed, Michael Gold-Biss’s 1994 study *The Discourse on Terrorism*, the first thorough scholarly analysis of the work of the SST and its impact on the discourse on ‘terrorism,’ stresses that “[t]he discourse on terrorism and the relationship between the cabalist community of interpretation and the SST was premised on the notion of the expertise of the former to interpret and analyze political violence and the importance of the latter as a venue for the expression and

¹⁰The day after Billington’s testimony before the SST, Senator Denton opened the session by announcing that “I would like to set the record a little bit straighter in view of a press report today regarding yesterday’s hearing. The report quotes Dr. Billington as urging that, ‘rigorous scholarly scrutiny’ be applied to suggestions that Soviet leaders had overcome doctrinal inhibitions about terrorism as a revolutionary technique. [...] I dare say that Dr. Billington did say those words [...], but I am not sure that that represents [...] a balanced presentation of what Dr. Billington had to offer. [...] it was clear from Dr. Billington’s testimony and from his book that all he was stating was that there should be fundamental documentation to support the thesis that the Soviets are supporting international terrorism” (United States, *Historical* 30).

diffusion of the discourse itself' (75). What is more, Gold-Biss argues, the SST, under the leadership of Senator Denton, "manufactured the discourse on terrorism" (76), meaning that the subcommittee was the first agent to problematize 'terrorism' and, through its activities and practices, the first to construct a coherent discourse about it.

I hesitate to agree fully with Gold-Biss's rather sweeping statement because in my view it somewhat overstates the effect and reach of the SST, especially considering that the media interest in the hearings soon abated (see also Stampnitzky 122, 126; Gold-Biss 79). Nevertheless, it is clear that the SST engaged in important political and cultural work which influenced and spread the discourse on 'terrorism' (it did not, however, single-handedly create it) because it offered an easily understandable and consumable, coherent presentation of the allegations against the Soviet Union. This was achieved, in part, by simplifying the issue further to exclude cultural and political factors as irrelevant, unless they 'proved' a propensity to rely on 'terrorism' for an entire people like 'the Soviets' or 'the Arabs.' It also used its own authority as a legislative organ with official hearings, witnesses and an audience, official transcripts which were published later, as well as an overall atmosphere of being in a courtroom to endow the claims about Soviet sponsorship of 'terrorism' with legitimacy and maintain its central discursive position (Hänni, *Terrorismus* 219). After delving into the intellectual origins and dissemination of ideas about a Soviet-sponsored international 'terrorism' network, I use the next section to read this narrative as a conspiracy theory in order to discuss its workings and functions in detail.

3.2 "Proof Abounded" – Reading Claims of a Soviet 'Terror' Network as Conspiracy Theory

In order to gain a clearer understanding of how the narrative of a Soviet-sponsored 'terrorism' network circulated and functioned in American society of the early 1980s, I propose to read it through the lens of conspiracy theory. This may seem like a controversial decision, especially when considering that previous scholarship on this narrative has, so far at least, never shown an interest in the concept as an investigative tool. This may be related, at least in part, to the fact that the main proponents of the narrative did

not rely on typical conspiracist language which would have openly marked their claims as conspiracy theory. Thus, Adrian Hänni, the first scholar to engage at length with the discourse on ‘terrorism’ during the (first) Reagan administration, uses the phrase “*Terror Network Image*” in his 2018 study *Terrorismus* (unfortunately only available in German). Carol Winkler, in turn, has argued that “Reagan’s application of the Cold War *narrative* transformed the national debate about the crime of terrorism” (*In the Name* 82; emphasis added). In my view, however, understanding the allegations about a Soviet-sponsored ‘terrorism’ network as a conspiracy theory captures the full scope of the issue, acknowledges its complexity, and constitutes a useful tool to analyze the diverse functions and changing discursive status of these claims. In the rest of this section, I therefore discuss the notion of a Soviet ‘terrorism’ network as a conspiracy theory and draw on the valuable insights put forth by a growing body of research engaged in analyzing the impact of conspiracy theories in American culture, past and present.¹¹

I follow here Michael Butter who defines conspiracy theories as the belief that “a group of evil agents, the conspirators, has assumed or is currently trying to assume control over an institution, a region, a nation, or the world” (*Plots* 1). The conspiracy theory under investigation here fulfills the parameters of Butter’s definition. It depicts the Soviet Union as main conspirator, the secretive force plotting to gain control over the world. At times, the conspiracy theory also names Cuba or Palestinian groups as co-conspirators, but in other versions of the narrative, these “evil agents” are represented rather as loyal and dutiful minions instead of equal partners. While it is only implied in Butter’s definition, Michael Barkun’s explanation of the concept includes a moral evaluation of the conspirators’ plans, i.e. the notion that they are “acting covertly to achieve some malevolent end” (3). In the case of the Soviet ‘terror’ network conspiracy theory, this element is relevant as the conspiracy theory posits a dichotomy between the ‘good,’ democratic, ‘counter-terrorist’ United States and the ‘evil,’ communist, ‘terrorist’ Soviet Union and its ‘terrorism’ network. As we will see later, this moralizing stance

¹¹For more on the development and functions of conspiracy theories in American history, politics, and culture, see Barkun; Butter, *Plots*; Fenster; Goldberg; Knight; Melley, *Empire* and *Covert*; Olmsted; and Thalmann.

inherent in the conspiracy theory of the Soviet ‘terror’ network would also influence the discourse on ‘terrorism’ in the years to come.

Moreover, Michael Barkun has stressed that conspiracy theories present the world as functioning “by design rather than by randomness” (3). Barkun has developed three principles which characterize conspiracy theories; the first one, “[n]othing happens by accident” (3), means that everything happens according to someone’s master plan. Barkun’s second principle states that “[n]othing is as it seems” (4), i.e. that the conspirators actively seek to hide their true identities and wish to appear innocent. The third principle, “[e]verything is connected” (4), posits that all clues and evidence are linked by a pattern which the conspiracy theorist has to discover to unveil the conspiracy.

In the case of the narrative about the Soviet ‘terror’ network, we can see Barkun’s principles at work. Every single case of ‘terrorism’ against a Western nation, be it the 1975 attack on the meeting of OPEC ministers in Vienna or the Rome and Vienna airport attacks ten years later, was explained as Soviet-sponsored ‘terrorism’ against ‘the West’ – allegedly, these were not unrelated incidents developing out of complex historical, cultural, and political conflicts, but rather steps in a single scheme to challenge ‘the West,’ particularly the United States. Likewise, the actual conspirators, the Soviet government and its many secret agents, were accused of using proxies like the PLO or Cuba to train, finance, and house ‘terrorists’ all over the globe. Soviet declarations of innocence and statements decrying ‘terrorism’ were re-interpreted as ‘proof’ of guilt as the Soviet government had to maintain its appearance of innocence and deny all involvement in order to keep the truth from leaking out. Moreover, main proponents of the Soviet ‘terror’ network conspiracy theory linked ‘terrorism’ in the Middle East to ‘terrorism’ in Italy and Germany and then connected it all with, for instance, the assassination attempt on Pope John Paul II in 1981, thus tying diverse events together into one coherent explanation which denied accidents and randomness.¹²

Indeed, as scholars of conspiracy theory have repeatedly stressed, conspiracy narratives offer a simple, coherent explanation for a complex situation (e.g. Knight 32; Melley, *Empire* 8). In the case of the Soviet ‘terror’ network conspiracy theory, this is

¹²Examples include, e.g., Sterling, *Time*; Becker, *Soviet*; and de Borchgrave, “Unspiking.”

certainly the case as the narrative provides a straightforward explanation for a chaotic international political situation where the ideological conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States constituted just one troublesome problem among several others like, for instance, the ongoing conflict between Israel and its neighbors in the Middle East. In fact, the conspiracy theory offered a way to integrate these diverse issues into one coherent explanation, brushing over ideological, cultural, historical, economical, and political differences between the different groups and actors, thus significantly simplifying a complex and complicated political landscape and reducing it to what was perceived as the one common denominator, i.e. antagonism towards the United States.

Fittingly, Mark Fenster has noted in this regard that conspiracy theories “engage in a logic that is at once tautological and Procrustean” because these narratives connect disparate events and figures, derive conclusions on the basis of little to no evidence, and generally offer explanations that are either “too simplistic or too complicated [...] to account for historical or present-day events” (95). One of the earliest texts to present the conspiracy theory of the Soviet ‘terrorism’ network to the wider public, namely Stefan Possony and L. F. Bouchey’s 1978 study *International Terrorism*, clearly engaged in this kind of argument. The book maintained that “present day international terrorism [wa]s principally attributable to communists, either directly or indirectly” (2), a sweeping statement with an overly simplistic claim to ‘fact.’ Possony and Bouchey then proceeded to argue that the Soviet Union sponsored ‘terrorist’ groups, providing training, weapons, and funding either directly in Moscow or in its satellite states because its ultimate goal was to extend its power, gain more satellite states, and destroy its opponents so that it could become the only global superpower (e.g. 22, 39).

As proof for their claims, Possony and Bouchey argued in typical conspiracist fashion that one should find out who benefited – *Cui bono?* – from the ‘terrorism’ in question (Byford 41-43; Uscinski and Parent 43-46). The authors called this a “structural analysis” (22), meaning that if a certain ‘terrorist’ incident could be seen to advance Soviet interests and the event was positively reviewed in Soviet media, then it was likely that the Soviet Union supported this ‘terrorist’ group. They cautioned that this “structural analysis” did not provide ultimate proof and that a thorough investigation had to follow the initial

suspicion, but this was mere lip-service because Possony and Bouchey then proceeded to claim that “structural analysis show[ed] that in a cautious way, the U.S.S.R. ha[d] provided psychopolitical support to international terrorism” – without specifying what that actually meant (23). What is more, they argued that “[t]he Kremlin, and communism, always gain[ed] by encouraging and fomenting disorder and turmoil wherever they c[ould]” (32), thus suggesting that any act of ‘terrorism’ anywhere in the world benefited the USSR and, following their own logic, therefore had to be sponsored by it. The entire argument put forth in *International Terrorism* thus illustrates how proponents of the Soviet ‘terrorism’ network conspiracy theory argued their case by relying on tautological reasoning and gross oversimplification of political reality in order to create a coherent narrative.

Tautological and Procrustean logic was also on display during the Jerusalem Conference on International Terrorism where speakers advanced analyses in a similar vein to argue in favor of the existence of a Soviet ‘terrorism’ network across ideological boundaries. Mordecai Abir, for example, maintained that “in the 1960s and 1970s puritan Muslim ideology was replaced, ironically, by an extreme Marxist ideology” (136), thus providing a rather simple and sweeping description for why ideologically disparate actors like Palestinian factions and the Soviet Union were supposedly collaborating so successfully. Yet, his statement did not actually provide any evidence for this development nor explain why this “extreme Marxist ideology” gained such a strong foothold in the Middle East. Similarly, Brian Crozier asserted during his talk at the conference that “there c[ould] be no doubt about general Soviet aid and sponsorship” to the Arab states in the Middle East and cited as evidence the fact that the PLO was allowed to open offices in Moscow in August 1974 (“Soviet” 71). Here, Crozier suggested a causal relationship between “Soviet aid and sponsorship” in the Middle East and the existence of PLO offices in Moscow, but it really constituted conjecture and not irrefutable evidence.

What is more, regarding the manner in which the alleged evidence was presented to the audience, conspiracy theorists warning of a Soviet ‘terrorism’ network also engaged in other strategies characteristic for the genre. Most notably, authors of conspiracist texts mimicked respectable academic research and writing styles. In *The Terror Network*, for instance, journalist Claire Sterling provided extensive footnotes which were meant to back

up her claims with evidence from either primary sources or other recognized secondary literature. Her book also contained a detailed bibliography as well as an index, both standard features of ‘serious’ academic works. Similarly, works like John Barron’s *KGB Today* (1983) or Roberta Goren’s *The Soviet Union and Terrorism* (1984) extensively relied on “elaborate citations and bibliographies” when presenting their argument in favor of the existence of a Soviet ‘terrorism’ network (Barkun 28). This suggested to readers that the texts at hand constituted serious and respectable intellectual work and had gone through the standard academic processes of peer-review and fact-checking to ascertain their veracity.

As Michael Barkun has stressed, however, these techniques merely give “the impression of validation without actually putting any propositions to the test of evidence” (28-29). In *The Terror Network*, for instance, Sterling claim[ed] that

[p]roof abounded in 1979 that the Soviet Union had trained, educated, and equipped every component of the Palestine Resistance [...]. Russian military hardware and expertise had in fact furnished the officers’ corps, tactics, and superb modern armament for all the Palestinians’ combined forces, the most formidable professional guerrilla army on earth. (277-78)

Yet, she did not actually provide any direct support from other sources for these claims, meaning that they remained unsubstantiated. But since the preceding and the following paragraph in the chapter both featured footnotes (which refer the reader to obscure foreign newspaper articles from the late 1970s), the impression of impeccable academic practice was maintained.

Alternatively, other conspiracy theorists insisted that there existed plenty of evidence for Soviet support of ‘terrorism,’ but offered no further references to prove it. During the Jerusalem Conference on International Terrorism, for instance, Brian Crozier began his talk by stating that “[t]he Soviet Union [wa]s deeply involved in supporting terrorist groups in many countries – through the provision of arms, weapons and training” (“Soviet” 64). He then proceeded to acknowledge that “[t]here [we]re of course gaps in the publicly available evidence of Soviet involvement” before concluding that “the evidence that *ha[d]* come to light [wa]s sufficiently abundant and authentic to put facts beyond all doubt” (64). Robert Moss declared in a similar vein that “[t]here [wa]s a great deal of evidence of the direct role that [wa]s played by the Soviet Union and its satellites in training foreign

terrorists” (“Terrorist” 131). Finally, in the closing session of the conference, Lord Chalfont summarized that “the involvement of the Soviet Union, and the common cause between the Soviets and some of the terrorist organizations, ha[d] been established as a matter of incontrovertible fact” (327). None of the speakers, however, produced any testable evidence which could be examined and analyzed by third parties who could have reproduced and confirmed these conclusions. But since these claims and allegations were voiced during an international conference attended by distinguished politicians, journalists, and researchers, the aura of academic practice was maintained and let these conspiracist messages appear as valid knowledge.

Another common practice in conspiracist texts is what Barkun calls “reciprocal citation,” the habit of conspiracy theorists to exclusively quote and reference only each other (28). Claire Sterling, for example, referred in her article in *The New York Times Magazine* from March 1, 1981 to Alexander Haig’s first press conference, discussed in the introduction of this chapter, which he used as a platform to accuse the Soviet Union of organizing and financing an international network of ‘terrorists’ (“Terrorism” 16). Haig, however, had based his own claims at the time on Claire Sterling’s then-unpublished book *The Terror Network* of which he had received an advance copy (Yallop 687). Likewise, in *The Terror Network*, Sterling quoted Brian Crozier, Stefan Possony and L. F. Bouchev’s *International Terrorism*, and various talks at the Jerusalem Conference on International Terrorism, continuing the cycle of conspiracy theorists citing each other (almost) exclusively. Similarly, John Barron, Roberta Goren, and Jillian Becker (who even edited Goren’s study) variously cited Sterling, the Jerusalem Conference, other pertinent proponents of the conspiracy theory, and each other in their works (e.g. Barron 238; Goren 142n188, 159n242; Becker, *Soviet* 16-18), creating what Barkun calls “a kind of pseudoconfirmation” since it suggested that these claims and sources had to be solid, precisely because they were cited so often (28). This practice effectively obscured the fact that these works merely recycled the same handful of ‘core’ conspiracist texts over and over instead of creating and participating in an open scholarly debate. Moreover, I contend, this practice constructed a kind of discursive echo chamber which amplified the central tenets of the conspiracy theory through endless repetition.

Believers in the conspiracy theory of a Soviet ‘terrorism’ network did not only use traditional ‘academic’ venues to present and discuss their findings. Some of them, most notably Robert Moss and Arnaud de Borchgrave, also employed fiction as a medium to spread information about the dangers of an international ‘terrorism’ network active in the United States and beyond. Their first novel *The Spike* (1980), an instant bestseller, follows the adventures of young journalist Robert Hockney who builds a career around reporting and exposing the CIA, its clandestine operations, and the Vietnam War. After a while, however, Hockney discovers that the KGB has skillfully infiltrated U.S. media, politics, and even the government up to the Vice President, and that he himself was fed misinformation by KGB agents. His attempts to reveal the conspiracy to the American public fail and Hockney is discredited and disgraced. Finally, the tide turns when Hockney helps a high-ranking KGB officer to defect to the United States where he reveals the workings and extent of the secret Soviet network to the public. In the end, Hockney is reinstated and the conspiracy is exposed and defeated, a move typical for what Fenster calls “classical” conspiracy narratives (140).¹³ The Vice President is forced to resign, and an incorruptible senator takes his place, governing with a firm hand and controlling a weak president. Both the FBI and the CIA are rebuilt to former powers and capacities, allowing the United States to – finally – take a strong stance against the Soviet aggressor.

The success of *The Spike* also points to another central element in conspiracy theories at work here as well, namely how “[t]he commonsense distinction between fact and fiction melts away” in conspiracy narratives (Barkun 29). In the case of Moss and de Borchgrave’s novel, many of its prominent readers did not regard the novel as a work of fiction, but rather as a *roman à clef* where (supposedly) true events were represented in fictional form. Most notably, Senator Denton, chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Security and Terrorism, praised the novel during a hearing on “Terrorism: Origins,

¹³Fenster argues that “[t]he classical conspiracy narrative attempts to provide closure to the complex and multifarious conflicts and crises it presents,” but also acknowledges that “any resolution” fictional and non-fictional conspiracy narratives offer “is often incomplete and disquieting” because the conspiracy in question is portrayed as all-powerful, making any resolution appear futile and instable (140). More recently, Thalmann has adapted Fenster’s categorization, suggesting instead that the type of conspiracy narrative Fenster describes constitutes “the latest stage” in the “conspiracy narrative tradition” (21). Thalmann shows that this type of narrative was particularly dominant in the 1950s when it was used to narrativize anti-communist conspiracy theories (22). Even though *The Spike* was published in the 1980s, the novel clearly takes up these concerns over a communist conspiracy against the United States and follows the literary traditions of this type of text.

Direction, and Support” in April 1981, telling Arnaud de Brochgrave: “I do not think your book is fiction. I think it is extremely relevant to our day and I think that some of the characters in your book are painted so accurately that one needs but change the name” (United States, *Terrorism* 78). Astute readers thus easily recognized the real-life personalities behind the fictional characters and could interpret the fictional text as providing more evidence for the Soviet ‘terrorism’ network conspiracy theory.

Ultimately, the conspiracy theory of a Soviet ‘terrorism’ network fulfilled a variety of important functions, both for its believers and the discourse on ‘terrorism’ at large. First and foremost, it offered an attractive and stable identity to the conspiracy theorists who could fashion themselves as intelligent and dedicated patriots (Butter, *Plots* 20). In this regard, Mark Fenster has commented that conspiracy theorists “gain[] a sense of exception and privilege” by engaging in the work of explaining and unveiling the conspiracy in question (115). Benjamin Netanyahu, for instance, asserted in the foreword to the published proceedings of the Jerusalem Conference on International Terrorism that the conference as a whole sent “a message that could not be ignored and whose echoes ke[pt] reverberating around the world. As several influential commentators ha[d] noted, the Conference marked a turning point in the world’s understanding of the problem of terrorism and what ha[d] to be done about it” (Foreword). This boisterous statement elevated the status of both the conference as a whole and the individual participants and organizers as having brought the truth to light by revealing the existence of a Soviet ‘terrorism’ network and as having consequently changed the course of history and politics for the better.

The conspiracy theory about a Soviet ‘terrorism’ network influenced American foreign policy and, at the same time, provided a convenient explanation of American aims and objectives in the arena of world politics. Jochen Hippler and Andrea Lueg, for instance, have pointed out that one of the ‘tasks’ of the conspiracy theory was to destroy any signs of peace and easing of tensions between the NATO and the Warsaw Pact (58). The conspiracy theory explained why these two organizations could not possibly work

together in times when references to ideological differences were no longer sufficient (58).¹⁴ Publicly accusing the Soviet Union of controlling and supporting ‘terrorism’ all over the globe thus became an effective way to escalate the Cold War and to demonize the Soviet Union and construct it as a serious threat to U.S. national security and the global *status quo*.

Moreover, the conspiracy theory turned out to be an effective justification for interventions in countries within the U.S. sphere of influence, such as Grenada, Nicaragua, or Lebanon, and beyond. As Adrian Hänni has argued, the Soviet ‘terror’ network conspiracy theory “constituted a rationale for supporting clandestine wars in countries at the margins of Soviet power” (“Mastermind” 245). It also gave the Reagan administration the discursive tools to explain its departure from the strategy of détente as practiced by the Ford and Carter administrations and functioned as an effective means to maintain unity and cohesion among the European allies. By projecting the Soviet Union (and much of the Middle East) as engaged in ‘terrorism,’ the United States could rationalize its foreign policy and, most importantly, its active escalation of the Cold War.

Maintaining and disseminating the conspiracy theory also had considerable domestic advantages for the Reagan administration. By presenting the Soviet Union as leading force behind a global ‘terrorist’ network with the stated aim to attack the United States, the U.S. government also (re)constructed the United States as global superpower and defender of supposedly ‘Western’ values like democracy and freedom. Establishing the Soviet Union and the ‘terrorist’ groups which allegedly made up the ‘terror’ network as ‘evil’ and totalitarian Other also enabled the United States to represent the Self as binary opposite, a powerful yet benevolent force which constituted the last hope for peace and justice in a world under attack by a global ‘terrorist’ network.

In addition, the conspiracy theory served more practical political purposes. As contemporary Reagan critics Edward Herman and Gerry O’Sullivan already remarked in 1989, the representation of the Soviet Union as leader of a global ‘terrorism’ network functioned in the tradition of previous Red Scares as a tactic to manage public opinion

¹⁴Hippler and Lueg do indeed call the proponents of the conspiracy theory about a Soviet-organized ‘terrorism’ network “pathological conspiracy theorists” (63; my translation, “die pathologischen Verschwörungstheoretiker” in the German original).

(Herman and O'Sullivan 23). Herman understood the conspiracy theory as a way to counter “the weakening of traditional restraints on the masses, and their assertive demands to share political power with the elite” in the wake of Vietnam (Herman 47). The conspiracy theory thus created a cultural and political climate within the United States which enabled the Reagan administration to return to the U.S. secret services rights and powers that had previously been curtailed in the wake of Watergate and other CIA scandals in the 1970s. Executive Order 12333, which Reagan put in place on December 4, 1981, for instance, considerably extended the competencies of the CIA and, among other things, allowed covert operations again. In 1983, the Department of Defense and FEMA received even more rights, most notably the right to impose martial law in cases of national emergency.¹⁵

In the end, the conspiracy theory about a Soviet ‘terrorism’ network influenced the discourse on ‘terrorism’ in lasting ways, particularly with regard to its framing of ‘terrorism’ as an international activity sponsored by an antagonistic government which targeted the United States. Earlier conspiracist texts in the mid- to late 1970s such as, for instance, Possony and Bouchey’s *International Terrorism* (1978) or the Jerusalem Conference on International Terrorism, developed these ideas and introduced them into the discourse. Then, when the Iranian hostage crisis began (see previous chapter), conceptualizations of ‘terrorism’ as international and receiving substantial state support were already present, providing President Carter with an attractive interpretative frame to make sense of what had happened. Carter’s choice to conceptualize the events in Iran as ‘international terrorism’ facilitated by financial and ideological support from the Iranian government, in turn, popularized these notions and endowed them with political power and cultural capital, effectively enhancing their discursive standing – and provided later conspiracist texts like Claire Sterling’s *The Terror Network* with an already established notion of what ‘terrorism’ meant at the time. Sterling and other conspiracy theorists writing during and after the Iranian hostage crisis could exploit these discursivizations of ‘terrorism’ as international and dependent on state support and develop them to portray the Soviet Union as sponsoring an entire international *network* of ‘terrorist’ groups. It effectively made their argument more appealing since its central knowledge claims had already been

¹⁵For more information, see Hänni, *Terrorismus*; Naftali, *Blind*; and Toaldo, *Origins*.

established as common knowledge. This reciprocal exchange thus not only illustrates how successfully conceptualizations of ‘terrorism’ traveled through different discursive fields, but also indicates the central role the conspiracy theory about a Soviet ‘terror’ network played in the development of the discourse on ‘terrorism’ in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

The other important discursive development forged by proponents of the conspiracy theory was the conceptualization of ‘terrorism’ as a form of war. Here, the Jerusalem Conference on International Terrorism proved central as it popularized a framing of ‘terrorism’ as a form of war against ‘civilized,’ meaning ‘Western,’ society. Benzion Netanyahu, one of the founders of the Jonathan Institute and father to Benjamin Netanyahu, asserted that “it [wa]s quite clear that the terrorist ha[d] declared war on the society of free men” (“Chairman’s Opening” 6). U.S. Senator Henry Jackson confidently stated that “international terrorism [wa]s a modern form of warfare against liberal democracies. [...] [T]he ultimate [...] goal of these terrorists [wa]s to destroy the very fabric of democracy” (33). Ray Cline, in turn, warned the audience: “Time is not on our side! Terrorism is part of a larger war! We, the open societies, are the targets!” (90).

By declaring ‘terrorism’ “a suitable substitute to traditional warfare” (Cline 92), participants incorporated both the phenomenon and the discourse about it into the Cold War framework. Lord Chalfont’s statement during the closing session aptly reflected the general message of the conference: “[m]any people [...] expressed the opinion that we are at war,” adding later, “[t]errorism, as we [...] defined it, is evil. It is a menace to the free society” (326, 329). ‘Terrorism’ thus became another strategy of warfare for the Cold War enemy, i.e. the Soviet Union and its satellites and allies all over the world, to use against the United States and the democratic ‘West.’ Moreover, by declaring ‘terrorism’ to be “evil,” the conference worked to moralize the term and escalate the level of threat supposedly emanating from it.

In that sense, the conspiracy theory about a Soviet ‘terrorism’ network, in a move characteristic for conspiracy theories generally, “express[ed] [...] virulent hostility” to a range of cultural and political Others (Fenster 11), militarizing the discourse on ‘terrorism’ and restructuring the meaning of the term itself. However, while the conspiracy theory was undoubtedly influential, it circulated in a fairly tight-knit community of journalists,

politicians, and scholars. The next section evaluates how successfully the conspiracy theory managed to cross over into other discursive sectors as well as critical responses to it.

3.3 “The Terror What?” – Responses to the Soviet ‘Terrorism’ Network Conspiracy Theory

At first glance, then, it appears that the Soviet ‘terror’ network conspiracy theory enjoyed considerable popularity and circulated widely throughout American politics, news, academia, and popular culture. In his study *Terrorismus* (2018), Adrian Hänni has illustrated in great detail how what he calls “*Terror Network Image*” pervaded American politics, news media, and popular culture. Among other insights, he argues that the Jerusalem Conference on International Terrorism in 1979 marked the birth of an organized, international propaganda network which spread and instrumentalized the narrative about a Soviet ‘terrorism’ network for its own purposes (72). Similarly, he views Claire Sterling’s *The Terror Network* as one of the most representative and influential texts for the American discourse on ‘terrorism’ in the early 1980s and highlights how the Senate Subcommittee on Security and Terrorism (SST), as a closed and regulated discursive space, spread and legitimized the conspiracy theory (95, 218-19). Moreover, Hänni maintains that Reagan personally did not have any doubts regarding Soviet involvement in ‘terrorism’ and acknowledged the Soviet role in ‘international terrorism’ in speeches and public statements (231). However, while this constitutes an attractive argument, in this section I take a closer look and, with the help of recent insights into the study of conspiracy theory generally, investigate these assumptions more critically.

I disagree with Hänni’s approach to read the Soviet ‘terrorism’ network conspiracy theory as a firmly established and practically uncontested discourse which dominated the public sphere. In my view, other discursive agents, like the president or contemporary popular fiction, did not actually propagate and advocate the conspiracy theory as a whole and rather carried a few selected components of meaning into public discourses on ‘terrorism’ and ‘terror networks.’ They framed Soviet involvement in a global ‘terrorism’ network in noticeably vaguer, more generalized and ambiguous terms and concentrated on other perpetrators like Cuba or Palestinian groups directly, thus actually downplaying the

extent of Soviet leadership in scenarios about international ‘terrorism’ networks. What is more, there were also a variety of critical voices who responded forcefully to the claims of the conspiracy theory and denounced and dismissed interpretations of ‘terrorism’ as solely organized and financed by the Soviet Union.

President Reagan, for instance, did not simply repeat the central claims of the conspiracy theory. This becomes clear when reading Reagan’s public statements on the matter more closely. While Reagan did circulate notions of an international ‘terrorism’ network operating globally against the United States, he rarely implicated the Soviet Union directly as its (supposed) leader. In the few cases where he referred explicitly to a Soviet role in ‘terrorism,’ the president framed it in noticeably looser terms, thus often actually minimizing the impact of Soviet actions. During a news conference on March 6, 1981, for instance, Reagan discussed the crisis in El Salvador and decried “the infiltration into the Americas by terrorists” as well as “this destabilizing force of terrorism and guerilla warfare and revolution [. . .], *backed* by the Soviet Union *and Cuba and those others that we*’[d] *named* (“President’s News;” emphases added). Here, Reagan acknowledged Soviet involvement in ‘terrorism,’ but presented the USSR as one nation among many others which engaged in the practice instead of depicting it as the leader of the network. What is more, by describing Soviet actions as “back[ing]” ‘terrorism’ generally, the president remained rather vague and abstract and avoided hard accusations regarding concrete actions which would require evidence and, importantly, a response by the American government.

Similarly, in his speech on June 17, 1982 before the United Nations General Assembly, the president argued that “Soviet-*sponsored* guerrillas and terrorists [we]re at work in Central and South America, in Africa, the Middle East, in the Caribbean, and in Europe, violating human rights and unnerving the world with violence” (“Remarks in New;” emphasis added). Once more, Reagan used vague terminology by relying on the notion of ‘sponsorship,’ leaving open what kind of actions and behaviors this actually entailed. Terms like ‘backing’ or ‘sponsoring’ were considerably less concrete than accusations of financing, organizing, and equipping ‘terrorist’ groups which core texts of the conspiracy theory circulated.

Indeed, even during Reagan's "Address to the Nation on Events in Lebanon and Grenada" on October 27, 1983, the president maintained his ambiguous stance toward supposed Soviet sponsorship of 'terrorism.' In the address, the president responded to the suicide attack on the Marine barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, as well as the U.S. invasion of Grenada two days earlier after a coup had ousted and executed the previous left-wing government. Commenting on the attacks in Beirut, Reagan accused Syria of trying to assimilate Lebanon into its own territory and claimed that "Syria ha[d] become a home for 7,000 Soviet *advisers* and *technicians* who man[ne]d a massive amount of Soviet weaponry" ("Address to the Nation;" emphases added). Here, Soviet support was described as directed towards a nation, not 'terrorism' or a 'terror network' of some kind. Moreover, this support involved "Soviet advisers and technicians," again fairly vague terminology which left open the exact extent of the Soviet aid. Rather, it was Syria, because it possessed "a massive amount of Soviet weaponry," which had become the main threat and danger to U.S. interests in the region.

Most importantly, Reagan did not implicate the Soviet Union in the bombing of the Marine barracks. Rather, he accused "a young man on a suicide mission" and argued that "[t]he clear intent of the terrorists was to eliminate our support of the Lebanese Government and to destroy the ability of the Lebanese people to determine their own destiny." This indicates that Reagan did not interpret the attack through the lens of the Soviet 'terrorism' network conspiracy theory. Similarly, when addressing the conflict in Grenada, namely the ousting of Prime Minister Bishop, "a protégé of Fidel Castro," Reagan described the usurpers as "more radical and more devoted to Castro's Cuba than he [PM Bishop] had been." Here, the focus is on Grenada's political and ideological relations to Cuba – not the Soviet Union, suggesting once more that the Soviet 'terrorism' network conspiracy theory did not play a central role in Reagan's understanding and framing of global conflicts.

Eventually, the president linked the conflicts in Lebanon and Grenada – but not, as Adrian Hänni has suggested, by describing it in terms of the "*Terror Network Image*" (*Terrorismus* 234-35). Reagan told his audience:

The events in Lebanon and Grenada, though oceans apart, are closely related. Not only has Moscow *assisted* and *encouraged* the violence in both countries, but it provides *direct support through a network of surrogates and terrorists*. It is no coincidence that when the thugs tried to wrest control over Grenada, there were *30 Soviet advisers* and *hundreds of Cuban military and paramilitary forces* on the island.” (emphases added)

First of all, the president described Soviet actions as ‘assistance,’ ‘encouragement,’ and ‘advice’ – all broad terms which left open what kind of specific behavior they entailed. This also meant that Reagan’s next accusation that the Soviet Union “provide[d] direct support through a network of surrogates and terrorists” was significantly softened since the type of support he depicted here was clearly of a non-military and rather intellectual kind. What is more, this phrase contains an open contradiction: the Soviet Union supposedly “provide[d] direct support,” yet this support came “through a network of surrogates and terrorists,” meaning that it was not “direct” after all. This suggested that the Soviet Union was not the only responsible power for the spreading of ‘terrorism.’ Rather, the main danger emanated from “the thugs [who] tried to wrest control over Grenada.”

Lastly, in this paragraph, Reagan acknowledged the presence of both “30 Soviet advisers” and “hundreds of Cuban military and paramilitary forces” on Grenada. The vast difference in numbers insinuated that the real threat emanated from Cuban forces who were not only present in significantly higher numbers, but also boasted military capacities while the “Soviet advisers,” few in numbers, did not fulfill any such function. Ultimately, Reagan’s depiction of the conflicts in Lebanon and Grenada did not follow the argumentation of the Soviet ‘terrorism’ network conspiracy theory exactly. He rather borrowed some its claims whenever politically useful and ‘softened’ them up before presenting them to the public. Hence, I disagree with Adrian Hänni’s claim that Reagan also spread the conspiracy theory of a Soviet ‘terrorism’ network (*Terrorismus* 231). Instead, I agree with Katharina Thalmann who has shown that Reagan “actually adhered to the markers of legitimate knowledge set forth by the discourse on conspiracy theory as he [...] avoided the semantic field of conspiracy” (207). Reagan remained vague and ambiguous about the extent of supposed Soviet sponsorship of ‘terrorism’ and also avoided openly conspiracist language, a rhetorical strategy which provided him with plausible deniability without alienating proponents of the conspiracy theory, after all often quite influential and powerful voices, who could still interpret his statements as confirming their beliefs. In turn, those among

his constituents who rejected the conspiracy theory as illegitimate knowledge could equally confidently interpret the president's utterances as non-conspiracist statements.

Another discursive space in which only selected elements of the conspiracy theory about a Soviet 'terrorism' network circulated was the pulp fiction series centering on the vigilante character Mack Bolan, also nicknamed "The Executioner." Created by Don Pendleton in 1969, the fictional character Mack Bolan is a Vietnam vet who returns home after his father has killed his sister and mother before turning the gun on himself in utter desperation over his inability to free his family from the pressures and threats of Mafia loan sharks.¹⁶ Bolan vows revenge and begins a killing spree which lasts the first 38 installments of the series, wiping out the entire Mafia operating all over the United States in a violent, ruthless vigilante war.

In episode 39, entitled *The New War* and published in 1981, however, the series undergoes a major narrative change, away from the notion that the mafia constitutes the biggest threat to U.S. interests. As the title of the novel indicates, a new enemy becomes of central concern to the protagonist and, by extension, his readers: 'terrorism.' Mack Bolan is approached by Hal Bologna, a high-ranking official in the U.S. Department of Justice, who offers him amnesty for his bloody past and the opportunity to start anew. Under the fake identity of John Phoenix (note the symbolic name), Bolan now heads a team of government-sanctioned vigilante fighters with a secret base called "Stony Man Farm" from where equally secret missions against 'terrorists' all over the world are launched. This 1981 change in the plot line of the hugely successful "Executioner" series is significant because it indicates that, in the wake of the Iranian hostage crisis, the issue of 'terrorism' had become a dominant worry for a wider audience who was also familiar enough with the phenomenon to accept it as a seemingly 'realistic' and 'authentic' plot device.

With regard to notions about Soviet involvement in 'terrorism' all over the globe, the series contained various conspiracist plot elements, but shied away from openly advancing a 'complete' version of the Soviet 'terror' network conspiracy theory. To begin with, the series engaged with the conspiracy theory about a Soviet 'terrorism' network only fairly

¹⁶For an analysis of the 'early' "Executioner" series, i.e. when Bolan still fights the mafia, see W. Murray and Server. For a history of the paperback publishing explosion in the 1950s and 1960s, see Davis. For the general representation of the Middle East in American crime fiction, see R. Simon, *Middle* as well as *Spies*.

late in 1984 when the story arc culminated in Bolan finding and uncovering a Soviet mole in the U.S. government. The story developed continuously over several installments, which is rather untypical for this type of formula writing and pulp fiction publishing in general, suggesting that publishers may have seen this as a plot device which would successfully lure readers in and keep them ‘hooked’ because of its topicality. In *Day of Mourning* (1984), Stony Man Farm, Bolan’s secret headquarters, is attacked and April Rose, Mack Bolan’s girlfriend and love of his life, is killed as she throws herself in front of a bullet meant for Bolan. In the next installment, *Dead Man Running* (1984), Bolan, driven by his desire for revenge for April’s death, reveals that a high-ranking official working for a rival agency and with direct access to the president, is really a KGB mole. He then executes the traitor with a quick chop to the neck and walks out of the White House, having declared war on the KGB.

In subsequent installments of the series, Bolan proceeds to fight the KGB and its ‘terrorist’ network all over the globe, but the individual books overwhelmingly focus on local enemies, especially from the Middle East, and do not really delve into the intricacies of the supposed network. In *Beirut Payback* (1984), for instance, Bolan is sent to Lebanon where the KGB has caused a bloody civil war with the help of the governments in Syria and Iran. However, the conflict between Bolan and the KGB/the Soviet Union is, as the narrator explains, first and foremost personal: Bolan “had come to Beirut to track down the elusive Soviet terror boss, destroy whatever the cannibal had going for him and terminate the KGB major general once and for all” (13). The characterization of Bolan’s nemesis as “Soviet terror boss” only implies that the Soviet Union in the “Executioner” universe has institutionalized ‘terrorism’ by tasking a high-ranking officer with spreading it. The novel does not explain further how the Soviet Union supposedly organized the civil war in Lebanon and rather relies on the familiar Cold War opposition between ‘Soviet communism’ and ‘American democracy’ to set up the conflict between the two characters. In many ways, then, *Beirut Payback* evokes the vague links between the Soviet Union and ‘terrorism’ constructed by the political discourse under Reagan and, by relying on the same kind of vague and imprecise language, leaves it open to its readers whether they want to read the plot as a Soviet ‘terrorism’ conspiracy or not.

Indeed, the main cast of enemies in these various installments consists predominantly of ‘Arab’ or ‘Muslim terrorists,’ thus further underscoring the series’ ambiguous attitude towards the conspiracy theory about a Soviet ‘terrorism’ network. In *Beirut Payback* (1984), the “diehard PLO terrorists” are controlled by Syria, here a nation with exceptional political power. As the narrator states, “[c]ontrol over the terrorist network gave Syria sinister leverage over moderate pro-Western oil producers who were exceedingly vulnerable to terrorism” (47). Indeed, by describing Syria as heading a “terrorist network,” the novel leaves it open to readers whether they want to assume that Syria, in turn, is controlled by the Soviet Union and Bolan’s arch nemesis – or whether they want to ignore the conspiracy theory and read *Beirut Payback* as a story about an American hero fighting ‘Arab terrorists’ in the Middle East.¹⁷ The series continuously hints at a possible connection between the Soviet Union and ‘international terrorism’ against the United States, yet remains ambiguous enough to facilitate conspiracist and non-conspiracist readings *at the same time*, allowing readers from both groups to find their beliefs confirmed in the novels.

Ultimately, then, Reagan appeared ambivalent about the Soviet ‘terror’ network conspiracy theory and popular pulp fiction series like “The Executioner” mirrored his vague and ambiguous language, meaning, however, that both discursive actors refrained from openly criticizing the conspiracy theory. Other discursive voices were considerably more critical. Interestingly, it was *The New York Times* which, from the very beginning, provided a platform for criticism and counter-views regarding the Soviet ‘terror’ network conspiracy theory. On February 9, 1981, i.e. twelve days after Reagan’s first Secretary of State Alexander Haig accused the Soviet Union of sponsoring international ‘terrorism’ during his first press conference, *The New York Times* ran an article reporting that “officials in the Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency and the State Department, asked to document those charges, said they were unable to do so” (Halloran A3). In fact, the article repeated the view of “[s]pecialists in terrorism outside the Government” who argued that the Soviet Union supported what they deemed to be national liberation movements but not “genuine terrorism” (A3), thus explaining Soviet

¹⁷Other novels in the series which depict Bolan as fighting ‘Arab terrorists’ in the Middle East include *Appointment in Kabul*, *Cold Judgment*, *The Libya Connection*, *Sudan Slaughter*, *Teheran Wipeout*, and *Trojan Horse*. To varying degrees, these novels also allude to Soviet involvement in these conflicts, but the main narrative focus lies on Bolan’s fight against ‘terrorism’ perpetrated by local actors.

support for Vietnam, North Korea, and Cuba explicitly as not forming part of a larger Soviet 'terrorism' policy. What is more, the article reported the official, indignant Soviet response to Haig's accusations by quoting from the Soviet statement which said that "Mr. Haig's reasoning would have made terrorists out of George Washington and other early American leaders" (A3). This article thus attempted to balance out the drastic claims made by members of the incoming Reagan administration and presented evidence which challenged official government statements.

Six weeks later, on March 29, 1981, *The New York Times* published another article, entitled "U.S. Study Discounts Soviet Terror Role," which noted that "[a] draft report produced by the Central Intelligence Agency ha[d] concluded that there [wa]s insufficient evidence to substantiate Administration charges that the Soviet Union [wa]s directly helping to foment international terrorism" (Miller 4). Moreover, the article repeatedly commented on the "concern that the agency was once again being asked to tailor its views to fit public pronouncements of senior Administration officials" ("U.S." 4). Similarly, an article published a few weeks afterwards took up these charges against CIA Director Casey, writing that "[a]nalysts complained that Mr. Casey had considered the draft faulty because it did not support Mr. Haig's assertions" (Taubman 36). *The New York Times* put forth serious charges which further undermined the sweeping claims made by Haig as well as other members of the Reagan administration with regard to supposed Soviet sponsorship of 'terrorism.'

The reporting of *The New York Times* notably provided a more nuanced picture and journalists paid attention to small, but important details. According to journalist Philip Taubman, "the Soviet Union ha[d] provided aid to organizations and nations [...] that support[ed] terrorism and engage[d] in it themselves" (36). But at the same time he also cautioned that "the Soviet Union ha[d] not played a direct role in training or equipping traditional terrorist groups [...] and ha[d] no master plan to create terrorism around the world" (36). Taubman even suggested that Haig might have been unduly influenced by Claire Sterling's book *The Terror Network* and quoted acknowledged 'terrorism' experts Walter Laqueur and Brian Jenkins who were both critical of Haig and questioned the Secretary of State's grasp of the problem of 'terrorism' in general (36).

Similarly, on October 18, 1981, Leslie Gelb published a special to *The New York Times* tellingly entitled “Role of Moscow in Terror Doubted.” The article quoted members of the intelligence community as insisting that “[t]here [wa]s no substantial new evidence” regarding a possible Soviet ‘terrorism’ network (9). Gelb also related to readers that “officials [...] told Haig on several occasions that there was no hard evidence to back up his assertions, and that he was basically repeating the stories of the Czechoslovak [sic] defector” (9). This depicts Haig as stubbornly clinging to a discredited (conspiracy) theory and risking a continued deterioration of relations with the American intelligence community. In this regard, Gelb was careful to note that “[i]ntelligence officials react[ed] with sensitivity to the subject of Soviet complicity in terrorist activities. Some fe[lt] that recent statements, including some by Administration officials, [we]re really accusing the intelligence agencies of covering up links between Moscow and terrorists” (9). Articles of this kind appeared repeatedly and consistently in *The New York Times* and opened up a discursive space in which counterviews and criticism of the conspiracy theory could be – and were – openly voiced.

The New York Times even became a platform for non-journalist ‘experts’ to criticize and deconstruct the conspiracy theory. For instance, Harry Rositzke, a retired CIA officer who specialized in Soviet operations, penned an opinion piece on June 20, 1981, ridiculing the notion of a Soviet ‘terrorism’ network. Rositzke opened his contribution by noting that “Washington ha[d] also resurrected the old idea that the Soviet Union [wa]s managing a worldwide conspiracy” (A17). He even outright called the narrative a “conspiracy theory,” arguing that it was unrealistic to assume that the KGB could “totally control and manipulate a dozen regimes and security services” (A17). Ultimately, “[r]ather than getting lost in the fog of ‘international terrorism,’” Rositzke concluded, “the Reagan Administration would do well to focus its energies on devising political and economic strategies that w[ould] reduce the prospects for success of these liberation efforts in South-West Africa, and South Africa, in the Middle East, and in Central and, inevitably, South America” (A17). As these examples demonstrate, then, a range of critical voices responded to the claims of the Soviet ‘terrorism’ network conspiracy theory and dismissed it as ideologically driven and (willfully) ignorant of historical and political realities.

Not only was the conspiracy theory itself heavily criticized, but some of its most visible and prolific proponents were also vocally denounced and dismissed. Robert Dreyfuss, for instance, published a satirical article entitled “A Close Encounter with Robert Moss” in *The Executive Intelligence Review* in 1980 based on his meeting of Moss during a conference of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy. In the piece, Dreyfuss called Moss “an overgrown fattish Eton schoolboy” and ridiculed Moss’s novel *The Spike* as a “Grade B novelette” (43). According to Dreyfuss’ report, Moss gave a talk during the conference in which he attempted to convince his listeners of the veracity of the Soviet ‘terrorism’ network conspiracy theory (43-45). Dreyfuss then recounted how he exposed Moss’s lies during the questions round after the talk, writing how he “point by point, [. . .] noted several cases of Mr. Moss’s lying,” before adding that “the next three questioners [. . .] each got up to say, with differing evidence, that Moss was insane” (45). Discounting Dreyfuss’s hyperbole and sarcastic, even insulting commentary, the article nevertheless demonstrates that the conspiracy theory, and its proponent Robert Moss, were recognized as such by other journalists and scholars, indicating that the conspiracy theory, as well as its proponents, were extremely contested from the outset.

Claire Sterling and her book also received significant push-back. Conor Cruise O’Brien, for instance, reviewed *The Terror Network* in an article entitled “The Roots of Terrorism” in July 1981. He opened his article by cautioning that ‘evidence’ about ‘terrorism’ was not only scarce, but actually suspect since the ‘terrorists’ themselves had “strong incentive[s]” to not keep records while informers and defectors were likely to “to report, or ‘recall,’ what their employers or debriefers want[ed] to hear” (29). Hence, O’Brien warned, there existed a strong “need for vigilance against the danger of manufactured or doctored evidence, ammunition in the cold war, for one side or another or for some faction within the intelligence community” (29). In his view, “Claire Sterling show[ed] almost no awareness of the existence of this problem, almost no skepticism about her Western sources” and O’Brien extensively criticized her for not questioning their veracity (29). He equally denounced her habit to rely on the other Cold Warriors Robert Moss and Brian Crozier, concluding that “[s]he may well indeed be citing the same sources, directly or indirectly, under other names, producing a cumulative effect on the unsuspecting reader through a

kind of echo chamber” (30). O’Brien then used the remainder of his article to discredit Sterling’s argument by deconstructing her case study of the Provisional IRA, ultimately concluding that “*The Terror Network* is worthless,” but likely successful because it “t[old] people exactly what they want[ed] to believe” (32).

Another, similar example constitutes Konrad Ege’s review of Sterling’s book, published in the summer of 1982, and entitled “The Terror What?” Ege equally dismissed Sterling’s work as unsubstantiated claims, writing that “Claire Sterling d[id] not prove or document that there [wa]s a Soviet-orchestrated campaign of supporting terrorist movements either directly or through its ‘surrogates’” (123). In his view, “*The Terror Network* [wa]s very poorly sourced. Many crucial quotes [we]re not referenced at all. Sterling relie[d] heavily on extreme rightwing publications and authors” (125). Ege also accused Sterling of basic mistakes such as spelling errors and lacks in logic, noting that “she contradict[ed] herself a few times” and that she “tend[ed] to ignore and downplay ideological differences between her ‘terrorist’ movements and orthodox Communist parties” (126). Like O’Brien before him, however, Ege was also forced to acknowledge that “her belief in Soviet responsibility for worldwide terrorism seem[ed] to be very close to the actual thinking of leading members of the Reagan Administration and the Republican Right” and poignantly called the book “a tool for the extreme right and fuel for the Cold War” (127). As these examples show, both the Soviet ‘terrorism’ network conspiracy theory and its main proponents were heavily criticized and contradicted both in the news media and academic circles, a conclusion which indicates that the conspiracy theory did not circulate unimpeded and unhindered.¹⁸ Rather, the forceful response from these different discursive spaces and agents suggests that, overall, the conspiracy theory did not circulate in an unimpeded manner. It was significantly adapted, often only alluded to in passing, or even aggressively rejected by critical voices as a form of corrupt and illegitimate knowledge.

These findings are, in fact, not surprising given the status of conspiracy theories in U.S. culture and politics at the time. As recent studies have shown, conspiracy theories underwent a change in status between the 1950s and 1970s. Both Michael Butter and Katharina Thalmann have argued that conspiracy theories constitute a

¹⁸Other contemporary texts criticizing the Soviet ‘terrorism’ network conspiracy theory and its proponents include Chomsky, *Culture*; Herman; Herman and O’Sullivan; Schmid et al.; and Yallop.

form of illegitimate knowledge from the 1960s onwards (Butter, *Plots* 9; Thalmann 16). According to Butter, discourses delegitimizing conspiracy theories, conspiracy theorizing, and conspiracy theorists emerged from the 1950s onwards, making conspiracy theories “a form of counterknowledge” with decreasing degrees of influentiality (*Plots* 9). This also meant that, unlike in the centuries before, conspiracy theories, while still attractive, were no longer that dominant in American politics (*Plots* 285). Similarly, Katharina Thalmann, who has analyzed the status change of conspiracy theories between the 1960s and the 1980s in more detail, asserts that in the 1970s, “[i]n mainstream public discourse, [...] conspiracy theory continued to produce and represent illegitimate knowledge and continued to be problematized” (206).

In my view, this explains the complex state of affairs regarding the Soviet ‘terrorism’ network conspiracy theory in the late 1970s and early 1980s: A tight-knit community of academics, journalists, and politicians used newly available platforms like conferences and publishing opportunities to construct, refine, and disseminate their views about a global conspiracy by the Soviet Union to use ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorist groups’ to defeat the United States. As the cases of Claire Sterling, Robert Moss, and Arnaud de Borchgrave demonstrate in particular, activity in this community of conspiracy theorists also became a way to making a living by disseminating it. At the same time, however, as the examples I discussed in this section showed, proponents of the conspiracy theory had to negotiate public skepticism, ridicule, and even outright rejection because conspiracy theories in general had become illegitimate, stigmatized knowledge. In an attempt to circumvent the negative label of ‘conspiracy theory,’ these proponents avoided openly conspiracist language when describing and arguing their claims. For instance, presenters at the Jerusalem Conference on International Terrorism and Sterling herself refrained from speaking about ‘plots,’ ‘conspiracies,’ or ‘schemes,’ terminology which had become markers of a conspiracist world-view and as such automatically suspect. By avoiding language from the semantic field of conspiracy (theory), its proponents successfully masked their ideas as ‘non-conspiracist’ knowledge. This made it easier for their allegations to be taken up by voices which did not form part of their community like President Reagan or popular fiction like “The Executioner” series who, in turn, spread *some* of the central claims of the

conspiracy theory. It also meant that whenever these claims were rejected, critics could not simply denounce them as ‘crazy’ conspiracy theory, but actually had to engage with these texts and prepare an evidence-based rebuttal, thus elevating the status of these ideas in the process. In the next section, I examine how these conspiracist ideas about international ‘terrorism’ networks developed from the mid-1980s onward as discursive actors began to explain ‘terrorism’ as something other than organized and controlled by the Soviet Union.

3.4 Starting a “War against Terrorism” – The ‘Terrorism’ Discourse in U.S. Politics and Academia in the Mid- to Late 1980s

As we have seen, the conspiracy theory about a Soviet ‘terrorism’ network proved popular in some discursive circles in the late 1970s and early 1980s while also being heavily criticized and stigmatized as illegitimate knowledge in others. Yet, the ideas put forth by conspiracy theorists still influenced the discourse on ‘terrorism’ in significant ways. This section therefore examines how the ‘terrorism’ discourse developed from the mid-1980s onward as it discursivized ‘terrorism’ in a manner which clearly reflected the traumatic experience of the Iranian hostage crisis as well as more recent knowledge claims circulated by the conspiracy theory. Generally speaking, then, this meant that, following the crisis in Iran, ‘terrorism’ was framed as international menace which was significantly aided and abetted by nations hostile to the U.S. The conspiracy theory provided further conceptual impulses so that ‘terrorism’ was additionally discursivized as a form of war, as ‘evil,’ and as organized in networks. However, in response to the changing political landscape in the mid- to late 1980s, the discursive focus shifted from the Soviet Union as main perpetrator to ‘Arab’ and ‘Islamic terrorists’ in and from the Middle East. Another important aspect was that while the emerging narrative about ‘terrorism’ did not constitute a conspiracy theory in itself – among other things, these new perpetrators were not portrayed as orchestrating ‘terrorism’ around the globe in a bid for world domination – it nevertheless clearly borrowed ideas from the genre. It also continued to rely on ambiguous language and phrasing which allowed for conspiracist and non-conspiracist readings simultaneously, thus revealing the

continued popularity of conspiracy theory as a way of making meaning while also reflecting its changed status as illegitimate knowledge.

Hence, as the discussion above showed, Ronald Reagan did not openly support the narrative about Soviet ‘terrorism’ networks propagated by conspiracy theorists, but, interestingly, adopted some of its knowledge claims about ‘terrorism’ and included them in his own statements on the issue while eschewing overtly conspiracist language. In his official statements, speeches, and messages, the president conceptualized ‘terrorism’ as a form of war which required a response in kind, accused ‘terrorists’ of operating in larger networks, often supposedly sponsored by other states and nations, and moralized it as “evil scourge” which needed to be eradicated. Indeed, Reagan popularized the phrase “the scourge of (international) terrorism,” repeating it in dozens of political speeches and statements over the years and turning it into a phrase which encapsulated his understanding of the issue.

Reagan framed ‘terrorism’ in this manner from the beginning of his presidency. For instance, he already spoke about “the scourge of international terrorism” during Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s visit to the United States in February 1981, a mere month into office (“Remarks for Margaret Thatcher”). Likewise, during a visit to Great Britain in June 1982, Reagan used his address to the British Parliament to comment on the conflict in Lebanon, telling his listeners:

In the Middle East now the guns sound once more, this time in Lebanon, a country that for too long has had to endure the tragedy of civil war, terrorism, and foreign intervention and occupation. The fighting in Lebanon on the part of all parties must stop, and Israel should bring its forces home. But this is not enough. We must all work to stamp out the scourge of terrorism that in the Middle East makes war an ever-present threat. (“Address to Members”)

Not only did the president here link ‘terrorism’ to ‘(civil) war’ by suggesting that there existed a pattern of causality between the two, he also moralized ‘terrorism’ as a “tragedy” and “scourge.” Reagan also spoke about “the fundamentally new phenomenon of state-supported terrorism” during a session with reporters in December 1983 and talked about his intentions “to hold increasingly accountable those countries which sponsor[ed] terrorism and terrorist activity around the world” (“Remarks and a Question-and-Answer”). Taken together, these presidential utterances constructed ‘terrorism’ as an abhorrent evil,

committed by ‘terrorists’ who received substantial support from other nations, and framed the concept as an act of war.

This notion gained traction in the years to come and became more prominent in the governmental discourse on ‘terrorism.’ Famously, Reagan used his April 26, 1984 “Message to the Congress Transmitting Proposed Legislation to Combat International Terrorism” to declare a “war against terrorism.”¹⁹ Describing “international terrorism” as a “pressing and urgent problem,” the president announced plans to introduce new legislation designed to combat it. He also used his message to warn his constituents:

In recent years, a very worrisome and alarming *new kind of terrorism* has developed: the direct use of instruments of terror by foreign states. This ‘*state terrorism*,’ starkly manifest in the recent dreadful spectacles of violence in Beirut, Rangoon, and Kuwait, accounts for the great majority of terrorist murders and assassinations. Also disturbing is *state-provided training, financing, and logistical support to terrorists and terrorist groups*. These activities are an extremely serious and growing source of danger to us, our friends and our allies, and are a severe challenge to America’s foreign policy. (emphases added)

In this paragraph, Reagan constructed ‘terrorism’ as a practice used by hostile nations against ‘the West’ who provided a wide range of material, ideological, and financial support to ‘terrorist’ groups in an effort to threaten America’s allies and destabilize international relations. He thus advanced an understanding of ‘terrorism’ which portrayed it as global in scope, a dangerous tool in international relations wielded by antagonistic governments, and therefore particularly threatening. This framing clearly exploited central claims about ‘terrorism’ which were developed in previous years, particularly during the Iranian hostage crisis (see previous chapter), thus establishing discursive continuity which, in turn, made the president’s statement appear logical and ‘true.’ What is more, in his message, the president also relied again on ambiguous language, meaning that it could easily be construed as a warning about a conspiracy by nations in the Middle East which used ‘terrorism’ to “challenge [...] America’s foreign policy.”

That the president considered the U.S. to be vulnerable to “this scourge” became clear when he wrote, “The legislation I am sending to the Congress is an important step in our war against terrorism. It will send a strong and vigorous message to friend and foe alike that the United States will not tolerate terrorist activity against its citizens or

¹⁹For analyses of Reagan’s rhetorical style, particularly his framing of ‘terrorism’ as a form of war, see Gold-Biss; Hänni, *Terrorismus*; R. Jackson, *Writing* and “Genealogy;” Winkler, *In the Name* and “Parallels;” and Zulaika and Douglass.

within its borders” (“Message”). By declaring a “war against terrorism,” the president significantly escalated the rhetoric about the topic and sidelined other framings of the issue. He further militarized the conceptualization of the term while positioning the United States as (possible) victim of a heightened ‘terrorist’ threat emanating from state-sponsored ‘terrorist’ groups.

Reagan then expanded on these themes in another, much noted speech on July 8, 1985 at the annual convention of the American Bar Association. In that speech, Reagan pointed to “a steady and escalating pattern of terrorist acts against the United States and our allies and Third World nations friendly towards our interests” (“Remarks at the Annual”). According to the president, Iran, Libya, Cuba, North Korea, and “the Communist regime in Nicaragua” had formed a “terrorist network” which targeted the United States. Reagan claimed that “these terrorist states [we]re now engaged in acts of war against the Government and people of the United States,” indicating that the conceptualization of ‘terrorism’ as a form of war continued to enjoy dominant discursive standing, just like the notion that states could commit ‘terrorism’ and organize their activities in loose networks. The president’s speech shows once more how both the Iranian hostage crisis as well as the conspiracy theory about ‘terrorism’ networks continued to influence conceptualizations of the issue in the mid- to late 1980s. Conspiracy theorists found their ideas confirmed in Reagan’s talk about a ‘terrorist network’ while those rejecting them worried about an emerging “pattern of terrorist acts against the United States” instead.

In this speech, Reagan developed the notion of a “war against terrorism” further and exacerbated the rhetoric about ‘terrorism’ once more, telling his audience:

[T]here we have it – Iran, Libya, North Korea, Cuba, Nicaragua – continents away, tens of thousands of miles apart, but *the same goals and objectives*. I submit to you that the growth in terrorism in recent years results from *the increasing involvement of these states in terrorism in every region of the world*. This is terrorism that is part of a pattern, the work of *a confederation of terrorist states*. Most of the terrorists who are kidnaping [sic] and murdering American citizens and attacking American installations are being trained, financed, and directly or indirectly *controlled by a core group of radical and totalitarian governments* – a new, *international version of Murder, Incorporated*. And all of these states are united by one simple criminal phenomenon – their *fanatical hatred* of the United States, our people, our way of life, our international stature. (emphases added)

Reagan not only named those he considered to be members of the ‘terrorism’ network, he also openly blamed them for “the growth in terrorism in recent years.” He expanded his conceptualization of ‘terrorism’ in that he described the (alleged) workings of the network in more detail as training, financing, and controlling ‘terrorist’ groups around the globe and depicted the network as organized and run like a business with an aim for profit, as the reference to “Murder, Incorporated” makes clear. According to Reagan, this new kind of efficient, well-organized and funded ‘terrorism’ network specifically targeted Americans out of its “fanatical hatred of the United States,” a rhetorical move which discredited any claims to political objectives these states or the ‘terrorist’ groups might have had. It also moralized the issue of ‘terrorism’ into a conflict between the ‘good,’ benign United States and the ‘evil terrorists’ and “these outlaw governments who [we]re sponsoring international terrorism against our nation.” Ultimately, the president’s conceptualization of ‘terrorism’ successfully exploited characterizations of it as international and successful because of extensive state sponsorship which were developed first during the Iranian hostage crisis. Moreover, he continued to tap into conspiracist ideas about secret ‘terrorism’ networks aiming to attack and destroy the United States while also militarizing and moralizing the issue.

The president was not the only discursive agent to conceptualize ‘terrorism’ in this manner. The legislative branch of the U.S. government also intervened in the discourse on ‘terrorism’ and put forth a similar framing of the concept. Indeed, the official government reports on ‘terrorism’ in the 1980s predominantly conceptualized ‘terrorism’ as a practice engaged in by states hostile to the United States, describing these states not only as supporting ‘terrorist’ groups in various ways, but also as organized in international networks. Importantly, at the beginning of the decade, the Reagan administration had tasked the State Department with revising the official statistics on ‘terrorism,’ in order to, as Charles Mohr reported for *The New York Times* at the time, “include ‘threats’ as well as actual acts of politically motivated violence,” a move which “would approximately double the number of terrorist ‘incidents’ counted by the United States in the last 12 years” (A17). This political move not only shows how ‘terrorism’ was actively constructed as political

problem, it also demonstrates how different discursive agents cooperated in order to advance their central knowledge claims.²⁰

The Middle East remained a central concern in the reports which consistently identified a host of different nations in the area as state sponsors, particularly Libya, South Yemen, Syria, Iraq, and Iran and generally warned of the “volatile situation” there (*Patterns 1982* 1). Reports confidently asserted that “the Middle East dominated the global terrorism picture in 1983” (*Patterns 1983* 1). Middle Eastern ‘terrorism’ was depicted as requiring constant attention and vigilance because “[t]he threat from Middle Eastern perpetrators of terrorism extend[ed] far beyond the region itself. During 1983, Iran, Syria, and several Middle Eastern terrorist groups carried their struggle into Western Europe and South Asia” (*Patterns 1983* 13). *Patterns 1984*, in turn, warned of “the growing dominance of the Middle East as the crucible of terrorism” and described the region as “a venue of international terrorism” (1, 2). These reports thus continued to construct the Middle East as center of ‘terrorism’ and expanded the threat by framing it as state-directed and local ‘terrorist’ groups as closely linked to their host governments.

The reports’ focus on the Middle East as hotbed of ‘terrorism’ also paved the way for another important discursive change: along with markers of ethnicity, religion started to become a central element in conceptualizations of ‘terrorism,’ particularly in and from the Middle East. *Patterns 1984*, for instance, singled out Iran, Syria, and Libya as principal sponsors of anti-American ‘terrorism’ and marked their brand of ‘terrorism’ as distinctly religious and ethnic. The report claimed:

These three *Muslim radical states* have actively supported a variety of ethnic and religious terrorist and guerrilla groups. Indeed, Iran, Syria, and Libya have set a new – and alarming – style in *state-supported terrorism*, one unique among the nations facilitating the spread of anti-US attacks. The unprecedented degree of backing and, in some cases, *active participation by these states in terrorist operations*, helped make terrorism in 1984 very much a problem of the Middle East. (4; emphases added)

‘Terrorism’ in and from the Middle East was primarily driven by religious and ethnic considerations, making this type of ‘terrorism’ “new” and “unique” and by implication more dangerous than previous encounters with ‘terrorism.’ For instance, as *Patterns*

²⁰See also Adrian Hänni’s discussion in his book *Terrorismus* of how, using *Patterns of International Terrorism: 1980* as an example, the reports manipulated the statistics and numbers. For a more general discussion of how these reports manipulate statistics of ‘terrorist’ incidents, see Guelke; Livingston; and Zulaika, *Terrorism*.

1984 maintained, Iran relied on ‘terrorism’ “to help create like-minded fundamentalist Islamic republics in Middle East and Persian Gulf states with large Shia populations” (4). Middle Eastern ‘terrorism,’ in the rhetoric of these government reports, was now invariably represented as solely religiously and/or ethnically motivated and threatening American interests in the Middle East and beyond. At the same time, this particular conceptualization of ‘terrorism’ also confirmed framings of the term circulated first during the Iranian hostage crisis that states could sponsor ‘international terrorism’ against the U.S. Moreover, the report echoed the president’s views and hinted at a ‘terrorism’ conspiracy of sorts by Middle Eastern states targeting the United States.

Yet, this “unique” ‘terrorism’ in and from the Middle East was depicted as inherently different in nature. For example, *Patterns 1985* claimed that “[m]ost attacks by West European terrorists were designed to avoid casualties, but most of those by Middle Eastern terrorists were intended to cause maximum casualties” (1). Middle Eastern ‘terrorism’ thus became its own analytical category, surpassing ‘terrorism’ from other regions in the degree of ‘evilness,’ i.e. willingness to accept loss of human life. This statement not only relativized ‘terrorism’ occurring in Europe (e.g. the Baader-Meinhof group in Germany or the Red Brigades in Italy), but also insinuated that ethnicity (derived from geographical location) and religious belief could influence the behavior of ‘terrorist’ groups.

Subsequent reports continued to style Middle Eastern ‘terrorism’ as unprecedented threat which was continually on the rise. *Patterns 1985*, for instance, maintained that “[i]nternational terrorism of Middle East origin increased substantially in 1985” (2), a statement which was printed in bold and italics to stress its importance as one of the report’s central findings. What is more, *Patterns 1985* escalated the threat by claiming that “Middle Eastern terrorists increased their level of activity outside the region, especially in Western Europe” (2), also printed in bold and italics to emphasize that it was spreading and affecting American allies. The implication was that ‘the West,’ led by the United States, had already become a target.

The reports of following years engaged in a similar strategy. While overall ‘terrorism’ might be diagnosed as declining for some years (e.g. *Patterns 1986* and *Patterns 1987*), all reports stressed that the Middle East constituted a notable exception to these trends.

Patterns 1986, for instance, maintained that “[i]n 1986 more international terrorist incidents – 360 – were recorded in the Middle East than in any other part of the world, virtually unchanged from the 1985 figure of 357” (1). Similarly, *Patterns 1987* found that the Middle East was still the region with the highest number of terrorist attacks (4). *Patterns 1988* equally stated that “[t]he Middle East again had the highest incidence of international terrorism” (1). These examples show, then, how an entire region and its nations and populations were vilified and how the discursive link between the Middle East and ‘terrorism’ was maintained and strengthened.

Apart from singling out the Middle East as hotbed of ‘terrorism’ and Middle Eastern ‘terrorism’ as its own category, these government reports also engaged in sweeping generalizations when it came to analyzing the different actors within the region. Libya and Iran received special attention in all reports for the 1980s as supposed state sponsors of ‘terrorism.’ Iranian ‘terrorism’ was represented as being motivated by religious concerns. *Patterns 1987*, for example, argued that

Tehran use[d] terrorism skillfully and selectively to support its long-term objectives of ridding the Middle East of all Western influence, intimidating Iranian dissidents overseas, forcing Arab countries to end their support for Iraq, and exporting Khomeini’s vision of a radical Islamic revolution to all parts of the Muslim world. (35)

Libya, in turn, was led by Colonel Qaddafi who “ha[d] made terrorism one of the primary instruments of his foreign policy, generally through the support of radical groups that use terrorist tactics” (*Patterns 1985* 4). Libya and Iran became familiar case studies in these government reports which used these two nations to generalize the problem of religiously and ethnically motivated ‘terrorism’ as a phenomenon which affected the entire Middle East. At the same time, these cases were presented as singular and unprecedented threats to ‘the West’ and the United States, thus combining broad generalizations with claims to uniqueness.

In this light, the disclaimer added in the foreword to the edition of *Patterns 1987* sounded sophisticated and self-aware, but effectively only confirmed that these government reports on ‘terrorism’ engaged in generalizations and put entire ethnic and religious groups under universal suspicion:

Adverse mention in this report of individual members of any political, social, ethnic, religious, or national group is not meant to imply that all members of that group are terrorists. Indeed, terrorists represent a small minority of dedicated, often fanatical, individuals in most such groups. It is that small group – and their actions – that is the subject of this report. (v)

This becomes especially evident when considering the analysis offered a few pages into that same report regarding the future development of Middle Eastern ‘terrorism’:

[T]he potential for terrorism of Middle East origin remained high because of the region’s large populations of Middle Eastern students, immigrants, and guest workers who may be recruited as terrorist operatives; easy access from the Middle East; lax security at borders; and an abundance of targets. Moreover, the increase in imprisoned terrorists may result in an upsurge in retaliatory attacks. (16)

Here, once more, *Patterns 1987* followed the discursive framework already established in previous editions of vilifying the entire region while emphasizing the increased threat emanating from Middle Eastern ‘terrorism.’

The reports not only focused on the Middle East as source for religiously and ethnically motivated ‘terrorism,’ they also corroborated the conceptualization of ‘terrorism’ as a form of warfare. This change becomes apparent in *Patterns 1983*, published in the spring of 1984 and thus reflecting and further shaping President Reagan’s more militarized approach to the topic. *Patterns 1983* simply defined ‘terrorism’ as “premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine state agents.” This definition is remarkable in that it, for the first time, spoke of “noncombatant targets,” a military term which framed ‘terrorism’ as a form of warfare. This definition was only slightly amended the next year when the subordinate clause “usually intended to influence an audience” was added. All subsequent reports in the 1980s adhered to this definition which shows that in the 1980s the conceptualization of ‘terrorism’ was militarized. The reasons given by the reports for a group to engage in ‘terrorism’ remained only vaguely ‘political,’ indicating that the discursive focus had shifted away from actually explaining why groups engaged in the practice at all.

Another discursive element which became increasingly important in the government reports on ‘terrorism’ was the notion that the United States was a primary target for ‘terrorist’ groups. *Patterns of International Terrorism: 1980* already asserted that “Americans remained the primary targets of international terrorism” (iii), a claim that was repeated in virtually every report in the 1980s. *Patterns of Global Terrorism: 1983*

even contained a section entitled “Target USA” and another one called “The Impact of Terrorism on US Interests,” effectively constructing the United States as principal target and victim of ‘terrorism’ worldwide. In that regard, the changing structure of the reports, especially in the early 1980s is telling. For the years 1980, 1981, and 1982, the reports’ titles indicated a concern with ‘international terrorism.’ From 1983 onwards, however, the reports focused on ‘global terrorism.’ Speaking of ‘global terrorism’ enhanced the threat because it suggested that, quite literally, ‘terrorism’ concerned the entire world and that the ‘terrorist’ enemy operated in a worldwide network. This terminology also insinuated that under these conditions the United States could not possibly escape the dangers of ‘terrorism’ and had to develop new strategies to defend itself. Overall, then, the government reports on ‘terrorism’ formed an integral part of how the government framed ‘terrorism’ generally and how it approached ‘terrorism’ in and from the Middle East in particular by constructing it as a war-like practice engaged in by nations in the Middle East out of religious and ethnic motivations, primarily targeting the United States. What is more, the reports exploited discursivizations of the issue established during the Iranian hostage crisis and tapped into claims and allegations about ‘terrorism’ networks popularized by conspiracy theorists, thus strengthening and disseminating this particular understanding of ‘terrorism.’

Similar framings were also popularized and circulated in the academic field of ‘terrorism’ studies. Here, the Jonathan Institute played once more a central role in the development of the discourse on ‘terrorism’ in the mid-1980s by not only developing but also spreading specific conceptualizations of ‘terrorism,’ thus privileging some knowledge claims about ‘terrorism’ over others and amplifying the power of the discourse. The Jonathan Institute organized its second international conference on ‘terrorism’ in 1984, but this time it was held in Washington, D.C., instead of Israel – another sign for the importance the issue was accorded in the United States. Once more, Benjamin Netanyahu edited the conference proceedings and published them in 1986 under the title *Terrorism: How the West Can Win*. It became one of President Reagan’s favorite books (Toaldo, “Reagan” 11).

The conference itself was organized into eight panels with influential and prestigious speakers. In the third panel, for instance, speakers focused on “Terrorism and the Islamic World” and, as the title already suggested, connected the issue of ‘terrorism’ to religion, specifically Islam. In his introduction to the third panel, Benjamin Netanyahu explained that “[c]ertain strains of Islam promote[d] an uncompromising interpretation of the faith which divide[d] the world into Muslim and infidel, and enjoin[ed] the former to wage unremitting warfare against the latter” (“Terrorism” 61). He concluded that “[t]errorism [wa]s thus uniquely pervasive in the Middle East, the part of the world where Islam [wa]s dominant” (61-62). Netanyahu even went so far as to claim that “[i]t [wa]s, in fact, impossible to conceive of international terrorism without the Middle East as both locus and source of so much terrorist activity” (62). Netanyahu constructed the Middle East as a region which created and spread ‘terrorism’ and linked it persistently to Islam, thus providing a powerful thematic frame for the contributions which followed in the panel itself.

The conference talks which formed the third panel on the connections between Islam and ‘terrorism’ all universally constructed the Middle East as a region which created and spread ‘terrorism’ and linked it persistently to Islam. J. P. Vatikiotis, for instance, spoke of “[t]he growth of terrorism in and from the Middle East” (77), warning that the principal reason for this development was Islam itself. He then claimed that “religion in the Middle East [wa]s a potent ideological force which challenge[d] territorial rule” (77). Vatikiotis characterized ‘terrorism’ as *modus operandi* in the Middle East, claiming that “[u]nrestrained Middle Eastern rulers ha[d] resorted to terrorism for domestic, regional, and international political purposes” (78-79). In his view, “one c[ould] not separate, in the Middle East, international terrorism from domestic terrorism” (83). Elie Kedourie, in turn, confirmed that “terrorism in modern Islam [wa]s unlikely to prove a flash in the pan” (76). Similarly, Bernard Lewis, an acknowledged ‘expert’ on the Middle East and Islam, conceded that “Islam [wa]s a political religion” (“Islamic Terrorism” 66). What all these examples show is how conference participants connected ‘terrorism’ to Islam and argued that Islam contained innate qualities which made it susceptible to ‘terrorism.’ They also represented Islam as the main motivating force behind ‘terrorism’ in and from the Middle

East, effectively de-politicizing the concept and Othering Muslims in general as solely driven by religious feelings and therefore more likely to engage in ‘terrorism’ against ‘the West.’

Speakers at the Washington Conference not only linked ‘terrorism’ in the Middle East to Islam, they also described it as organized in networks and as financed and supported by specific states. Secretary of State George Shultz, for instance, coined the term “League of Terror” (16), which in his view included Libya, Syria, Iran, and North Korea. Similarly, Benjamin Netanyahu saw Iran, Libya, and Syria as “the principal terrorist states of the Middle East” (“Defining” 14). Eli Kedourie, in turn, pointed to Iran as prime instance of “a ‘terrorist state’ – a state which, as a matter of course, organize[d] terrorist activities against foreign individuals and groups whom it desire[d] to eliminate or intimidate” and listed the Soviet Union, Syria, Libya, and Iraq as further examples (72). Taken together, then, the conference advanced an understanding of ‘terrorism’ as originating in the Middle East, motivated by Islam, and organized in sophisticated networks and receiving significant state support.

Interestingly, apart from these conceptualizations of ‘terrorism,’ the Washington Conference also still provided a platform for proponents of the conspiracy theory about a Soviet-sponsored ‘terrorism’ network to advance their views. The fourth panel debated “The International Network” and featured well-known advocates of the Soviet ‘terrorism’ network like Claire Sterling, Jillian Becker, and Michael Ledeen. At the conference, Secretary of State George Shultz, for instance, argued, “The Soviet Union officially denounces the use of ‘terrorism’ as an instrument of state policy. Yet there is a wide gap between Soviet words and Soviet actions. [...] The Soviets use terrorist groups for their own purposes, and *their* goal is always the same: to weaken liberal democracy and undermine world stability” (21). Becker, Ledeen, and Sterling all argued that the Soviet Union organized and sponsored ‘terrorism’ worldwide; Becker and Ledeen additionally claimed that the PLO received Soviet support while Sterling focused on the assassination attempt on Pope John Paul II which, she claimed, was organized by Soviet proxies (Becker, “Centrality” 98-99; Ledeen, “Soviet” 91; Sterling, “Unraveling”).

Yet, the discursive presence of the Soviet ‘terrorism’ network conspiracy theory was clearly waning since all other participants gave precedence to framings of ‘terrorism’ which focused on the Middle East and the role of Islam. This led, at times, to attempts to explain ‘terrorism’ simultaneously as a global, Soviet-sponsored ‘terrorist’ network and as organized in the Middle East and influenced by Islam. In his contribution, Benjamin Netanyahu, for example, explained that “[m]odern terrorism ha[d] its roots in two movements that ha[d] assumed international prominence in the second half of the twentieth century, communist totalitarianism and Islam (and Arab) radicalism” (“Defining” 11-12). Paul Johnson concluded that “[t]errorism was thus able to draw on the immense financial resources of the Arab oil states, and on the military training programs of the Soviet Union and its satellites, Cuba, South Yemen, Vietnam, and North Korea” (31). Arnaud de Borchgrave, in turn, argued more generally for links between international ‘terrorist’ groups and the Soviet Union as well as “radical Middle Eastern regimes” (“Censorship” 117).

These examples suggest that the original conspiracy theory about a Soviet-sponsored ‘terrorism’ network had been marginalized over other, more dominant explanations, effectively forcing some of its main proponents like Arnaud de Borchgrave to adapt their narrative in order to maintain their influential discursive position. The second international conference on ‘terrorism’ thus also functioned as a platform to ‘test’ and spread conceptualizations of ‘terrorism’ which gave the Middle East more prominence and worked towards establishing ‘Arab’ and ‘Islamic’ or ‘Muslim terrorism’ as independent discursive concepts. An indication for the ‘success’ of this discursive endeavor is Edward Said’s review of the volume which concluded that “*Terrorism: How the West Can Win* [wa]s thus an incitement to anti-Arab and anti-Moslem violence” (“Essential” 832).

While there may have been some disagreement over which actors were ultimately responsible for ‘terrorism,’ what virtually all conference participants agreed on was that ‘terrorism,’ whether led by “terrorist states” in the Middle East or the Soviet Union itself (Ben Zion Netanyahu, “Terrorists” 29), constituted a form of war. Arnaud de Borchgrave, for instance, spoke of “the free world’s war with international terrorism” (“Censorship” 119). Jeane Kirkpatrick, American ambassador to the United Nations, agreed that “[t]errorism [wa]s a form of political war” (“Totalitarian” 56). She argued:

Terrorist war is part of a total war, which sees the whole of society as the enemy and all the members of society as appropriate objects of violence. It is absolute war because its goal is the absolute destruction of a society. Terrorists are the shock troops in a war to the death against the values and institutions of a society and of the people who embody it. (57)²¹

In turn, George Shultz not only spoke of a “battle against terrorism” (21), but also maintained that “[i]t [wa]s time to think long, hard, and seriously about more active means of defense – defense through appropriate preventive or preemptive actions against terrorist groups *before* they str[uck]” (23). As Secretary of State, Shultz’s words carried considerable weight since they suggested that the military power of the United States should be employed. What is more, speaking about “preventive” or even “preemptive actions” reflected conventional military jargon and cast the confrontation with ‘terrorism’ as a conflict which could only be resolved through military means, i.e. open warfare, if necessary even before ‘the terrorists’ themselves had become active.

But the conference participants not only understood ‘terrorism’ to be a form of war which had to be defeated through war, they also continued the tradition to cast the conflict in moralizing terms, depicting ‘terrorists’ as innately evil and amoral. Benzion Netanyahu, for instance, referred to “the terrorist menace” (“Terrorists” 25). George Shultz likened ‘terrorism’ to an “epidemic” for which “the civilized world” had not yet found the much needed “remedies” (16). Similarly, Paul Johnson declared that “[t]errorism [wa]s the cancer of the modern world” (31). According to George Shultz, ‘the terrorist’ “s[ought] to spread chaos and disorder, to paralyze a society” (19). Benzion Netanyahu characterized ‘the terrorist’ as “carrier of oppression and enslavement” (“Terrorists” 29) while Jeane Kirkpatrick explained that “[t]he terrorist cho[se] violence as the instrument of first resort” (“Totalitarian” 56). Conference participants thus actively constructed the trope of the amoral, evil ‘terrorist’ and used it to further de-politicize analyses of ‘terrorism’ by preventing any probing into historical and cultural contexts and political motivations of

²¹Particularly for a German scholar, Kirkpatrick’s declaration of “a total war” carries additional meaning as it evokes Joseph Goebbels’ infamous Sportpalast speech on February 18, 1943. As the Axis powers were starting to lose ground to the Allies, Goebbels used the speech to whip the crowds assembled at the Sportpalast in Berlin into a frenzy. It is considered to this day a haunting example of the power of propaganda and Nazi rhetoric. Kirkpatrick’s use of this phrase thus framed the conflict between democracy and totalitarian ‘terrorism’ following the narrative conventions of the United States’ ‘good’ fight against ‘evil’ Hitler and Nazism. ‘Terrorism,’ like fascism, had become an ideology, not just a technique of combat anymore.

those labeled ‘terrorists.’ This kind of rhetoric also paved the way for increased (military) aggression towards those called ‘terrorists’ by dehumanizing them as disease which needed to be eradicated forcefully.

Overall, then, the second international conference on ‘terrorism’ constituted another important intervention in the discourse on ‘terrorism’ since it shifted the focus to ‘Arab’ and ‘Muslim terrorism’ in the mid-1980s. What is more, conference participants advanced an understanding of ‘terrorism’ as organized in networks, supported by nations hostile to the United States, and a form of war which required a response in kind, effectively re-affirming and cementing knowledge claims first developed during the Iranian hostage crisis and then adapted by proponents of the Soviet ‘terrorism’ network conspiracy theory a few years later. Likewise, the conference moralized the conflict between ‘terrorism’ and ‘the West’ as war between good and evil, civilization and “prehistoric times [...] when morality was not yet born” (Benzion Netanyahu, “Terrorists” 29). As we will see in the next chapters of this study, these discursive themes proved to be resilient and persisted well into the next decades as hegemonic conceptualizations of ‘terrorism’ in American discourses.

Other scholars studying ‘terrorism’ in the 1980s advanced similar conceptualizations of the issue. Robin Wright, for instance, published *Sacred Rage: The Crusade of Modern Islam* in 1985. Using Iran after the 1979 revolution as a case study, Wright argued that “the Middle East had begun witnessing a virulent new strain of terrorism that spread like an infectious virus” (18). Here, Wright insisted that it was both Shia and Sunni groups which relied on ‘terrorism’ to further their goals (22), effectively suggesting that Muslims of all schools of faith were potential ‘terrorists.’ Referencing the Marine barracks bombing of 1983 in Lebanon, Wright also concluded that “[t]he suicide attack was no longer an isolated incident, but a trend, one that neither the massive intelligence apparatus nor the elite military wing of the free world’s superpower could prevent” (17). Indeed, Wright’s study connected ‘terrorism’ to Islam and depicted it as a military struggle which targeted first and foremost the United States.

Wright was not the only scholar to frame ‘terrorism’ in this manner. Gayle Rivers, for instance, published *The War against the Terrorists* in 1986, a study in which he, as

the title already indicates, described ‘terrorism’ as a war between ‘the West’ and different groups of ‘terrorists.’ Rivers insisted that “[a]ll terrorists [we]re the enemy” and referred to them as “roaches and rats” (103, 31), warning that “if we let them proliferate, we w[ould] lose the war in which we ha[d] been pitted against them by their volition” (31). Amir Taheri wrote *Holy Terror: The Inside Story of Islamic Terrorism* in 1987 in which he warned that “there exist[ed] today a phenomenon justifiably described as ‘Islamic’ terrorism” (3). In Taheri’s view, ‘Islamic terrorism’ constituted a new movement different from other forms of ‘terrorism’ because “it [wa]s clearly conceived and conducted as a form of Holy War which c[ould] only end when total victory ha[d] been achieved” (8). He warned that “[r]adical Islam ha[d] declared a war on the infidels” and maintained that “[t]he terror that the world [wa]s witnessing today in the Middle East and beyond [wa]s directly traceable to the basic teachings of Islam” (12, 9). Taheri also claimed that the United States had become the main object of hate in “the Muslim world” (194), thus mirroring a conceptualization of ‘terrorism’ as a form of war waged by fanatical Muslims against the United States.²²

The examples discussed here suggest that conceptualizations of ‘terrorism’ as motivated by belief in Islam and constituting a form of war, as put forth by participants of the Washington Conference, were slowly influencing other scholars working in the field of ‘terrorism’ studies. Nevertheless, these ideas were not yet taken up to the same extent by the more prominent members of the academic community. Bruce Hoffman, for instance, predominantly focused on providing broader assessments to the government about the threat of ‘terrorism’ generally. In his view, ‘Islamic terrorists’ constituted one dangerous group among several others such as “Left-wing radical organizations” and “Right-wing racist, anti-authority, survivalist-type groups” (*Terrorism in the United v*). He only mentioned in passing that “Islamic elements m[ight] be preparing to carry out terrorist attacks in the United States” (*Recent Trends* 57), but did not discuss it further. Similarly, Brian Jenkins was more generally concerned about “Future Trends in

²²Other examples include David Rapoport, “Fear,” and the various contributions collected in Yonah Alexander’s anthology *Middle East Terrorism*, discussed in more detail in the next chapter. At the same time, scholars working in the field of Middle Eastern Studies increasingly discovered ‘Islamic fundamentalism’ as a problem but investigated it without explicitly referring to ‘terrorism.’ See, e.g., Lewis, “Islamic Revolution;” and Pipes, “Fundamentalist” and *In the Path*.

International Terrorism” and did not single out Islam as force behind ‘terrorism’ (*Future* 1). Walter Laqueur’s 1987 study *The Age of Terrorism* does not address the issue of religion in connection with ‘terrorism’ at all, suggesting that the notion of ‘Islamic terrorists’ was not yet considered overly relevant by the most influential ‘terrorism’ scholars.

More importantly, the mid- to late-1980s also saw the emergence of a small group of more critically-minded scholars who engaged not only with the issue of ‘terrorism’ but also ‘terrorism’ studies itself. Most significantly, in 1984, Alex Schmid, in collaboration with Albert Jongman, published *Political Terrorism: A Research Guide to Concepts, Theories, Data Bases and Literature*. The handbook, which appeared in a second revised, updated, and expanded edition in 1988, quickly became one of the most important publications in the field. (The 1988 edition is still cited and referred to by scholars to this day.) In *Political Terrorism*, Schmid and Jongman set out to map the field of ‘terrorism’ research, compiling and critically reviewing, among other things, existing definitions and typologies of the term, various theories about ‘terrorism,’ and the use of data and data bases on ‘terrorist’ incidents as a research tool. They also provided an extensive bibliography listing relevant literature on the topic as well as a comprehensive directory of designated ‘terrorist’ organizations.

They additionally polled their fellow scholars to establish who they considered as leading authors in the field. The list, revised once more in 1988, featured, among others, Brian Jenkins, Paul Wilkinson, J. Bowyer Bell, Yonah Alexander, Martha Crenshaw, Walter Laqueur, Claire Sterling, Michael Stohl, Ray Cline, and Brian Crozier (*Political Terrorism: A New Guide* 181). This endeavor not only established an academic hierarchy, it also confirmed and institutionalized these particular voices as more important than others, accepting and legitimizing their discursive dominance. It effectively cemented their position as (often uncontested) leaders for decades to come, signaling that the knowledge about ‘terrorism’ produced by these scholars was privileged and more valuable than the work done by other academics.

What set Schmid and Jongman’s handbook apart from other publications at the time was the self-reflective, critical tone with which they evaluated the state of the field. First and foremost, the authors focused on the need for an accepted definition of

‘terrorism,’ arguing that “[w]ithout some solution to the definitional problem, without isolating terrorism from other forms of (political) violence, there c[ould] be no uniform data collection and no responsible theory building on terrorism” (*Political Terrorism: A New Guide* 3). Moreover, they added, “[t]he question of the definition of a term like terrorism c[ould] not be detached from the question of who [wa]s the defining agency” (127), a statement notable for its awareness of the role of the academic researcher in shaping knowledge about a topic.

Alex Schmid also set out to build a consensus definition, to date the first and only scholar to do so, by sending out questionnaires to other leading scholars in the field. Based on the responses, Schmid compiled a complex definition of ‘terrorism,’ which he revised once more for the 1988 edition of the handbook after collecting feedback and suggestions from colleagues in the field. While his definition never achieved a dominant status in the field – in fact it was seldom cited by any other scholar – Schmid’s endeavor nevertheless illustrates that the mid- to late-1980s saw the emergence of a new, more critical generation of scholars who approached the issue of ‘terrorism’ with greater care, aware of the discourse’s power to shape (political) reality and calling for a more critical approach to the study of ‘terrorism.’ However, since they were only few in numbers, they did not have the political capital to change the academic discourse on ‘terrorism’ in a significant and lasting way.²³ Ultimately, this meant that conceptualizations of ‘terrorism’ as a form of war waged by ‘evil’ networks, spearheaded by ‘Islamic’ terrorists from the Middle East, remained (largely) unchallenged. In the next section, I discuss how the news media and American popular culture responded to these constructions.

²³Other examples include Slater and Stohl as well as Stohl. The first dissertations which surveyed the academic field of ‘terrorism’ studies were written by Kissane; Reid, *Analysis*; and Romano.

3.5 Fighting ‘Arab Terrorists’ in the Middle East – The ‘Terrorism’ Discourse in U.S. News Media and Popular Culture in the Mid- to Late 1980s

As the section above showed, in the 1980s, political and academic discourses presented a fairly homogeneous conceptualization of ‘terrorism’ as a form of war conducted mainly by ‘evil terrorists’ who received state support and were organized in global networks. They only differed in the extent to which religion (meaning Islam) was included in framings of ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorist’ motivations. Thus, media and cultural discourses on ‘terrorism’ in the 1980s did not simply adopt these knowledge claims about ‘terrorism,’ but rather advanced their own framings of the concept which at times echoed some of these notions yet also differed significantly from these rival constructions in other aspects. As a result, some claims about ‘terrorism,’ particularly that it constituted a form of war and that it involved support from hostile states, achieved a dominant discursive position as they reverberated through different discursive fields. However, other claims, for example that ‘terrorists’ operated in networks or that religion somehow fueled ‘terrorism,’ did not play an important role in media and cultural discourses and did therefore not become a dominant component in the meaning of ‘terrorism’ in the 1980s. Hence, this section thus takes a closer look at how the media, using *The New York Times* as an example, as well as Hollywood movies like *The Delta Force* (1986) conceptualized ‘terrorism.’ As in the previous chapter, I base my analysis of media trends on data taken from the online database of *The New York Times* where I collected and counted the amount of hits a particular search term generated per calendar year (January 1 to December 31).

Generally speaking, in the 1980s, ‘terrorism’ became even more central in American news reporting than in the previous decade. Figure 3.1 illustrates this trend. In the 1970s, an average of 961 articles containing the word ‘terrorism’ appeared per year in *The New York Times*. A decade later, however, this number rose to 1,645 pieces, an increase of 71%. In fact, the 1980s, with five articles per day which mentioned ‘terrorism,’ constituted the decade with the highest average number of articles on ‘terrorism’ before the events of September 11, 2001.²⁴ By comparison, for the 1990s, this number is reduced slightly to

²⁴For the decade spanning the years 2000-2009, there were an average of 6,378 articles per year in *The New York Times* which mentioned ‘terrorism.’ See Chapter 5.

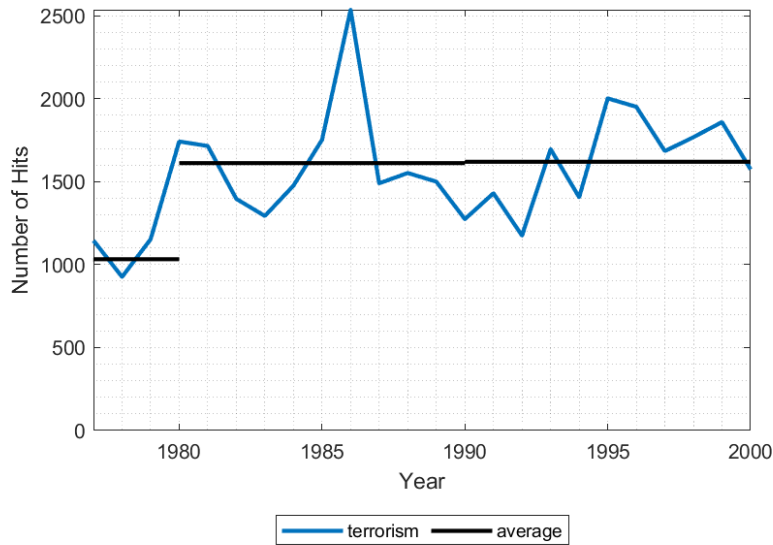


Figure 3.1: Reporting on ‘terrorism’ in *The New York Times*, 1977-2000

1,625 articles per year, a minimal decrease of 1%. These numbers thus indicate the central role the issue of ‘terrorism’ played in the American news media in the 1980s.

A further look at the graph in Figure 3.1 supports this claim. In the late 1970s to the early 1980s, reporting on ‘terrorism’ in *The New York Times* went through a first notable growth, resulting in an above-average number of articles in 1980 and 1981, i.e. the years of the Iranian hostage crisis but also the beginning of Reagan’s presidency. While there were already 1,153 articles on ‘terrorism’ in 1979, this number rose by 51% to 1,742 articles the following year. In 1981, journalistic interest in ‘terrorism’ remained high (even though the hostages had come home in January) at 1,715 articles that year, suggesting that Reagan administration’s immediate focus on ‘terrorism,’ which I recounted at the beginning of this chapter, was also mirrored in above-average reporting on the issue in *The New York Times*.

A similar dynamic was on display a few years later. In 1984, there were 1,476 articles on ‘terrorism’ in *The New York Times*, but that number increased by 19% to 1,752 reports in 1985 and then once more by 45% to 2,536 articles in 1986. During the entire decade, reporting on ‘terrorism’ in *The New York Times* was constantly higher than in the 1970s, even in 1983, the year for which the database records the lowest number of articles at 1,293 pieces. This illustrates not only how dominant the discourse on ‘terrorism’ had

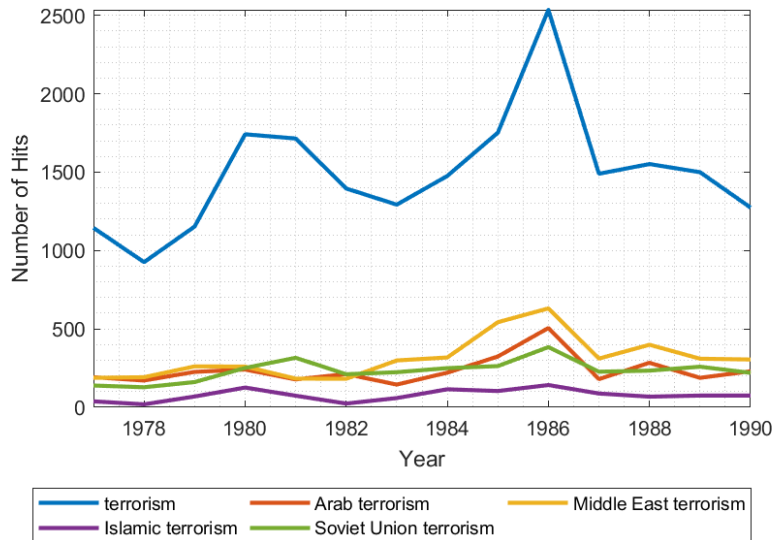


Figure 3.2: Reporting on ‘terrorism’ in *The New York Times*, 1977-1990

become in American news reporting, but suggests, in fact, that in the 1980s the discourse maintained a hegemonic position in American mainstream society.

The data also allows for interesting conclusions with regard to how *The New York Times* framed ‘terrorism’ in its writings. As Figure 3.2 outlines, two topics dominated reporting on ‘terrorism’ in the 1980s: the Soviet Union and the Middle East. Indeed, as the data shows, roughly one third of all articles on ‘terrorism’ in the 1980s also mentioned the Soviet Union in some form or other. Searches with the terms ‘Soviet Union’ and ‘terrorism’ on the website of *The New York Times* recorded numbers of hits which regularly made up about a fourth of all articles on the issue. As this chapter has already demonstrated, *The New York Times* maintained a decidedly critical view and continuously questioned and rejected claims about the existence of a Soviet-sponsored global ‘terrorism’ network. The data collected here, however, quantifies the extent of the newspaper’s efforts to deconstruct and discredit the conspiracy theory, suggesting that the debate delegitimizing and stigmatizing the conspiracy theory was central to discourses about ‘terrorism.’

However, the far more central topic in journalistic writings on ‘terrorism’ in *The New York Times* was the Middle East. As the graphs in Figure 3.2 show, reporting on ‘terrorism’ in relation to the Middle East made up a third of the overall coverage of ‘terrorism’ in the newspaper, particularly from 1983 onwards, indicating that the topic

became increasingly important as the decade progressed. In fact, reporting on ‘Middle East terrorism’ trumped the coverage of ‘Soviet Union terrorism’ in every year except in 1981 and 1982, the years when the conspiracy theory enjoyed the highest popularity in U.S. politics and academia. This development also highlights the interconnectedness of the various discursive fields.

As Figure 3.2 makes clear, in the 1980s, ‘terrorism’ in connection to the Middle East experienced a heightened journalistic interest. Indeed, the data also shows that, as ‘Middle East terrorism’ became more popular, so did references to ‘Arab terrorism.’ While reporting on ‘Islamic terrorism’ remained fairly low throughout the decade, articles mentioning either ‘Middle East’ or ‘Arab terrorism’ made up, on average, 35% of all writing on ‘terrorism’ per year (although there is bound to be some overlap between the two concepts). This illustrates that *The New York Times* predominantly linked ‘terrorism’ to a geographical region, namely the Middle East, and the perpetrators’ ethnicity as ‘Arab’ while questions of religious belief remained marginalized and not important in journalistic framings of ‘terrorism.’ In this regard, the journalistic discourse on the phenomenon differed noticeably from academic and political conceptualizations of ‘terrorism,’ indicating that not all meaning components had stabilized sufficiently to exert dominance across different discourses.

This journalistic interest in ‘terrorism’ in relation to the Middle East can be further specified and quantified. As Figure 3.3 illustrates, at different times throughout the 1980s, different nations located in the geographical and imaginary Middle East became central to reporting on ‘terrorism’ in the newspaper. In the early 1980s, articles addressing Iran and ‘terrorism’ spiked in response to the hostage crisis (see previous chapter). From 1982 onwards, *The New York Times* also increasingly focused on ‘terrorism’ in Lebanon, the coverage peaking in 1985 (374 articles, i.e. 21% of all reporting on ‘terrorism’) and 1986 (369 articles, 15%). 1986 also saw a spike in reporting on ‘terrorism’ in and from Libya with 768 articles (30% of all ‘terrorism’ reporting), an increase of 793% compared to 86 articles in the previous year. ‘Terrorism’ in connection to Iran, Iraq, and Syria also generated continuous journalistic interest throughout the 1980s, suggesting that the actions

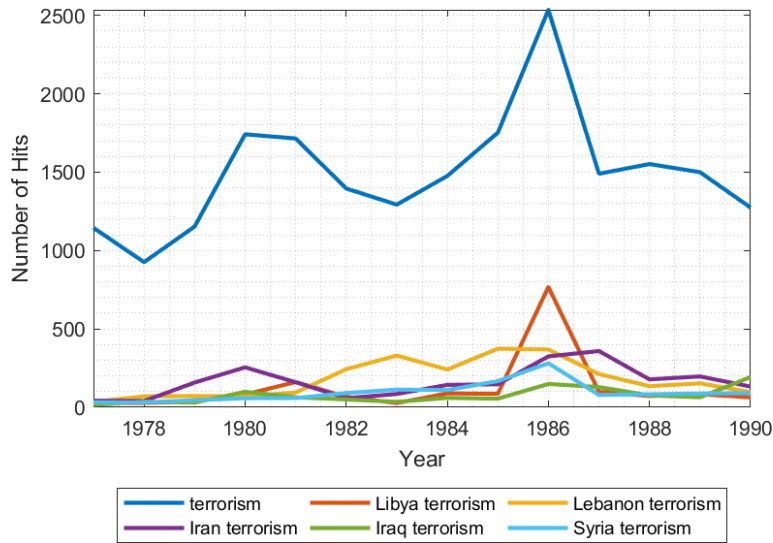


Figure 3.3: Reporting on ‘terrorism’ in and from the Middle East in *The New York Times*, 1977-1990

of states antagonistic to or in outright conflict with the United States were central to news reporting on ‘terrorism.’

Furthermore, it appears that *The New York Times*, much like other central discursive agents, conceived of ‘terrorism’ as closely tied to war. The graph in Figure 3.4 shows that the number of articles addressing both ‘terrorism’ and ‘war’ at the same time consistently constituted a third of all reporting on ‘terrorism.’ By comparison, notions of a ‘terror network’ or a ‘terrorism network’ did not figure in any significant way in the writings of *The New York Times*, suggesting that constructions of ‘terrorist’ groups as operating in networks were not particularly relevant to the newspaper’s understanding of the concept.

Lastly, the reporting on ‘terrorism’ in *The New York Times* remained moderate in tone. As the graphs in Figure 3.5 demonstrate, articles addressing the issue of ‘terrorism’ rarely contained emotionalizing or moralizing terms such as ‘evil’ or ‘bad.’ Even the phrase “scourge of terrorism,” coined by President Reagan throughout the 1980s, did not impact the journalistic discourse on the issue in any significant way. This indicates that a moral condemnation of ‘terrorism’ did not play an important role in journalistic constructions of the issue, an important difference to conceptualizations of ‘terrorism’ advanced by other discursive agents.

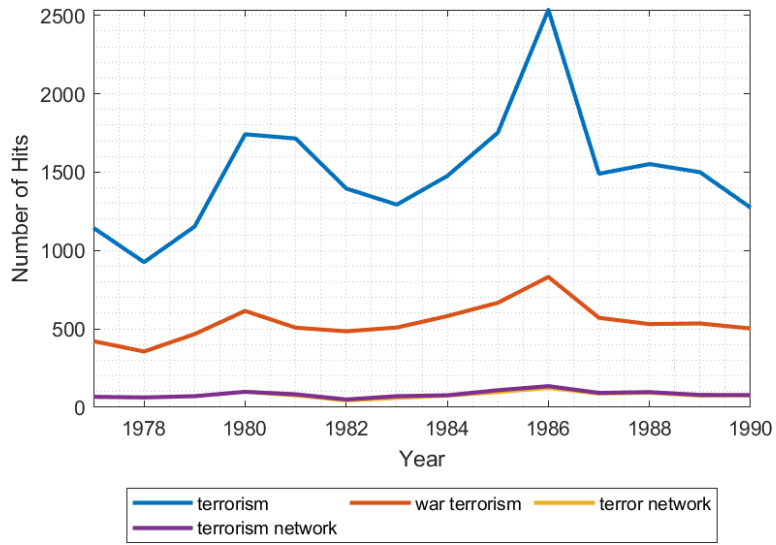


Figure 3.4: Reporting on ‘terrorism’ and other concepts of (political) violence in *The New York Times*, 1977-1990

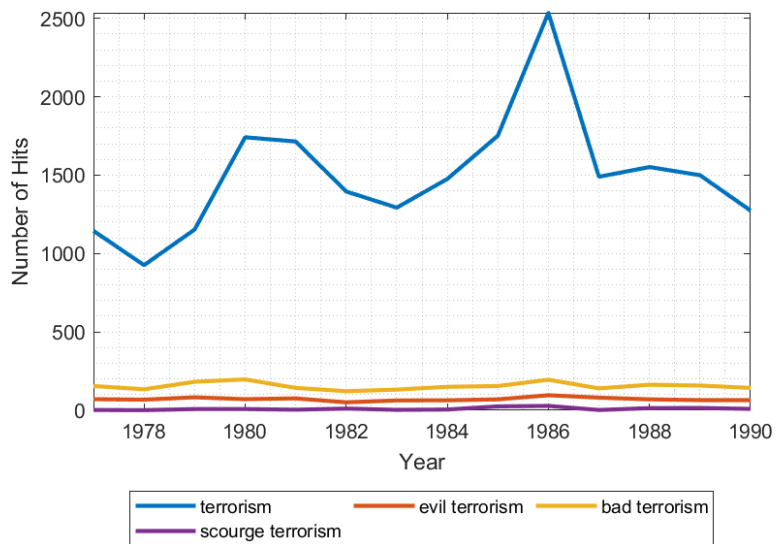


Figure 3.5: Reporting on the ‘scourge’ of ‘terrorism’ in *The New York Times*, 1977-1990

Overall, then, the data suggests that *The New York Times* conceptualized ‘terrorism’ predominantly as a state activity which constituted a form of war, thus echoing and enhancing similar knowledge claims by other discursive agents. The newspaper also retained the familiar focus on the Soviet Union and especially nations in the geographic and imaginary Middle East, linking them together via a presumed shared ethnicity, ‘Arab.’ Yet, significantly, markers of religion were not central to journalistic writings on ‘terrorism,’ indicating that *The New York Times* participated actively and independently in the discourse by advancing its own constructions and conceptualizations of the term. Similarly, it rejected the notion of networks, popularized by political and academic discourses, instead focusing on the behavior and actions of individual states. Interestingly, the newspaper also refrained from overtly moralizing and emotionalizing instances of ‘terrorism,’ rather retaining a more restrained tone in its reporting. This indicated that the overall discourse on ‘terrorism’ was marked by a considerable degree of heterogeneity since different discursive agents conceptualized the term independently, with some meaning components overlapping and others diverging.

The threat from ‘terrorism’ in and from the Middle East as constructed by the Reagan administration, U.S. academia, and print media like *The New York Times* also quickly spread into American popular culture. The 1980s saw the rise of the Hollywood blockbuster with enormous budgets for filming, star power, and action sequences.²⁵ ‘Terrorism,’ especially the kind from the Middle East, quickly became a staple in action blockbusters in the 1980s. As William Palmer has pointed out, ‘terrorism’ on film was seen as a convenient “provider of automatic weapon toting cannon fodder” and became “the predominant source of villainy” in these films (128, 164). In addition, the ‘terrorist’ action blockbuster popularized the stereotype of the hate-filled, irrational, violent ‘Arab terrorist’ who wanted to destroy the United States as representative of ‘Western’ values.

One such example is the 1986 production *The Delta Force*, starring Chuck Norris and Lee Marvin. *The Delta Force* tells the story of how a group of ‘Arab terrorists,’ with the help of the Lebanese military, kidnap American Travelways Flight 282 and take all

²⁵For more on the emergence of the Hollywood blockbuster, see Alford and King. On the general representation of ‘terrorism’ in film, see Augé; Cettl; Prince, *Firestorm*; Riegler; “Through;” M. Ryan and Kellner; Vanhala; and Zywiets. For the representation of ‘Arabs’ in film, see Semmerling and Shaheen, *TV and Reel*.

passengers as hostages. The ‘terrorists’ order the pilot to fly to Beirut, Lebanon, and commence negotiations with the U.S. government for the release of the hostages. In an emotionally charged scene and unbeknownst to the American authorities, the ‘terrorists’ separate the Jewish passengers from the rest of the group and hide them in a safe house in Beirut. Then the plane departs again for Algiers where the ‘terrorists’ release the women and children on board. A first rescue attempt while the plane is still on the tarmac by the American ‘counter-terrorism’ unit Delta Force, led by Colonel Nick Alexander (Lee Marvin), is aborted when Alexander learns about the Jewish passengers still kept hostage in Beirut. A shoot-out ensues in which the ‘terrorists’ execute one of the passengers, navy diver Tom Hale, and throw his body on the runway before taking off with the remaining male passengers on board. In response, Delta Force prepares and executes a daring rescue mission to free both the hostages on the plane as well as the small group of predominantly Jewish passengers kept hidden in a safe house in Beirut by the ‘terrorists.’ Major McCoy (Chuck Norris) and his men kill all ‘terrorists’ and free the passengers. Their plane returns to Israel where they are accorded a triumphant welcome.

The events depicted in the movie were partly inspired by real-life historical events and other filmic representations of successful fights against ‘terrorism.’ *The Delta Force* borrows central plot elements from the 1985 hijacking of TWA flight 847 by members of Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad, particularly the killing of U.S. Navy Petty Officer Robert Stethem. An additional influence on the movie was the successful and internationally celebrated Israeli rescue mission to free hostages held at Entebbe Airport, Uganda, in June 1976 by Palestinian ‘terrorists’ as well as the Israeli movie production *Operation Thunderbolt* (1977) which brought the story of the daring Israeli rescue mission to the silver screen.²⁶ These references virtually guaranteed that audiences of *The Delta Force* interpreted the events depicted in the movie as ‘terrorism’ in and from the Middle East from the very beginning.

The Delta Force shows the United States as under attack from ‘Arab terrorism’ and constructs the villains as state-sponsored ‘terrorist’-soldiers enacting the ‘terrorism’ policies of notorious state sponsors like Iran and Lebanon. The impression that the United

²⁶In fact, both *The Delta Force* and *Operation Thunderbolt* were produced by the same production company, Golan-Globus, and directed by Menachem Golan.

States is imperiled by ‘terrorism’ is created by continuous references to the Iranian hostage crisis throughout the movie. Most notably, the opening scenes of *The Delta Force* recreate the failed rescue operation “Eagle Claw” in the Iranian desert. In the chaos of running and shouting soldiers, fires and explosions, protagonist McCoy distinguishes himself by rescuing one of his men from a burning helicopter despite significant danger to his own life. As he carries his injured friend to the waiting chopper which lifts them out of the desert, the movie already establishes that the U.S. soldiers engaged in the day-to-day battle against America’s enemies are unequivocally ‘good’: McCoy and his men are heroic, loyal, strong, masculine, and intelligent.

It is also McCoy who, on the flight back to the U.S., sitting defeated among the other equally silent and serious soldiers, asks his commanding officer Colonel Nick Alexander, “[w]hy the hell wouldn’t they listen, Nick? We told ‘em it’s too dangerous to launch this operation at night” (04:13-04:19). This comment suggests that the American defeat against the ‘terrorism’ behind the Iranian hostage crisis was engineered in Washington and constitutes a not so subtle smear of then-President Carter. It also establishes that the United States has, so far, been powerless and ineffective against ‘terrorism,’ particularly the kind from the Middle East. Nevertheless, the heroic music and theme song underlying much of the opening sequence of *The Delta Force* also indicate that the situation will not remain that way and that the United States will eventually return to its former glory and power. Indeed, the movie functions in many ways as a revenge fantasy through which the trauma of the Iranian hostage crisis is overcome.

The Delta Force then dedicates considerable time to establishing the ‘Arab terrorist’ threat. Audiences can easily identify the ‘terrorists’ in *The Delta Force* as ‘Arab’ since the movie makes use of general stereotypes already firmly entrenched in American culture and merges them with dominant conceptualizations about ‘the terrorist’ to create the trope of the ‘Arab’ (and ‘Muslim’) ‘terrorist.’²⁷ The ‘terrorists’ are marked as ‘Arab’ because of their darker skin tone, dark hair, and dark eye color. By contrast, the non-‘terrorist’ characters in the movie are all light-skinned, overwhelmingly blond and blue-eyed. This

²⁷For a discussion of the general representation of ‘Arabs’ in American television and film, see the body of work by Shaheen. For an analysis of the representation of the Middle East in American popular fiction, particularly crime fiction, see again R. Simon, *Middle and Spies*.

includes the Israel characters who, following established discursive traditions of the ‘special relationship’ between the United States and Israel, are white-washed as quasi-Americans.²⁸ The ‘Arab terrorists’ are further Othered since they speak Arabic for most of the movie and English only with a strong accent. They also have stereotypical ‘Arab’ names like Abdul or Mustafa.

The movie then fuses these biased representations of ‘Arabs’ with equally stereotypical notions about ‘terrorists’ to construct and visualize the trope of the ‘Arab terrorist.’ Especially Mustafa (David Menahem), one of the two hijackers, enjoys cruelty as depicted, for instance, in his vicious and merciless beating of one of the navy divers or punching the priest on board when he dares to correct Mustafa that “America never bombed Beirut” (25:22). What is more, the group’s objective is left vague throughout the movie, giving the impression that the ‘terrorists’ engage in ‘terrorism’ for the sake of the violence itself, not for a larger political goal with which audiences might even sympathize to a certain extent.

Moreover, the movie works to enhance the danger of the ‘Arab terrorists’ by presenting them as part of a larger pan-Arab ‘terrorist’ network supported by various state sponsors in the Middle East, thus taking up and disseminating prevailing discursive constructions of ‘terrorism’ in the mid- to late-1980s. The ‘Arab terrorists’ have links to Iran and the Ayatollah Khomeini, which can be gleaned from the fact that a large picture of the Ayatollah hangs above the radio equipment in the ‘terrorist’ group’s headquarters in Beirut. When it becomes clear that the Delta Force will succeed in its mission to free the hostages, Abdul (Robert Forster), the head of the ‘terrorist’ group, receives the news that the Ayatollah is prepared to welcome him and the hostages to Iran so that they can continue the confrontation with the United States. *The Delta Force* here clearly raises the specter of a second Iranian hostage crisis and the possibility of another American failure to combat ‘Arab terrorism’ effectively and efficiently.

Lebanon turns out to be another state sponsor of the ‘Arab terrorists’ in the movie. When the hijacked plane lands in Beirut for the first time, Abdul is greeted by Jamil (Uri Gavriel), a high-ranking military officer as “brother” (41:39), indicating that, at the

²⁸For more on the ‘special relationship,’ see the references in Chapter 2, footnote 28 on page 78.

very least, the Lebanese military sympathizes with the ‘terrorists.’ In the course of their conversation (entirely in Arabic), however, it becomes apparent that the Lebanese military has taken a much more active role and been involved in the planning of the hijacking from the beginning. The military officer Jamil tells Abdul to release the women and children as a sign of good will so that the United States will negotiate with the ‘terrorists.’ But Abdul refuses to follow these orders and in the ensuing discussion Jamil tells him that “I am your commander” in an attempt to get Abdul to comply (41:54). In the end, the ‘terrorists’ are given fuel and told to continue the hijacking in their own manner as the Lebanese Minister of Defense caves to the pressure of the situation. These scenes make it clear that the Lebanese state apparatus has financed and organized the hijacking and is generally supportive of ‘Arab terrorism’ against the United States. All in all, then, *The Delta Force* depicts the ‘Arab terrorists’ as having links and receiving unconditional support from many different Middle Eastern nations, thus visualizing and legitimizing already circulating constructions of ‘terrorism’ as financed and organized by nations in the Middle East hostile to the United States.

Similar to knowledge claims made by other discursive agents in the 1980s, *The Delta Force* also depicts ‘terrorism’ as a form of war. In the movie, the ‘Arab terrorists’ are shown wearing military fatigues while they expertly handle military equipment like jeeps and machine guns. In the latter half of the movie, where the action takes place in Beirut itself, the ‘terrorists’ work jointly with Lebanese soldiers to keep the hostages hidden and, later, to fight the attack of the Delta Force. In these scenes, it is practically impossible to distinguish between genuine ‘Arab terrorists’ and Lebanese soldiers as they all wear the same uniforms. *The Delta Force* thus constructs the ‘Arab’ perpetrators as ‘terrorist’-soldiers, engaged in a ruthless and violent war against the United States.

In the end, the threat from the ‘Arab terrorists’ can only be contained and defeated through the superior violence styled as vengeance and justice exacted by members of the Delta Force, foremost protagonist Major McCoy. *The Delta Force* glorifies this anti-‘terrorist’ violence in countless shooting scenes in which anonymous ‘Arab terrorists’ are sprayed with fire from American machine guns and die gory deaths. The final battle between McCoy and Abdul is staged as hand-to-hand combat in which McCoy beats

Abdul to a pulp before exploding him inside his car with a rocket from his motorcycle. Melani McAlister has rightfully commented that this scene “functions as something like a torture session, where vengeance is enacted slowly on the body of the Arab” (229). Thanks to the heroism and power of the Delta Force, ‘Arab terrorism’ against the United States is successfully combated and defeated.

The Delta Force was not the only Hollywood production to make use of ‘Arab terrorists’ as villains. Other movies, like *Iron Eagle* (1986), *Iron Eagle II* (1988), or *Death before Dishonor* (1987), equally presented ‘Arab terrorists’ as enemies of the United States. The trope became so pervasive, in fact, that the first *Die Hard* movie, released in 1988 and starring Bruce Willis, could rely on “the audience’s presumed familiarity with the genre” to construct its plot by having the villains pretend to be ‘terrorists’ in order to rob a vault (McAlister 224). What is more, movies featuring ‘Arab terrorists’ acted out U.S. revenge fantasies and visualized the tough rhetoric with which the Reagan administration sold its ‘counter-terrorism’ strategy to the public, even though it corresponded rarely to actual policy. Stephen Prince recounts that after President Reagan watched *Rambo: First Blood Part II* in 1985, “he enthusiastically announced that he knew what to do the next time American hostages were taken in the Middle East” (*Visions* 16). Hollywood productions of brave Americans fighting ‘Arab terrorism’ not only turned ‘terrorism’ into a commodity item, they set up the entire discourse on ‘terrorism,’ particularly the kind in and from the Middle East, for consumption. However, as the next chapter shows, ultimately, political and academic conceptualizations of the issue which stressed the importance of religion (read: Islam) as motivation for ‘terrorism’ overshadowed media and cultural framings which singled out ethnicity as main meaning component.

Chapter 4

“We Are Confronting the Emergence of New Kinds of Terrorist Violence” – ‘New Islamic Terrorism’ in the 1990s

The end of the Cold War was widely perceived as a watershed moment in U.S. history (e.g. Badey 51, J. Edwards xi, Hendrickson xi).¹ Contemporary commentators continuously stressed that the world was entering a new, unparalleled era of peace and prosperity, leading political scientist Francis Fukuyama to proclaim a definite victory of democracy over communism: “What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government” (4).

While Fukuyama and his colleagues constructed and celebrated the end of the Cold War as caesura in world politics and history, American politicians, diplomats, and military officers were unexpectedly faced with an ideological void. Since the Soviet Union was no longer available as nemesis and ‘Other’ to vilify, these officials suddenly lacked an enemy figure against which to position the United States as superior. As Michael Klare has put it, “the end of the Cold War provided an enormous shock for American military leaders” and politicians because it “eradicated the mental map that hitherto had explained world events and governed U.S. policymaking” (6). New enemies and new explanations for their motivations were needed.

This also influenced the American discourse on ‘terrorism.’ Now that the distinctly political and ideological paradigm which had framed the ‘terrorism’ discourse in the 1980s had become obsolete, perceived cultural and religious differences gained in importance, especially differences between ‘the West’ and Islamic cultures in the Middle East, which were positioned as inherently Other and threatening to American society. In that process,

¹For a history of the Cold War, see Campbell and Logevall, Fink, Immerman, and Lüthi. For an analysis on the Cold War with a focus on rhetoric, see Medhurst et al. For an analysis of the aftermath of the Cold War, see Adelman, Cameron, Casey and Wright, and Savranskaya and Blanton.

discursive actors and voices continuously tapped into notions of ‘terrorism’ established in the previous decade, i.e. that ‘terrorists’ operated in groups and networks, that ‘terrorism’ constituted a form of war, and that it overwhelmingly involved ‘Arabs’ and ‘Muslims’ in and from the Middle East. But these ideas were not simply ‘recycled,’ they were also adapted and tailored to the changed political and cultural context, thus both reflecting concerns over ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorists’ in a post-Cold War world and actively shaping them at the same time.

The often openly antagonistic attitude towards the Middle East and, increasingly, Islam was espoused by prominent members of the political scene, the academic communities, journalists, and in influential Hollywood productions. Already in 1990, Vice President Dan Quayle, for instance, warned during a speech at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, “We have been surprised this past century by the rise of communism, the rise of Nazism, the rise of radical Islamic fundamentalism. [...] Though we may be surprised, let us always be prepared” (33:06-33:11).² With just a few sentences, Quayle constructed ‘Islamic fundamentalism’ as a threat for not only U.S. national security but for American society as a whole. By likening the dangers from “radical Islamic fundamentalism” to the 40-year long conflict with the Soviet Union and Nazism, arguably discursivized as the ‘ultimate evil’ in American culture, Quayle endowed it with epic proportions and constructed it as a central challenge for U.S. politics.³

He was not the only one to perceive Islam and the Middle East that way. The influential scholar and designated ‘expert’ on the Middle East, its peoples, and cultures, Bernard Lewis, took it upon himself to clarify to readers “The Roots of Muslim Rage” in an influential, eponymous article for *The Atlantic* in 1990. Lewis explained that while the American way of life with its promise of freedom, justice, and opportunity was widely admired throughout the Middle East, a “great change” had occurred recently “when the leaders of a widespread and widening religious revival sought and identified their enemies as the enemies of God” and designated the U.S. as such an enemy (50). Lewis discerned that Americans were “baffle[d]” by this “surge of hatred” against them and endeavored

²See also Halliday.

³For more on the representation of the Holocaust in American culture, see J. Alexander; Butter, *Epitome*; Novick; and Rosenfeld. For an analysis of the representation of World War II in American culture, see, e.g., Christiansen, Ramsay, and Takayoshi.

to explain these developments to the public (48). As Zachary Lockman has pointed out, Lewis' "age, much trumpeted erudition, magisterial style and very British air of authority enhanced his stature" so that Lewis' opinions and writings carried considerable weight (*Contending* 251).

In his article, Lewis wrote that the principal reasons for this anti-Americanism among Muslims in the Middle East were "American support for Israel" as well as "American support for hated regimes" (52), but qualified these explanations immediately by arguing that they had only "some plausibility" and therefore "d[id] not suffice" as reasons at all (52-53). Similarly, he relativized and discarded accusations of 'the West' as racist, imperialist, and sexist by stating that "[i]n none of these sins [we]re we the only sinners, and in some of them we [we]re very far from being the worst" (53). Here, Lewis' choice of the personal pronoun "we" is telling as he created an imagined community with readers of his article, assuming a collective kinship which erased all differences and nuances and created a homogeneous 'Western' reader who shared Lewis' concerns. Moreover, Lewis' description of human rights violation by Western colonial powers as "sins" added a religious undertone which subtly framed the conflict he described as one between different cultures and faiths. He dismissed charges of imperialism against the United States in the same vein, arguing, "In many of these writings, 'imperialist' is given a distinctly religious significance [...]. [...] What is truly evil and unacceptable is the domination of infidels over true believers" (53). Lewis thus interpreted conflicts between 'the West,' meaning the United States as its principal representative, and the entire Middle East as driven by cultural and religious imperatives. Political explanations for tensions and clashes were downplayed and read as obscuring deeper religious struggles while the Middle East was represented as united in its animosity towards a benevolent, innocent United States.

Following his own logic, Lewis then concluded that "A Clash of Civilizations" between a distinctly Christian "Western civilization" and "the Islamic world" was immanent (56, 58, 59). As he explained, while "Christendom [learned to] restrain the murderous intolerance and persecution" of others, "Muslims experienced no such need and evolved no such doctrine" and were thus more prone to resort to violence to act out their

hostile feelings (56). From Lewis' point of view, this fault in "the Islamic world" made Muslims inherently inferior to 'the West' and he posited:

Islamic fundamentalism has given an aim and a form to the otherwise aimless and formless resentment and anger of the Muslim masses at the forces that have devalued their traditional values and loyalties and, in the final analysis, robbed them of their beliefs, their aspirations, their dignity, and to an increasing extent even their livelihood. (59)

In Lewis' analysis, Islam dominated the entire Middle East, homogenizing the region under its banner and providing the motivation and rationale for its conflicts with a benign, enlightened 'West.' Islam became the sole aggressor in this scenario and created "the danger of a new era of religious wars" (60).

Lewis' notion of a "Clash of Civilizations" between 'the West' and Islam resonated with readers and the article was widely and controversially discussed.⁴ Importantly, it paved the way for Samuel P. Huntington who expanded on Lewis' theses in a 1993 article for *Foreign Affairs* entitled "The Clash of Civilizations?" Huntington postulated:

[T]he fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. [...] the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. (1)

Huntington then proceeded to identify the civilizations in question as "Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and possibly African civilization" (3).⁵ In his view, these civilizations would clash in the future because "processes of economic modernization and social change throughout the world [we]re separating people from longstanding local identities" (4). People, he wrote, built their identities in predominantly ethnic and religious terms which dispositioned them to interpret the world in terms of religious and ethnic markers (7). What is more, according to Huntington, these cultural (and especially religious) differences contained a significant potential for violent conflict not only between groups within a single civilization, but predominantly between two or more civilizations.

As example for his claims, Huntington singled out the "fault line" between Western and Islamic civilization since conflicts between the two "ha[d] been going on for 1,300

⁴See, e.g., Esposito, *Islamic*.

⁵For a contemporary critique of Huntington's claims, see Ajami; Binyan; Ignatieff; Mahbubani; and Said, "Clash." For a more recent engagement with Huntington's claims, see Holloway and Migdal.

years” (9). For Huntington, Western civilization was “at an extraordinary peak of power in relation to other civilizations” and its military might was “unrivaled” (15). This enabled ‘the West’ “to run the world in ways that w[ould] maintain Western predominance, protect Western interests and promote Western political and economic values” (17), but also contained the seed of conflict since “Western ideas of individualism, liberalism, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, free markets, the separation of church and state often ha[d] little resonance in Islamic, Confucian, Japanese, Hindu, Buddhist or Orthodox cultures” (17). Huntington thus positioned a monolithic ‘West’ as culturally, economically, and politically superior to “the Rest” (16), suggesting that civilizations and cultures which opposed the *status quo* were, at least in part, driven by feelings of inferiority and envy.

On the other side of the conflict between “the West and the Rest” (16, 18), Huntington singled out “The Confucian-Islamic Connection” (21), basically arguing that these two civilizations had joined forces to challenge the dominance and superiority of ‘the West.’ Both civilizations especially hoped to acquire nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons and weapons technologies in order to balance out Western military might (22-23). Huntington thus constructed two cultures, traditionally Othered in American discourses, as threats against American national security and foreign policy interests.⁶ These threats were of a new magnitude since a peaceful resolution of tensions and conflicts between different civilizations was extremely unlikely, if not outright impossible. As Huntington asserted from the outset, “[t]he fault lines between civilizations w[ould] be the battle lines of the future” (1) – and the conflict between ‘the West’ and Islamic civilization with its “centuries-old military interaction [...] [wa]s unlikely to decline” (9).⁷ Huntington, much like Lewis before him, not only downplayed all cultural, historical, political, economic, and social differences between those he grouped together into one civilization on either side of the divide, he also offered a coherent interpretative paradigm which transcended Cold

⁶For an analysis of the representation of Asian communities and cultures in American culture, see, e.g., Lee, R. Mayer, and Nishime. For an analysis of the representation of Arab and Muslim communities in ‘the West,’ Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) is the classic study. See also Little; Lockman, *Contending*; Macfie; McAlister, Sha’ban; Varisco; and Chapter 2, footnote 6 on page 35.

⁷The term ‘fault line’ can also refer to geological phenomena, for example a large crevice on the surface of the earth after an earthquake. In the context of Huntington’s argument, it naturalized the conflict and subtly coded the cultural opposition as strong and lasting enough to rip apart the previous world order.

War explanations of conflict and instead framed perceived differences in an essentialist manner as much more fundamental and innate to humanity itself.

Huntington eventually expanded on his ideas in the widely-discussed 1996 volume *The Clash of Civilizations*. While Huntington's *Foreign Affairs* article still contained a question mark at the end of the title, suggesting that there was, at the very least, still some room for doubt and discussion, his book three years later shed all signs of ambiguity and hesitation and stated as a matter of fact his belief that "[i]n the post-Cold War world, the most important distinctions among peoples [we]re [...] cultural" (21). Huntington also continued the theme established in the article that "[t]he resurgence of Islam and 're-Islamization' [...] in Muslim societies" constituted a considerable threat to 'the West' and its central tenets (94).

In the book, Huntington singled out once more the 'Islamic civilization' as the main opponent of 'the West.' He discerned an "Islamic Resurgence" (103) – spelled in capital letters to underline its significance and global dimension – which, while accepting modernity, strictly rejected Western culture and was committed to "Islam as the guide to life in the modern world" (110). This characteristic marked Islam as dangerous to 'the West' because it "unit[ed] religion and politics" (210), thus offering an all-encompassing way of life. In Huntington's interpretation, Muslims were always the aggressors and the ones to engage most in "fault line conflicts," i.e. conflicts between members of different civilizations, a claim that he repeated several times throughout the book (e.g. 208, 255, 259-264, 268). Huntington then clarified that "[t]he underlying problem for the West [wa]s [...] Islam, a different civilization whose people [we]re convinced of the superiority of their culture and [we]re obsessed with the inferiority of their power" (217).

In his highly influential writings, Huntington developed and constructed a post-Cold War future which posited the United States as main representative of 'the West' against an Islamic civilization which spanned, geographically, all of the Middle East and large parts of Asia, and included the entirety of Muslim believers who all supposedly espoused aggressive anti-secular and anti-Western views and who were willing to challenge global Western dominance through violence, 'terrorism,' and "fault line" wars. What the rest of this chapter shows is that Lewis and Huntington (and others like them) provided the

vocabulary and ideological paradigm to invigorate ‘terrorism’ studies in the 1990s and (re-)focus the ‘terrorism’ discourse decisively on the Middle East, ‘Arabs,’ and threats from ‘Islamic fundamentalism’ and ‘terrorism.’⁸

The 1990s were, in many ways, a turbulent decade and these ideas influenced how incidents of (political) violence were problematized. Some of these events, which proved influential for the discourse on ‘terrorism’ include the bombing of the World Trade Center on February 26, 1993, when a bomb exploded in the garage of the building with the clear intention of bringing the towers down. The endeavor failed, but still killed six people and injured over 1,000 more. A few years later, on August 7, 1998, almost simultaneously, two al-Qaeda suicide bombers drove trucks filled with explosives into the U.S. embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and Nairobi, Kenya, causing 224 deaths and more than 4,500 injuries as well as the destruction of the compounds. These incidents generated considerable coverage and commentary at the time and greatly impacted the discourse on ‘terrorism,’ as commentators took these incidents as proof that ‘Islamic terrorism’ was on the rise and specifically targeting the United States. Thus, throughout the rest of the chapter, I will continually refer to these events in my discussions of how the discourse on ‘terrorism’ developed in the 1990s and came to focus on ‘Islamic terrorism’ as its main concern.

In the next section, I discuss how both the academic and the political discourse on ‘terrorism’ reoriented themselves in the early years of the new decade by developing a new way to problematize the issue. Then I turn to early manifestations of ‘Islamic terrorism’ in American news media, using *The New York Times* as an example, as well as Hollywood’s engagement with ‘Islamic terrorism’ in the beginning of the decade. In the third section, I analyze how the academic discourse on ‘terrorism’ recovered its dominant position in the field by constructing ‘Islamic terrorism’ as supposedly new and unprecedented threat. After that, I examine in more detail how the Clinton administration responded to these discursive framings. Finally, in the last section, I turn to media and cultural representations of ‘Islamic terrorism’ in the mid- to late 1990s.

⁸Other contemporary articles which took a similar approach to the Middle East and the issue of ‘terrorism’ in the 1990s include Miller, “Challenge;” Kramer, “Islam;” and Pipes, “Muslims” and “There Are.”

4.1 “A Period of Relative Quiet” – The ‘Terrorism’ Discourse in U.S. Politics and Academia in the Early 1990s

The beginnings of the new decade constituted somewhat of a lull for the discourse on ‘terrorism’ as interest in the topic waned. In the political arena, President George H. W. Bush set the rhetorical focus on building his “New World Order,” which he started to proclaim in early 1990, most prominently during an Address to Congress on September 11 that year in response to the brewing crisis in the Gulf region after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait (“Address on the Persian”). This shift away from ‘terrorism’ as main political focus also affected the academic study of ‘terrorism’ where the production of knowledge about ‘terrorism’ received reduced attention and support. This section therefore discusses how the ‘terrorism’ discourse evolved in the early 1990s in the political and academic fields as it struggled to remain relevant and maintain its hegemonic position.

At the beginning of the new decade, the ‘terrorism’ discourse had notably lost influence in the American political scene, in part because contemporary political wisdom held that the end of the Cold War had ushered in an unprecedented era of peace and stability, making war, ‘terrorism,’ and other forms of political violence obsolete. Indeed, George H. W. Bush kept comparatively quiet on the issue of ‘terrorism,’ illustrating the decreased importance of the ‘terrorism’ discourse in presidential rhetoric and U.S. politics in the early 1990s.⁹ Figure 4.1 visualizes this trend and is based on data derived from my online search of the database of *The American Presidency Project* (see also again Figure 1.1). As Figure 4.1 shows, President Bush mentioned ‘terrorism’ on average only 32 times per year during his presidency. By comparison, Reagan referred to ‘terrorism’ 38 times a year while Clinton even spoke of the issue 106 per year on average. In fact, for the years 1989, 1990, and 1992, the number of times President Bush brought up the issue of ‘terrorism’ were below his average, suggesting that ‘terrorism’ was not a particularly central topic for the Bush administration. The year 1991 marked an exception with above-average references to ‘terrorism’ for President Bush, namely 43 in total. According to the database of *The American Presidency Project*, 21 of those 43 statements on ‘terrorism’, almost half (49%), also mentioned Iraq, suggesting that this spike in presidential comments on

⁹For a general analysis of his presidency, see, e.g., Greene as well as Nelson and Perry.

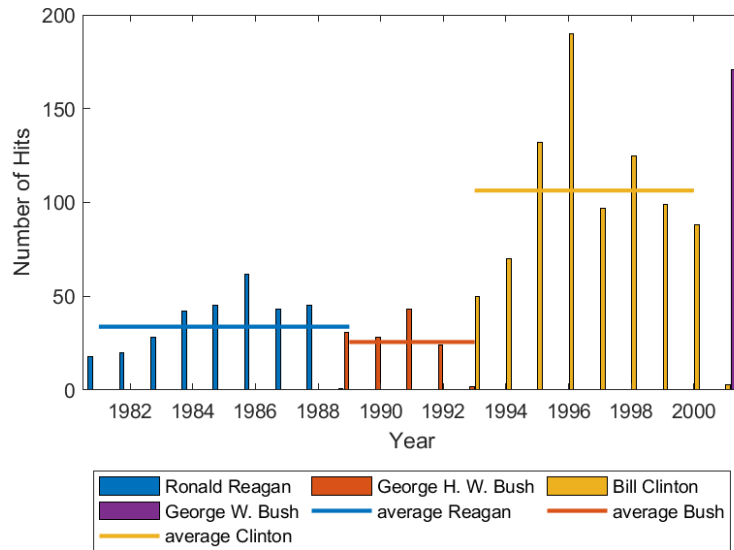


Figure 4.1: Presidential references to ‘terrorism,’ 1981-2001

‘terrorism’ in 1991 was related to the escalating Gulf War, i.e. a specific historical incident, and not a more permanent and stable interest in the topic of ‘terrorism’ generally.¹⁰

Not only did President Bush rarely mention ‘terrorism,’ he also conceptualized it in noticeably vague terms. For instance, only a few days into office himself, the president declared during the Swearing-in Ceremony for James A. Baker III as Secretary of State on January 27, 1989, “Today’s Secretary of State must be prepared to work with our allies to solve such global threats as the international narcotics trade, terrorism, the degradation of the world’s environment, and the economic distress of developing countries” (“Remarks for James”). Similarly, he urged a few days later, “We must be in the forefront in the fight against terrorism” (“Remarks for Samuel”). Bush identified “the problem of international terror” and, during a visit of the Japanese Prime Minister later that year, called for “international cooperation for the prevention of terrorism” (“Remarks and a Question-and-Answer;” “Remarks Following”). President Bush repeated this call during his speech at the United Nations later that same month, urging the representatives at the General Assembly to “join forces to combat the threat of terrorism” (“Address to the 44th Session”). The president also insisted, “I have frequently emphasized my determination to work to eliminate the scourge of terrorism, and I have no intention of negotiating with

¹⁰By contrast, in the previous year, only 9 out of the total 28 statements mentioned ‘terrorism’ and Iraq together, i.e. 32%.

terrorists” (“Statement”). Repeated references to ‘terrorism’ as a “scourge” established a discursive continuity with the administrations of his predecessor, Ronald Reagan, without actually adopting any of the definitional components inherent to the term in the previous decade. Indeed, President Bush never specified how he understood the term itself, rather using it as buzz term alongside other social and political problems of a global scale. In his rhetoric, ‘terrorism’ became a means to present himself as focused, dedicated president who understood the serious political and social problems of the day and knew how to combat them.

As a consequence, ‘terrorism’ could be applied to a variety of different situations. For instance, President Bush repeatedly and consistently also linked drugs and narcotics to ‘terrorism’ to justify being ‘tough’ on drug abuse. Just a few weeks into office, he already spoke of “the scourges of terrorism and drugs” (“Written”). A month later, he explained, “drugs are like chemical weapons that a society turns on itself. And they breed the most insidious forms of domestic terrorism. And they’ve got to be stopped, and we’ve got to vow that they will be stopped” (“Remarks to Members”). President Bush also stated that “we ha[d] all different kinds of terrorists, but this narco terrorism [wa]s simply outrageous and unacceptable” (“Joint”). By linking the drug trade to ‘terrorism,’ the president amplified the perceived threat emanating from drug abuse and drug cartels and enhanced its status as a domestic policy issue. As these examples illustrate, President Bush used ‘terrorism’ as a flexible signifier in his statements, widening its meaning and applicability to a greater variety of situations than before, obscuring its meaning, and in the process removing the ‘terrorism’ discourse from its dominant position.

The effects of this rhetorical strategy become particularly apparent when considering how President Bush referred to ‘terrorism’ in the context of the crisis in the Persian Gulf, precipitated by Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait between August 2 and 4, 1990.¹¹ Even though the Bush administration inherited a strong discursive construction of ‘terrorism’ as a form of war from its predecessor, Bush remained extremely reluctant to frame the invasion as a form of ‘terrorism’ or to accuse the Iraqi regime of engaging in it. Instead, President Bush explained on August 2, 1990, during a speech at the Aspen Institute Symposium in Aspen,

¹¹For analyses and histories of the first Persian Gulf War, see, e.g., the anthologies edited by Bresheeth and Yuval-Davis as well as Blumberg and French, and the studies by Malik, Moore, and Yetiv.

Colorado, that “[t]he brutal aggression launched last night against Kuwait illustrate[d] my central thesis: [...] the world remain[ed] a dangerous place with serious threats to important U.S. interests” (“Remarks at the Aspen”). He continued that “[t]he events of the past day underscore[d] also the vital need for a defense structure which not only preserve[d] our security but provide[d] the resources for supporting the legitimate self-defense needs of our friends and of our allies” (“Remarks at the Aspen”). In the early stages of the conflict, President Bush condemned the invasion and suggested that it constituted a threat to American interests in the Middle East but refrained from linking it to ‘terrorism’ in any way. Instead, he focused his efforts on building an international coalition to support Kuwait and mobilized the United Nations Security Council to organize the response of the international community.

In fact, the president did not connect the crisis in the Persian Gulf directly to ‘terrorism’ at all, suggesting once more that the ‘terrorism’ discourse was not particularly relevant or dominant in the early 1990s. Hence, I disagree with Carol Winkler who has argued that “[e]ventually, the administration decided to depict the events in the Gulf as terrorist acts and borrowed the Reagan strategy of reconstituting the Cold War narrative” (*In the Name* 98). Rather, President Bush continued to refer to ‘terrorism’ in a vague, almost dismissive manner. For instance, in response to a reporter question about “the possibility of terrorist attacks” against Americans living and working in the Persian Gulf region, the president admitted that he “[did] worry about extremists taking extreme action” (“Exchange aboard Air”), a noticeably imprecise phrasing which did not use the term ‘terrorism’ at all. He added later, “There’ve been concerns about terrorism for many years. And those concerns have been there long before this irrational action by Saddam Hussein, and they are ongoing. Because, you know, you could well see terrorist groups try to capitalize on this” (“Exchange aboard Air”). Here, Bush characterized Hussein’s behavior as explicitly ‘non-terroristic,’ as “irrational action,” and, in fact, clearly distinguished between ‘terrorism’ and the crisis in the Persian Gulf. The president instead presented the prospect of ‘terrorist’ acts against the U.S. as hypothetical possibility, yet also remained vague on who these opportunistic “terrorist groups” might be and how exactly they might

“try to capitalize on this.” The Iraqi regime, however, was not described as (possible) ‘terrorist’ perpetrator.

It was only after the multi-national operation “Desert Storm,” led by U.S. forces, began operations to push the Iraqi army out of Kuwait that President Bush became more direct when characterizing Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi regime, but he was – again – noticeably non-committal and inconsistent in how he used the term ‘terrorism’ in this context. In a few instances, President Bush accused the Iraqi regime of engaging in “environmental terrorism” against its own population and the rest of the world, referring to Iraqi soldiers spilling oil and setting fire to oilfields. For example, during the 1991 State of the Union speech, President Bush declared that “if he [Hussein] th[ought] that he w[ould] advance his cause through tragic and despicable environmental terrorism, he [wa]s dead wrong” (“Address on the State”), but then publicly wondered a few days later about “the endless appetite for evil that would lead a man to make war on the world’s environment” (“Remarks to Community”), not mentioning ‘terrorism’ at all.

In another instance, Bush described the Iraqi dictator as “a man that ha[d] launched environmental terrorism” and warned that while “[t]he environmental terrorism ha[d] not taken human life yet, [...] it [wa]s pretty bad” (“President’s News;” “Exchange on the Persian”). After the coalition victory and the liberation of Kuwait, the president commented that “what he [Hussein] ha[d] done, laying waste to the assets of Kuwait, [wa]s brutal environmental terrorism. There [wa]s no excuse for it” (“Interview”). As these examples demonstrate, President Bush’s coining of the term “environmental terrorism” followed his tradition of merging ‘terrorism’ with other societal ills like drug abuse and environmental destruction. It suggests that ‘terrorism’ functioned as a flexible signifier which could be combined with another concept, thus requiring no further elaboration or explanation. What is more, these references to ‘terrorism’ appeared only after the Iraqi regime had been defeated and they did not describe the invasion itself, only an aspect of its aftermath. As becomes apparent, then, ‘terrorism’ did not constitute a compelling political paradigm in the early 1990s, as President Bush’s usage of the term remained vague, flexible, and even somewhat inconsistent, indicating that it did not exert significant discursive control over the administration.

The abating political interest in ‘terrorism’ also had consequences for the academic field and its production of knowledge about ‘terrorism.’ As Lisa Stampnitzky has pointed out, “[w]ith the fall of the Berlin Wall, the breakup of the Soviet Union, and the end of the Cold War, [...] external demand and funding for terrorism expertise dried up, making the early 1990s a period of relative quiet” (139). Emblematic for this “period of relative quiet,” Stampnitzky notes, was also the fact that between 1990 and 1995, only eight conferences were held, a serious low point, especially considering that a few years earlier, there were often over ten conferences on ‘terrorism’ organized per year (139). Likewise, think tanks like RAND experienced difficulties in procuring sufficient funding. As a consequence, in the early 1990s, there was little significant academic output, stalling the production of knowledge about ‘terrorism’ and quieting and marginalizing the academic discourse about the issue.

An example for the precarious situation of ‘terrorism’ studies in the early 1990s was, for instance, Yonah Alexander’s 1994 edited collection *Middle East Terrorism*. Alexander, a few years earlier still a staunch proponent of the Soviet ‘terrorism’ network conspiracy theory, used the book as an opportunity to reprint a diverse array of articles from the 1980s and early 1990s which all focused on ‘terrorism’ in connection to the Middle East, ‘Arabs,’ and the role of Islam. John W. Amos II’s contribution to the volume, originally written in 1985, for instance, argued that ‘terrorism’ in the 1980s was increasingly used by religious and ethnic minorities and relied on motivated individuals instead of ‘professional terrorists’ trained by states (150). He concluded that “[v]iolence in the Middle East in the middle of the 1980s ha[d] taken on a new dimension,” aided by more sophisticated weapons used by smaller groups who engage in supposedly “random” ‘terrorist’ violence (160).

Evelyn le Chêne, originally writing in 1989, identified chemical and biological warfare as “the threat of the future” (27), while several other scholars focused on the supposedly rising ‘new’ threats from “Militant Islamic Movements” and “Muslim Fundamentalism.” Nazih Ayubi, for example, already warned in 1982 that “the flourishing of militant Islamic groups [wa]s an indication of the existence of a disillusioned youth revolt in many countries of the Middle East” (272), suggesting that the 1980s were witnessing a “strong ‘return to Islam,’ but this time with a right-wing orientation” (272). Similarly, Anthony Hyman

discerned already in 1985 “a rising Islamic tide” and cautioned readers that “Muslim fundamentalism ha[d] grown under the pressures and challenges of foreign – especially Western – influences in Muslim lands” (4, 3). Lastly, also in 1985, Daniel Pipes informed readers that “[t]he United States face[d] a new adversary, the radical fundamentalist Shi’i Muslim” (“Death” 3). He advised that “[t]he scope of the radical fundamentalist’s ambition pose[d] novel problems; and the intensity of his onslaught against the United States ma[de] solutions urgent” (“Death” 3). In the eyes of these authors, then, ‘terrorism’ was becoming predominantly ‘Muslim’ in nature – ethnic markers, as in the concept of ‘Arab terrorism,’ were considered noticeably less important.

Alexander’s anthology fulfilled several important functions. First of all, it confirmed conceptualizations of ‘terrorism’ as motivated by Islam which had already circulated in the late 1980s and presented them as legitimate knowledge (see again Chapter 3). It built a bridge to previous scholarship and created discursive continuity which strengthened the conceptualization of ‘terrorism’ as based on religion, meaning Islam. Also, given Alexander’s close ties to political institutions and think tanks, it signaled to fellow scholars which interpretative frameworks for ‘terrorism’ were favored by the current political elite. Moreover, it enabled Alexander to fashion himself as a scholar who had supposedly always claimed that Islam caused ‘terrorism,’ even though he used to be a firm believer and disseminator of the Soviet ‘terrorism’ network conspiracy theory a decade earlier. In that sense, the anthology also demonstrates that in the early 1990s, the academic community mainly recycled old knowledge claims about ‘terrorism,’ lacking fresh ideas and in danger of stagnating as a field of research.

Indeed, Alexander was not the only acknowledged ‘terrorism expert’ to change his interpretation of ‘terrorism’ in the early 1990s. Benjamin Netanyahu, a few years earlier also a vocal advocate for the Soviet ‘terrorism’ network conspiracy theory, now proclaimed that “[o]ne d[id] not have to be an expert in international terrorism to sense that this rising tide of Islamic terrorism [wa]s qualitatively different from the terrorism which the West ha[d] had to face up until now” (*Fighting* 125). He, too, discerned a “new terrorist challenge which the democracies now face[d]” and worried about “the enduring hatred of the West by today’s Islamic militants” (130, 82), effectively merging notions of ‘terrorism’

with familiar narratives of how “the West” was threatened by Islam and presenting it as entirely ‘new’ knowledge.

Overall, however, the early 1990s saw hardly any significant academic studies on ‘terrorism’ which presented original knowledge claims, leading Edna Reid to not only note a “major decline in publications” for the period 1986-1990 (“Terrorism” 22), but even to proclaim in her 1997 review of the field that this time period was “characterized by crisis and m[ight] include the eventual demise of a research area” (“Evolution” 96). With the benefit of hindsight, we know that these prophecies of doom were overstating the actual state of academic research into ‘terrorism’ in the early 1990s. Yet, these contemporary assessments are informative because they reflect the general state of desolation and preoccupation of scholars with the sudden marginalization of ‘their’ discourse after years of dominance and the disappearance of the material, political, social, and cultural benefits that used to come with it. In order to remain relevant and return the academic discourse on ‘terrorism’ to its former status, the academic community had to – and would eventually – produce ‘new’ knowledge about ‘terrorism’ to showcase its continued relevance. Nevertheless, in the early 1990s, the academic and political discourses on ‘terrorism’ were not the only ones experiencing a waning interest in the topic. As the next section demonstrates, the news media and cultural representations of ‘terrorism’ fared similarly.

4.2 “Islamic Terrorist Groups Have Mushroomed Throughout the Arab World” – The ‘Terrorism’ Discourse in U.S. News Media and Popular Culture in the Early 1990s

Similar to developments in U.S. politics and academia, ‘terrorism’ as an issue was sidelined in U.S. news and cultural discourses in the early 1990s, meaning that the ‘terrorism’ discourse was considerably less central at the beginning of the decade than it had been during the Reagan years. In part, this simply mirrored a general declining interest in ‘terrorism’ as the Cold War came to a surprisingly peaceful end. It made ‘terrorism’ a less attractive paradigm through which the government could interpret global conflicts. As a consequence, newspapers like *The New York Times* referred less to ‘terrorism’ in their writings. When ‘terrorism’ was referred to, however, it was framed as not only

stemming from the Middle East and involving ‘Arab’ perpetrators, it also, importantly, was increasingly linked to Islam. Initially less pronounced, these developments would become more visible as the decade progressed, eventually making the notion of ‘Islamic terrorism’ the dominant discursive concept. At the onset of the 1990s, though, conceptualizations of ‘terrorism’ still focused on a combination of all three attributes, ‘Middle Eastern,’ ‘Arab,’ and ‘Muslim.’ In this section I therefore examine more closely how the news media, using *The New York Times* as an example, framed ‘terrorism’ in the early 1990s, basing my analysis on data derived from searches of the newspaper’s online database. Then I turn to cultural representations of the issue at the beginning of the decade.

In the early 1990s, reporting on ‘terrorism’ in *The New York Times* experienced somewhat of a lull, mirroring the reduced political interest in the topic. As Figure 4.2 shows, the overall volume of reporting on ‘terrorism’ went down in the early years of the new decade. While there were 1,500 articles on ‘terrorism’ in 1989, this number dropped by 15% the following year to 1,274 pieces. In 1991, that number rose again by 12% to 1,430 articles that year, only to drop once more by 18% to 1,175 articles in 1992. On average, for the time period 1990-1999, there were 1,625 pieces on ‘terrorism’ per year in *The New York Times*, a marginal drop of 1% from the average of 1,645 articles in the 1980s, meaning that for the first time in several decades, reporting on ‘terrorism’ in *The New York Times* had not increased but stagnated. These numbers indicate, then, that ‘terrorism’ played a rather reduced role in American news reporting, suggesting that the discourse had lost in importance and vitality in the early 1990s.

However, the graph in Figure 4.2 also shows a few notable spikes in the mid- to late 1990s. In 1993, there were 1,696 articles on ‘terrorism’ in *The New York Times*, a rise of 44% compared to the previous year. This was also the first year in which the total amount of articles was (slightly) above the average for the decade. Thus, in hindsight, 1993 marked the discourse’s return to a more dominant position. Indeed, while 1994 was once again a ‘quieter’ year with only 1,406 pieces, i.e. a drop of 17%, this number was also not the lowest point in the graph either, suggesting that, as a general trend, interest in ‘terrorism’ was on the rise once more. From 1995 onwards, then, there was continuously above-average coverage of ‘terrorism’ in the newspaper. For that year, for instance, *The New York Times*

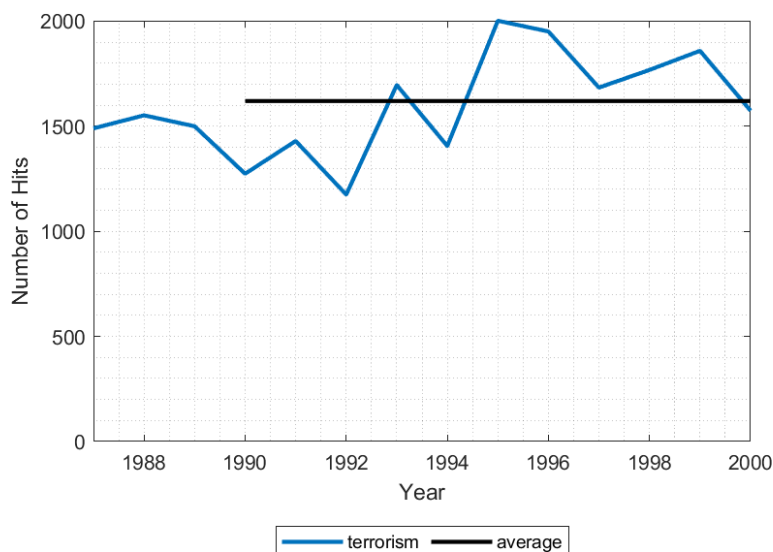


Figure 4.2: Reporting on ‘terrorism’ in *The New York Times*, 1987-2000

database lists 2,002 articles on ‘terrorism,’ a growth of 42% compared to 1994, suggesting that the increased journalistic output on the topic reflected a (re-)vitalization of the ‘terrorism’ discourse and its return to a hegemonic position. What is more, considering that after 1995, the annual total of articles on ‘terrorism’ remained above-average, it appears that the discourse’s return to prominence was long-term and stable.

Moreover, as Figure 4.3 demonstrates, regardless of the changing status of the discourse on ‘terrorism,’ the Middle East remained a central focus in the reporting on the issue in *The New York Times*. In 1990, articles mentioning the Middle East and ‘terrorism’ made up 24% of all reporting on ‘terrorism;’ a year later, that number rose to 30%. Indeed, roughly a third of all pieces on ‘terrorism’ published by *The New York Times* in the 1990s mentioned the Middle East in some form or other, indicating that it continued to be a central element in conceptualizations of ‘terrorism’ in the American news media. ‘Arab terrorism’ was slightly less commonly used in journalistic writing, but, as the development of the respective graph indicates, remained stable throughout the 1990s, suggesting that ideas about ‘terrorism’ which focused on the perpetrators’ ethnicity, popularized first in the 1980s, remained relevant to media conceptualizations about ‘terrorism.’ Indeed, articles mentioning either the Middle East or the ‘Arab’ ethnicity of the perpetrator in connection with ‘terrorism’ made up, on average, 31% of the overall annual reporting on

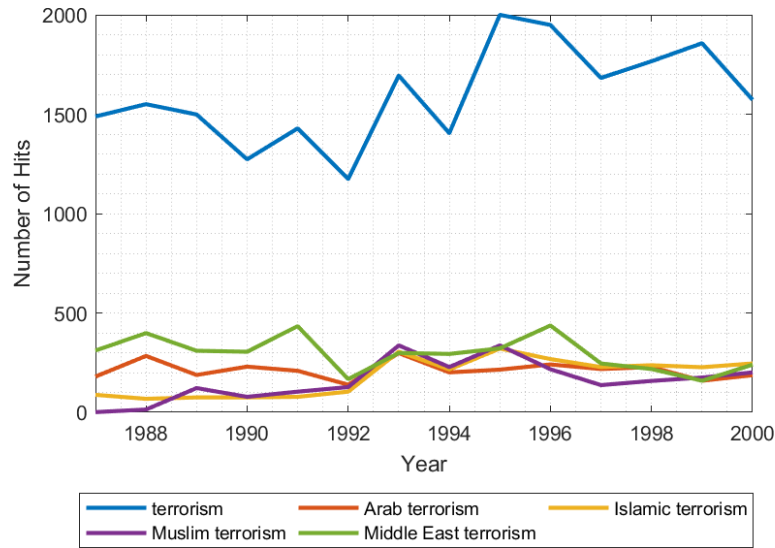


Figure 4.3: Reporting on ‘terrorism’ in and from the Middle East in *The New York Times*, 1987-2000

‘terrorism’ in the 1990s, thus clearly indicating how central these conceptualizations were to the discourse.

Lastly, articles linking ‘terrorism’ to being Muslim or Islamic became increasingly more common throughout the decade. For both graphs, the year 1993 marked a first and important peak. While there were only 127 articles on ‘Muslim terrorism’ in 1992 (i.e. 11 % of the overall ‘terrorism’ reporting that year), this number rose by a remarkable 165 % to 337 articles a year later (20 %). Conversely, the newspaper published 104 pieces on ‘Islamic terrorism’ in 1992 (9 %), but 305 articles a year later (18 %), a staggering increase of 193 %. After 1993, both graphs even out at around a fourth of the overall ‘terrorism’ reporting of the decade. Interestingly, ‘Islamic terrorism’ appears to become the slightly more popular term of the two from 1995 onwards. This suggests that even though both terms, ‘Muslim’ and ‘Islamic,’ presented belief in Islam as central characterizing element for ‘terrorism,’ the latter expression proved more successful in traveling through different discursive spheres, crossing over into academic, media, political, and cultural discourses on ‘terrorism’ and functioning as unifying element between them.

Ultimately, the graphs in Figure 4.3 also clearly show that, when added up, reporting on ‘terrorism’ in and from the Middle East, with a focus on ‘Arab’ ethnicity, and belief in

Islam, made up, on average, 44 % of the overall reporting on ‘terrorism’ in the 1990s. While there is bound to be some overlap with articles appearing multiple times in searches for all four categories, it is nevertheless apparent that ‘terrorism’ in the writings of *The New York Times* was predominantly linked to the Middle East as well as ‘Arab’ and ‘Muslim’ perpetrators, indicating that these framings of ‘terrorism’ had carried over successfully from the previous decade and stabilized, effectively marginalizing other regions and perpetrators.

These discursive trends also come to the fore in the detailed reporting of specific incidents in the early 1990s, for example the 1993 World Trade Center bombing in New York City. Indeed, the bombing was immediately described as act of ‘terrorism’ and explanations of possible motifs and objectives of the perpetrators drew on familiar notions of ‘Arab terrorism,’ the Middle East as hotbed of ‘terrorism,’ and, importantly, ‘Islamic terrorism.’ (By contrast, later incidents would be almost solely discussed as instances of ‘Islamic terrorism.’ See below.) This not only explains the spike in the graphs represented in Figures 4.2 and 4.3, but also the increased interest in ‘Arab’ and ‘Islamic terrorism’ thereafter.

After a bomb exploded in the underground parking of the North Tower of the World Trade Center in New York City on February 26, 1993, the initial reporting of *The New York Times* focused on reconstructing the events, the plight of the victims, and the frantic rescue efforts. But already these first articles on the incident persistently raised the possibility that the bombing could have been a ‘terrorist’ attack. Douglas Jehl, for instance, informed readers that “[i]t [wa]s unknown whether a terrorist group was responsible for the explosion today” (“Car” 24) while his colleague Catherine Manegold disclosed that “preliminary investigations pointed to the possible involvement of a terrorist group in the explosion in the basement of the World Trade Center on Friday” (35). In another article, Jehl openly speculated which ‘terrorist’ group could have perpetrated the bombing and, again a day later, revealed that “[f]ederal officials and private experts said, the explosion bore many of the earmarks of a terrorist attack, including the size of the explosion and the choice of a symbolic target” (“Lack” B4). This indicates that a framing of the bombing as an act of ‘terrorism’ occurred almost immediately and quickly provided the most popular explanation for what had happened.

It is also noteworthy that many articles on the World Trade Center bombing quoted established ‘terrorism experts’ and their views on the incident. Douglas Jehl, for instance, referred in one of his articles to “Brian Jenkins, a security consultant with Kroll & Associates who [wa]s one of the nation’s leading private experts on terrorism” (“Car” 24). He also quoted “Bruce Hoffman, a terrorism specialist” and “the author of several surveys of terrorism in the United States” as saying that “the World Trade Center [wa]s a symbol of Wall Street and the Manhattan skyline and the United States itself,” positioning Hoffman’s comment as evidence for ‘terrorism’ behind the bombing (“Car” 24). Ralph Blumenthal, in turn, referred to the verdict of “L. Paul Bremer, who headed the State Department’s counterterrorism operations in the 1980’s” (B4), to support his argument that car bombs, as in the case of the World Trade Center bombing, were a device frequently used by ‘terrorist’ groups. These numerous deferrals to the opinion of established ‘terrorism experts’ formalized and valorized the construction of the bombing as act of ‘terrorism’ while edging out other interpretations of the event. They further explain how information and conceptualizations of ‘terrorism’ traveled from one discourse, here the academic one, to another, i.e. the news media, while simultaneously institutionalizing both as authorities on the topic.

Considering the reporting in *The New York Times* as a whole, it is noticeable how notions of ‘Islamic fundamentalism’ and ‘terrorism’ were mixed with the concepts of ‘Arab’ and ‘Middle Eastern terrorism.’ The emerging narrative posited that the bombing constituted an act of ‘terrorism,’ targeting the United States for its supposedly ‘superior’ values while casting the perpetrators as ‘radical Islamic fundamentalists’ as well as a mix of different ethnicities subsumed in the category of ‘evil Arabs’ coming from the Middle East to attack the U.S. on its own territory. Richard Bernstein, for instance, argued that while that United States used to be fairly “immune” to attacks at home, “the assault on the World Trade Center appear[ed] to have changed that” (39). Bernstein explained that “the bombing of the trade center appear[ed] to be the first episode of Middle East terrorism on such a scale to take place on American soil, and the first time the entire terrorist panoply of events – the scenes of horror, the disruption of life, the huge economic costs – had taken place here” (39). To further validate his interpretation, Bernstein quoted Bruce

Hoffman from RAND as agreeing that “it [was] very much of a watershed” (qtd. in 39). A. M. Rosenthal noted that “[w]herever the inspiration and money for the World Trade Center bombing came from, the tragedy at least g[ave] us a chance to examine Mideast terrorism and see it whole – a major danger in international life, a planned policy, not a mad unfathomable passion” (A29).

Likewise, on March 6, Youssef Ibrahim published an article, telling readers that “Islamic terrorist groups ha[d] mushroomed throughout the Arab world during the last two decades” and that “[t]he quest to establish fundamentalist Islamic states ha[d] long existed in the region” (24). Ibrahim connected ‘Islamic terrorism’ with “the Arab world,” specifying the threat and fixating it in the geographic and imaginary Middle East. Similarly, A. M. Rosenthal referred to “Muslim Mideastern states” (A29), a phrasing that located Islam in the Middle East and suggested that Islam was the driving political force in the region. When Richard Bernstein warned that “[t]here ha[d] in the last few years been a substantial immigration of Muslims to the United States, some of whom [we]re fundamentalists who could potentially be used to form terror networks here” (39), ‘terrorism’ and ‘Islamic fundamentalism’ were effectively used synonymously.¹² In this manner, the reporting in *The New York Times* constructed a chain of signifiers which interlinked notions of ‘Arabs’ and the Middle East with ideas about ‘terrorism’ motivated by Islamic beliefs where one term triggered the others, inviting readers to (subconsciously) tap into concepts of ‘Arab’ and ‘Islamic terrorism’ in their interpretation of events.

These ideas about ‘terrorism’ in the early 1990s were not restricted to U.S. news reporting, but also influenced cultural representations of ‘terrorists.’ Indeed, the end of the Cold War also posed a challenge to the Hollywood film industry in that the trope of the evil Soviet communist enemy was no longer available. As Douglas Kellner has pointed out, “films are highly capital-intensive and the producers of the culture industries closely follow political and social trends. They are especially sensitive to winds of change, so when detente with the Soviet Union appears as an important political development, Hollywood shifts its focus accordingly” (*Media* 83). Thus, as the Cold War ended, Hollywood needed

¹²Also note Bernstein’s reference to “terror networks,” evoking conceptualizations of ‘terrorism’ from the previous decade and thus establishing discursive continuity which made his analysis appear even more convincing.

new enemies and, as the previous chapter already showed, began to present audiences with ‘Arab terrorists’ as villains from the late 1980s onwards. Over the course of the 1990s, movies slowly developed this trope further into the ‘Islamic terrorist,’ an antagonist from the Middle East, vaguely ‘Arab’ in appearance, who was predominantly motivated by religious imperatives. In the early 1990s, however, this trope was not yet fully developed and refined; rather, Hollywood productions from the onset of the decade still relied on ‘terrorist’ villains which were a blend of different, already circulating tropes and stereotypes about the Middle East, ‘Arabs,’ and Islam. These early representations did significant cultural work as they drew on representations of ‘terrorism’ from the Middle East with which audiences were already familiar and adapted and developed them to reflect (as well as shape) an increasing concern over the role of religion (meaning Islam) in connection to ‘terrorism.’

In what follows, I analyze the films *Navy SEALs* (1990) and *True Lies* (1994) to illustrate the early stages of this development. *Navy SEALs* was released at the beginning of the 1990s and, in my view, constituted one of the first films in the new decade to represent ‘terrorism’ in and from the Middle East in this more ambiguous manner as both politically *and* religiously motivated. However, the film was not particularly successfully at the box office as it only debuted in fourth place and barely recuperated its budget (Broske), also a sign for the marginalized status and reduced interest in ‘terrorism’ at the time. By contrast, four years later, the James Cameron production *True Lies* topped the box office on its opening weekend and was one of the first films to have a budget of \$100 million for filming (“True”). While this is certainly not the sole factor in determining a movie’s discursive impact, this nevertheless suggests that the overall status of the discourse on ‘terrorism’ had changed compared to earlier years and that it had become central once more by the mid-1990s.

The 1990 production *Navy SEALs*, directed by Lewis Teague and starring, among others, Charlie Sheen and Michael Biehn, details how a team of Navy SEAL special forces recover powerful U.S. Stinger missiles from the hands of the Lebanese ‘terrorist’ group Al Shudadah, led by Ben Shaheed (Nicholas Kadi). This eventually requires the SEALs to infiltrate into Beirut, a city destroyed by a raging civil war, to find the safe-house

where the ‘terrorist’ group hides the missiles in order to destroy the weapons as well as the ‘terrorist’ base. The film itself features a wide array of action sequences, including a car chase through war-torn Beirut, and bloody shoot-outs with the ‘terrorists,’ used as opportunities to stage the heroism, patriotism, and selflessness of the individual members of the SEAL team. *Navy SEALs* contrasts the valor displayed by the American agents with the depravity of the ‘terrorists,’ who are characterized as driven by both political and religious imperatives.

The antagonists in *Navy SEALs* are constructed as ‘terrorists’ from the very beginning. Already the film’s paratexts frame what viewers will see on the screen as ‘good’ Americans fighting (and winning) against ‘evil terrorists.’ For example, the trailer declares that “they [the SEALs] are America’s designated hitters against terrorism.” Similarly, one of the film’s official taglines reads “[t]hey’re America’s secret weapon against terrorism” (“Navy”), thus preventing other possible interpretations of the conflict. In the movie itself, U.S. officials speak of the group as “terrorists” and casting choices reinforce the notion that leader Ben Shaheed and his men are stereotypical ‘Arab terrorists.’ They have a darker complexion, most of them wear facial hair, and they speak Arabic most of the time which the film rarely translates, thus presenting them as inscrutable, mysterious Others.¹³

Shaheed and his men are also heavily armed and wear non-descript military fatigues, suggesting that their group represents the most organized and dominant of all the factions vying for power in war-torn Lebanon. In addition, the ‘terrorists’ are violent and cruel. For instance, in the beginning of the movie, they have captured an American army helicopter crew and execute in cold blood one of the soldiers with a shot in the head, his blood and brains splashing on his fellow prisoners. In response, the other Americans start screaming and, even though bound by hand and foot to chairs, attempt to fight the ‘terrorists’ who, however, mercilessly begin kicking and hitting their defenseless prisoners. It is only thanks to the U.S. SEALs bursting in at the last moment that the captured soldiers survive. The ‘terrorists’ are also dangerous since they possess a large cache of American Stinger missiles (how they received them is a question the film does not address) which one U.S. officer calls “the perfect terrorist weapon” (23:56). Later in the movie, Shaheed’s group uses

¹³Shaheed’s English is also heavily accented to further mark him as outsider.

one of these missiles to shoot down a private jet leaving Madrid airport with an Algerian peace committee on board, killing all passengers and crew on board, thus demonstrating to the other characters in the film and audiences alike that these ‘terrorists’ prefer war and violence over peace and that they are willing to kill ruthlessly.

Navy SEALs depicts the motivations of the ‘terrorist’ group as partly political and partly driven by religious imperatives. That Shaheed’s group has political objectives becomes evident in the following exchange between Ben Shaheed and the young and beautiful Lebanese-American female reporter Claire Varrens (played by Joanne Whalley-Kilmer):

Shaheed: You cannot invade our land and talk about security. You cannot send soldiers into our homes and talk about peace. You cannot kill a man’s family and talk about human rights.

Claire: When you wage this war with acts of terrorism against civilians.

Shaheed: If America kills our people, then our people will kill Americans.

Claire: As in the bombing of the Marine Barracks in Beirut in 1983?

Shaheed: In the reprisal for the shelling of our homes and the murder of our families by American warships. (23:01-23:27)

This exchange accomplishes several things at once. It suggests once more that Shaheed and his group are ‘terrorists’ and that they have chosen this course of action in response to the political situation in Lebanon. Shaheed’s statements indicate that he and his group deeply resent U.S. involvement in the Middle East and that they rely on “acts of terrorism” in order to drive U.S. forces out of the region. Furthermore, the reference to the historical 1983 Marine barracks bombing establishes the political context since the attack was widely interpreted as an attempt to force the U.S.-led international forces out of the country by making staying too costly. At the same time, the movie blurs the line between fictionality and factuality since the journalist alleges that it was Shaheed’s group which carried out the 1983 bombings. These scenes are also filmed in a way aimed at imitating U.S. news journalism and at the end of the dialogue the camera zooms out again to show a TV set in a large room at the Pentagon full of high-ranking officers who then proceed to discuss how to respond to the threat posed by Shaheed and his group. Shaheed and his group are thus carefully represented as dangerous ‘terrorist’ threat, driven by political motives.

However, the film does not stop there and also adds a religious component to explain what motivates the ‘terrorists.’ When U.S. intelligence services eventually determine that the Stingers may be on board a merchant vessel also carrying a group of “Muslim pilgrims” (31:39), the SEALs are sent back out again to make their way on board of the ship and find the missiles. The team uses the cover of the night to climb on board and search the vessel for both the Stingers and the ‘terrorists’ who are hiding among the sleeping pilgrims by pretending to be part of their group. This is already the first indicator that the ‘terrorists’ also have a religious background since they are indistinguishable from ‘regular’ Muslims.

As one of the ‘terrorists’ is clumsy enough to kill himself with his own booby trap, the explosion wakes the group of pilgrims and panic ensues immediately.¹⁴ In the chaos, the SEALs find it impossible to distinguish between ‘terrorists’ and Muslim pilgrims and, once they have established control over the vessel, they simply assume that everyone on board is a potential ‘terrorist.’ They solve the situation by rounding all passengers up and forcing them to kneel on deck with their hands behind their heads until reinforcements arrive early the next morning, all while members of the SEAL team tower menacingly over the frightened group, machine guns pointed directly at them.¹⁵ The film thus fortifies the link between ‘terrorism’ and Islam.

A little while later, *Navy SEALs* shows how reporter Claire works on another of her pieces for TV, recording the commentary for a short news segment about the situation in war-torn Lebanon. “True Islam does not preach terrorism” (38:55) she can be heard saying at the opening of the sequence. It is noteworthy that this is the first sentence she says because it implies that she is responding to a common criticism of Islam, meaning that ‘terrorism’ is the first thing people generally associate with Islam. When she continues by declaring that “[t]rue Islam is one of the world’s most tolerant religions” (38:57), this

¹⁴*Navy SEALs* exhibits the same contradictions in the representation of the ‘evil,’ foreign enemy as other films in the genre: On the one hand, the ‘terrorists’ are depicted as extremely dangerous and powerful – they have managed to acquire a large amount of U.S. Stinger missiles after all – on the other hand, they are easily killed in great numbers by the American SEALs because they are clearly not very good at what they are doing. This enables the movie to legitimize the use of excessive counter-violence against the ‘terrorist’ enemy while at the same time maintaining American military and moral superiority in the face of the ‘terrorist’ threat.

¹⁵In the initial panic, one ‘terrorist’ takes a hysterically screaming Muslim woman hostage, but is unceremoniously shot by Dale Hawkins (played by Charlie Sheen) who tells his boss Curran that this is “a dead terrorist” in order to explain the chaos on board (37:44). Curran accepts this without further discussion, signaling that violence against ‘terrorists’ is always legitimate and justified.

statement rings hollow because the connection between ‘terrorism’ and Islam has already been evoked. When speaking, Claire emphasizes the word ‘true’ in each of the sentences, suggesting that there is another version of Islam – ‘untrue’ as it may be, but nevertheless existing – in which ‘terrorism’ is condoned. The comments she makes in defense of Islam after the initial link between Islam and ‘terrorism’ do not rebut and weaken the connection; instead, they reinforce the notion that there exists a popular version of Islam which facilitates ‘terrorism.’

Moreover, even Claire has to acknowledge that “[f]ourteen years of devastating civil war [in Lebanon] have given rise to small but militant groups of fundamentalists who believe the very survival of their faith is at stake” (39:15-39:27). Viewers are encouraged to transfer this observation onto the activities of the ‘terrorists’ in the movie because she finishes her recording by referring to Al Shudadah, Shaheed’s ‘terrorist’ group. As she speaks the last sentences, James Curran enters the studio and the audience already knows that he wants to convince Claire to help them find Shaheed and the Stinger missiles. The connection between Islam and ‘terrorism’ is fortified further at this point.

Eventually, even Claire herself, the only voice in the movie attempting to draw a nuanced picture of the situation in Lebanon and Shaheed’s motivations, has to concede that negotiating with these ‘terrorists’ is impossible because they are driven by religious imperatives. When Curran finally convinces her to help them find Shaheed, she, Curran, and Hawkins go through all the material they have and develop a plan. Hawkins suggests kidnapping a man closely linked to Shaheed’s group and “make him talk” (53:37). Claire scoffs at the idea, explaining that “I don’t think you understand the situation. These guys are religious zealots. There’s no way you could make them talk. You’re dealing with extremists” (53:44-53:52). Claire’s explanation significantly undermines any pretensions to political objectives Shaheed’s ‘terrorists’ may have (had) and thus turns the ‘terrorist’ group from a political one into a group of ‘Islamic extremists’ whose complaints and criticisms can be easily dismissed.

As a result, the ‘terrorists’ in *Navy SEALs* constitute a hybrid form – they are ‘evil Arabs’ operating in the Middle East and are, at least partially, driven by their ‘Islamic’ faith. This particular construction marked the slowly changing discursive focus, moving

from ‘Arab terrorists’ in the late 1980s to the ‘Islamic terrorists’ of the 1990s. What is more, it also invigorated the newly-emerging discursive strand since it specified that these ‘Islamic terrorists’ could only be Arabs from the Middle East – no other ethnicity or geographic location is compatible with the notion of ‘Islamic terrorism.’ Thus, future representations of ‘Islamic terrorists’ can draw discursive power from already firmly established notions of ‘Arab’ and ‘Middle Eastern terrorism’ in their conceptualization of ‘Islamic terrorists.’

While *Navy SEALs* to some extent still grants its ‘terrorists’ a political background and subtly brings in the religious subtext, subsequent Hollywood productions addressing ‘terrorism’ in the 1990s gradually focused on Islam as the main explanation for the ‘terrorism’ they depicted. For example, *True Lies* (1994), directed by James Cameron and starring Arnold Schwarzenegger and Jamie Lee Curtis in the leading roles, is an action-comedy film about the double life of Harry Tasker (Schwarzenegger) who works as a secret agent for the fictional ‘counter-terrorism’ task force Omega Sector, but keeps this a secret from his wife Helen (Curtis) and teenage daughter Dana (Eliza Dushku), who both think he is a boring computer salesman. Soon, however, the domestic and the professional spheres of Tasker’s life collide as the ‘terrorist’ group “Crimson Jihad,” led by Salim Abu Aziz (played by Art Malik), prepares to launch a nuclear attack on the United States. Harry’s fight against “Crimson Jihad” becomes personal when Abu Aziz kidnaps first Helen and then later Dana. Although they both turn out to be fairly capable of defending themselves, they still need to be saved by Harry in the end. He heroically protects his family and the nation from the destructive forces of ‘terrorism’ and restores the *status quo*.¹⁶

In *True Lies*, the ‘terrorists’ of “Crimson Jihad” do not have a clear political agenda and instead appear to be predominantly driven by religious motives. The first indicator is already the name of the group itself, “Crimson Jihad,” which already implies that the group’s focus is religious, not political. Moreover, during the first spectacular chasing

¹⁶Many reviewers of *True Lies* have commented in detail on the problematic representation of gender and gender roles in the film, especially with regard to Schwarzenegger’s screen persona, as well as the (infamous) erotic dancing scene in which Harry/Schwarzenegger orders his wife Helen to perform a striptease while he watches her from the dark. See, e.g., Clarke, Hyden, McVeigh and Kapell, and Turan for critical analyses. While these discussions are relevant and important, especially considering the commercial success of *True Lies* which grossed more than 378 million U.S. Dollars worldwide (“True”), I rather want to focus here exclusively on the movie’s portrayal of the ‘Arab-Islamic terrorists,’ which has been discussed far less frequently.

sequence which has Abu Aziz escape on a motorcycle while Harry pursues him through the streets, a hotel, a shopping mall, and rooftops on a police horse, Abu Aziz can be heard yelling “Allahu akbar” several times (e.g. 33:42, 33:58). Audiences do not need to speak “perfect Arabic” like Harry in order to understand that Aziz is invoking the help of Allah in order to evade capture successfully, thus marking him as religious fanatic (06:21).

At first sight, *True Lies* grants the ‘terrorists’ some political motivation but a closer look reveals that the movie actually actively works to undermine this dimension. After the captured Harry has verified that the nuclear warheads in the groups’ possession are indeed what Abu Aziz claims them to be, Aziz has one of his followers record his message on a hand-held video camera. Aziz addresses the American public in his speech, declaring that

[y]ou have killed our women and children, bombed our cities from afar like cowards, and you dare to call us terrorists! Now the oppressed have been given a mighty sword with which to strike back at their enemies. Unless you, America, pulls all military forces out of the Persian Gulf area immediately and forever, Crimson Jihad will rain fire on one major U.S. city each week until our demands are met. (1:26:00-26:40)

When considering Aziz’ statement in isolation, it reads indeed as highly political since he voices familiar grievances over the American military operations in the Middle East as well as specific demands to withdraw from the Persian Gulf region. *True Lies*, however, persistently undercuts the gravity of these claims and ridicules Aziz and his demands. Halfway through his announcements, the video camera runs out of battery, eventually shuts down, and the recording session has to be stopped. This sequence is shot alternating between what Aziz’ camera man sees through his lens, where soon an ‘empty battery’ signal begins to flash, and the camera man’s face himself, sweating and swallowing hard as he realizes that the camera finally turned off in the middle of Aziz’ speech. That a supposedly dangerous ‘(Islamic) terrorist’ can be stopped in his tracks by something as simple as an empty battery offers a moment of comic relief in what would otherwise have been a tense, dramatic moment in the film. As Diane Waldman has pointed out, by capturing Aziz’ helpless fury (another comedic moment), *True Lies* “plac[es] more emphasis on the rage of his reaction than on the content of his speech” (126). The effect is, as critic Mark Gallagher remarks, that “[t]he film denies the villains any substantial historical or political foundations and presents them merely as unsympathetic killers” (218).

Thus, films like *Navy SEALs* and *True Lies* functioned as active discursive agents and put forth representations of ‘terrorists’ which increasingly replaced political explanations for ‘terrorism’ with those focused on ethnic markers and religious motivations. While *Navy SEALs* still depicted ‘terrorists’ who seemed to have an ill-defined political grievance against the United States while also being driven by their faith in Islam, *True Lies* already foregrounded the religious affiliation of its ‘terrorists’ and denied them any political aspirations. In the next section, I turn to how the academic discourse on ‘terrorism’ recovered its dominant position in the mid- to late 1990s.

4.3 “Defining the Nature of [...] Islamist Terrorist Groups” – The ‘Terrorism’ Discourse in Academia in the Mid- to Late 1990s

While the early 1990s constituted “a period of relative quiet” (Stampnitzky 139), the mid- to late 1990s saw an upsurge in the scholarly production of knowledge about ‘terrorism,’ returning the academic discourse to a more dominant position again. Remarkably, the ‘terrorism’ discourse of the 1990s was characterized by consensus with regard to the narrative it presented about its subject, essentially arguing that a new kind of ‘Islamic terrorism’ had become a central tool used by Middle Eastern groups and nations in a Huntington-esque “Clash of Civilizations” between ‘the West’ and the Middle East which had effectively superseded the Cold War. Critical voices were marginalized and sidelined. The rest of this section analyzes these developments and claims in more detail.

A central knowledge claim posited by the academic discourse in the 1990s was that Islam fueled ‘terrorism’ and that this made the Middle East with ‘Muslim’ populations a problematic and dangerous opponent for the United States as representative of ‘the West.’ As Yonah Alexander’s anthology *Middle East Terrorism*, discussed earlier in this chapter, demonstrated, these ideas already circulated in the 1980s and before, but in the 1990s they were ‘rediscovered’ and presented as new and original knowledge. What had changed, however, was the explanation offered for this rise in what was variously termed ‘Muslim terrorism,’ ‘holy terror,’ ‘Islamic fundamentalism,’ or ‘Islamic terrorism.’ The reasons for this surge in ‘Islamic terrorism’ supposedly lay in what both Lewis and Huntington called

a “religious revival” among the Muslims of the world – and this idea was taken up by ‘terrorism scholars’ and integrated into their interpretations of the issue. For instance, David Rapoport discerned that “[a] most arresting and unexpected development in recent years ha[d] been the revival of terrorist activities to support religious purposes or terror justified in theological terms, a phenomenon that might be called ‘holy’ or ‘sacred’ terror. It [wa]s most striking in Islam among both Shia and Sunni” (“Sacred” 103).

Scholars overwhelmingly agreed that religious ‘terrorism’ was on the rise and singled out Islam as the main manifestation of this worrisome trend. Jessica Stern asserted that “[t]errorist groups motivated by religious concerns [we]re becoming more common” and that “[t]he emergence of ad hoc fundamentalist Islamic groups [...] [wa]s a particularly troubling development. These groups operate[d] on a global scale and claim[ed] to act for Islam” (7). Bruce Hoffman, in turn, insisted that “the religious imperative for terrorism [wa]s the most important defining characteristic of terrorist activity today” (*Inside Terrorism* 1998, 87). He explained that “[t]he reasons why terrorist incidents perpetrated for religious motives result[ed] in so many more deaths may be found in the radically different value systems, mechanisms of legitimization and justification, concepts of morality, and world-view embraced by the religious terrorist, compared with his secular counterpart” (94). Meanwhile, Walter Laqueur warned of the dangers from “Islamic Radicalism” and explained that “[t]he current resurgence of religious terrorism [wa]s largely identified with trends in the Muslim and the Arab world” (*New* 127, 128). In Laqueur’s view, Islam condoned violence “if it [wa]s carried out against infidels or heretics ‘in the path of Allah’” and he noted that “the frequency of Muslim- and Arab-inspired terrorism [wa]s still striking” (129).¹⁷

In the eyes of most ‘terrorism’ experts, the fact that ‘terrorism’ was now predominantly motivated by belief in Islam meant that this was an entirely ‘new’ phenomenon committed by a ‘new’ kind of actor who followed a different logic, unlike any of the past manifestations of ‘terrorism.’ Harvey Kushner, for instance, spoke of “a new breed of foreign terrorist” which appeared to threaten ‘the West’ (“New” 4). Jessica Stern used noticeably analogous phrasing in her 1999 study *The Ultimate Terrorists* when she stated that “[a] new breed of terrorists [...] appear[ed] more likely [...] to commit acts of

¹⁷Other examples include, e.g., Cooley; Emerson; R. Kelly; Kerry; Kushner, *Terrorism and Future*; Kramer, “Moral;” Netanyahu, *Fighting*; O’Ballance; Ranstorp, “Terrorism;” Reeve, *New*; and Tibi.

extreme violence” (8). Even Walter Laqueur, who at the time already enjoyed the status of an *eminence grise* of ‘terrorism’ studies, proclaimed in his extremely influential and aptly titled 1999 book *The New Terrorism* that “there ha[d] been a radical transformation, if not a revolution, in the character of terrorism” (4). He warned his readers that they “[we]re confronting the emergence of new kinds of terrorist violence” (4). Bruce Hoffman, in the other main ‘terrorism’ study of the decade, *Inside Terrorism* (1998), proclaimed that “the emergence of this new breed of terrorist adversary mean[t] nothing less than a sea-change in our thinking about terrorism and the policies required to counter it” (212).

The view that ‘terrorism’ had changed (or was currently changing) into something ‘new’ fulfilled several important functions. First of all, it simplified the at times bewildering new political, cultural, and societal dynamics emerging all over the globe in the 1990s which seemingly could not be explained with the previous models. Insisting that ‘terrorism’ was ‘new’ provided an accessible framework which did not require more detailed explanations of causes, causalities, and motivations. It also asserted the importance and relevance of ‘terrorism’ studies in times when a clear enemy like the Soviet Union was missing and the Department of Defense and its associated think tanks and experts were faced with the threat of significant budget cuts (Klare 7, Stampnitzky 139). Finally, those scholars (and scholar-politicians) who insisted on the ‘newness’ of ‘terrorism’ could further cement their academic standing by positioning themselves as having identified a previously unnoticed phenomenon.

By constructing a dichotomy between ‘old’ and ‘traditional terrorism’ on one side and ‘new terrorism’ on the other, the academic community worked to rewrite “the pasts of both terrorism and terrorism expertise” (Stampnitzky 158). In that process, the ‘terrorism’ of the previous decades acquired the diametrically opposite characteristics of the ‘new terrorism’ which were then positively connoted and held up as somehow ‘better’ than the ‘new terrorism’ since the ‘old terrorists’ were now supposedly guided by rational, relatable, political principles – a clear contradiction of the dominant discursive constructions of the 1980s (see Chapter 3). At the same time, the narrative of a ‘new terrorism’ threatening the post-Cold War world provided a “cohesive framework” which explained the incidents of the 1990s and made them knowable and controllable (Burnett and Whyte 6).

The academic community then proceeded to develop the concept of ‘new Islamic terrorism’ further, elaborating on its supposed characteristics and components. In that process, scholars often also ‘borrowed’ ideas already developed in the 1980s and adjusted them to the present situation. Thus, while ‘Islamic terrorism’ in itself was already considered a grave danger, the threat scenario was further escalated by imagining the enemy in possession of so-called ‘weapons of mass destruction’ (WMDs), i.e. biological, chemical, and nuclear weaponry. Jessica Stern articulated the general concern that after the fall of the Soviet Union, the “black market now offer[ed] weapons, components, and knowhow” (9), leading to a proliferation of biological and chemical weapons which, in her view, “ha[d] made terrorism with weapons of mass destruction easier to carry out” (10).¹⁸

In the view of these scholars, the use of WMDs was particularly attractive to religiously motivated ‘terrorists.’ Nadine Gurr and Benjamin Cole stated that “[g]roups that [we]re predominantly religious in character appear[ed] to have stronger motivations to use NBC [nuclear, biological, and chemical] weapons than groups that [we]re predominantly secular in character because of their all-encompassing objectives” (251). Jessica Stern agreed that “[r]eligiously motivated terrorists might decide to use WMD [...] in the belief that they were *emulating God*” (70). Benjamin Netanyahu, in turn, warned that “[t]he expansion of militant Islam, its growing power to intimidate the West and to cause it grievous damage, would be immeasurably increased if the Islamic Republic of Iran or the Sunni militant movement succeeded in acquiring nonconventional weapons – chemical, biological, or even nuclear” (*Fighting* 121). He insisted that “the world [wa]s standing in front of an abyss” and needed to act immediately (127).

Given the new technological and scientific possibilities, scholars assumed that the ‘new terrorism’ would be more indiscriminate and lethal. Brian Jenkins asserted that “terrorists ha[d] become more bloody-minded” (“Will Terrorists” 242). Nadine Gurr and Benjamin Cole agreed that the world community would have to expect fewer incidents but with significantly greater numbers of casualties (22). Their colleagues Steven Simon and Daniel Benjamin similarly argued that future ‘terrorist’ attacks would be more lethal since ‘terrorists’ started to exhibit “increasing technological and operational competence”

¹⁸Similar views are also expressed in, e.g., Emerson; Gurr and Cole; Jenkins, “Will Terrorists;” Kerry; and Laqueur, *New*; and Netanyahu, *Fighting*.

as well as a “desire [...] to obtain weapons of mass destruction” (66). Bruce Hoffman also warned that “terrorists ha[d] profited from past experience and ha[d] become more adept at killing” (“Terrorism Trends” 14).

Moreover, the ‘terrorism’ experts claimed that political grievances and motivations would lose in importance in the future. Simon Reeve asserted that “[t]errorism in the 1970s and 1980s consisted largely of radical left-wing groups in Europe and South America with definable goals – however unattainable. The new breed of terrorist attacking the West ha[d] few aims. They just want[ed] to kill and punish for what they believe[d] [wa]s Western imperialism and the global oppression of Muslims” (*New* 4). Walter Laqueur, in turn, stated that “[t]he new terrorist [wa]s different in character, aiming not at clearly defined political demands but at the destruction of society and the elimination of large sections of the population” (*New* 81). Similarly, Nadine Gurr and Benjamin Cole, who I quoted above, ascribed “all-encompassing objectives” to religiously motivated ‘terrorists’ (251), arguing that “the short- to mid-term objective of many groups [wa]s to Islamize the nation states in which they operate[d], or were born in” (127). However, these ideas were, at least in part, uncontested because they had already been established as legitimate knowledge about ‘terrorism’ in the 1980s.

Lastly, scholars insisted that the ‘new terrorists’ organized in a different manner than groups in the previous decades had done – even though the idea of ‘terrorist’ networks had already been central to ‘terrorism’ discourses a decade earlier. Ian Lesser, for instance, explained that “[t]errorists [we]re organizing themselves in new, less hierarchical structures [...] to a far greater extent than in the past” (1-2). His colleague Simon Reeve concurred and added that “[t]he new breed of terrorist [wa]s even more dangerous, because the groups [we]re less structured and hierarchical: the terrorists [we]re more like members of a cult” (*New* 263). At the RAND Corporation, Brian Jenkins discerned that “[o]rganizationaly, terrorism ha[d] become more fluid” (“Will Terrorists” 243) while Bruce Hoffman argued that ‘new terrorists’ relied on “less-cohesive organizational entities, with a more-diffuse structure and membership” (“Terrorism” 9).

Overall, then, ‘Islamic terrorism’ was, to use Foucault’s concept, problematized as radically ‘new’ and ‘different’ from all other ‘terrorisms,’ past and present, and

more dangerous than any other possible enemy. The ‘new Islamic terrorists’ supposedly organized themselves globally and in loose networks without clear hierarchical structures; they increasingly relied on WMDs, including nuclear weapons, and exploited the new technological developments to their advantage – a trend which would make the ‘new Islamic terrorism’ not only more dangerous than before, but also more indiscriminate and lethal in its manifestations. In that context, Islam itself was constructed as “the single greatest unifying factor in the region” and these experts assumed that all Muslims were guided in their everyday life by all of Islam’s tenets at all times (Jacobs 55). This also meant that historical grievances and political motivations behind ‘Islamic terrorism’ could be ignored and discarded, thus effectively de-politicizing the concept of ‘terrorism.’ Hence, scholars like Bassam Tibi could confidently argue that “[t]he breeding ground for Islamic fundamentalism ha[d] been the perennial Islamic predicament with modernity” and that ‘Islamic terrorism’ “[wa]s in fact a defensive-cultural response to global issues” (34, 36). In this manner, ‘Islamic terrorism’ was constructed as driven by cultural and religious imperatives which could never be completely resolved as they were diametrically opposite to ‘Western’ values.

This particular conceptualization of ‘(Islamic) terrorism’ helped frame interpretations of incidents of violence in the United States in the 1990s as instances of ‘(new) Islamic terrorism’ targeting the United States and the rest of ‘the West,’ just as the meaning ascribed to the concept itself was influenced by the experience and interpretation of these incidents themselves. Indeed, it was the 1993 World Trade Center (WTC) bombing in New York City which ‘terrorism’ scholars widely constructed as the first major instance of ‘Islamic terrorism’ targeting the United States. Robert Kelly explained that “[t]he blast that rocked the WTC, however, was unmistakably aimed against Americans and was a signal that the ‘new’ Middle Eastern terrorism had arrived in the United States” (29). Harvey Kushner called it “[t]he largest act of terrorism on U.S. soil” (*Terrorism* 11). Nadine Gurr and Benjamin Cole maintained that “[t]he World Trade Centre bombing was a powerful indicator that at least some groups [we]re willing to perpetrate acts of indiscriminate mass killing” (133). Steven Emerson warned that “since the bombing, prosecutors, intelligence agents, and law enforcement officials ha[d] discovered that militant

Islamic extremists ha[d] established extensive networks throughout the United States” (24), positing that the bombing marked the beginning of an assault by ‘Islamic terrorists’ against the United States.

Even the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, perpetrated by the Americans Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols, which killed 168 people, was recast as an act of ‘Islamic terrorism’ by some stubborn scholars. Benjamin Netanyahu, for example, suggested that the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah building in Oklahoma constituted “a mimicry of the favorite type of Islamic fundamentalist car bombing” (*Fighting* 130). Simon Reeve alleged that McVeigh and Nichols learned from the World Trade Center bomber and designated ‘Islamic terrorist’ Ramzi Yousef how to build the bomb and argued that while “[t]here [wa]s no hard proof linking Yousef to the plot, [...] there [wa]s a wealth of circumstantial evidence” (*New* 83).

When in the summer of 1998 two suicide bombers blew up the U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, which left 224 people dead, al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden moved into the academic focus. The scholarly community agreed that “despite years of investigation and monitoring by the world’s intelligence services, al Qaeda was still a powerful terrorist force worthy of a James Bond movie” (Reeve, *New* 200). John Cooley asserted that these events “were signs of the spreading globalization and privatization of the assault upon America” (7). Osama bin Laden, in turn, was described as “the most significant individual sponsor of international terrorism during the 1990s” (Reeve, *New* 156). He was portrayed as “the shadowy figure orchestrating global Islamic terrorism” and quintessential ‘new terrorist’ relying on ‘Islamic terrorism’ to destroy the West (1). Steven Simon and Daniel Benjamin, for example, maintained that “the face of this phenomenon [‘new Islamic terrorism’] belong[ed] to Osama bin Laden” (59), characterizations which depicted bin Laden and al-Qaeda as leading figures in a global network of ‘Islamic terrorists,’ evoking similar constructions of the issue from the previous decade (see Chapter 3).

What all these examples illustrate, then, is how the academic discourse on ‘terrorism’ came to construct ‘Islamic terrorism’ as the ‘new’ threat in the post-Cold War era. ‘Terrorism’ was de-politicized and instead framed as an inherently cultural and religious

issue, influenced by notions of a “Clash of Civilizations,” propagated by influential scholars like Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington, which posited ‘the West’ as under attack from Islam, located solely in the imaginary and geographical Middle East.¹⁹ ‘Islamic terrorism’ was presented as manifestation of the innate cultural and religious differences between the Middle East and ‘the West’ – differences which could never be overcome, issues which could never be settled because the Huntington-esque civilizations in question were inherently disparate and thus destined to clash until one would eventually defeat the other.

At the same time, this ‘new Islamic terrorism’ also exploited previous discursivizations of the issue as international, ‘terrorist’ groups as operating in networks and receiving help from a state sponsor. However, as the examples of writing about bin Laden and al-Qaeda show, this idea was adapted somewhat to include wealthy individuals in the role of (state) sponsor of ‘terrorism.’ This discursive continuity made the knowledge claims by scholars in the 1990s appear ‘logical’ and astute since they had already been established as legitimate, accepted knowledge in the 1980s, thus fortifying the discursive standing of these ideas in later years.

Indeed, the force of this academic construction of ‘Islamic terrorism’ was so immense that it overshadowed more critical voices in the scholarly community. These scholars, for instance, still grappled with the problem of defining ‘terrorism’ itself and criticized their colleagues for largely abandoning the discussion or letting personal judgments about what constituted an act of ‘terrorism’ and what did not affect their work.²⁰ Those scholars adhering to what I call the ‘orthodox’ interpretation of ‘terrorism,’ which I discussed above, tended to follow one of three strategies. Some did not define ‘terrorism’ at all in their studies, thus assuming that their readers simply ‘knew’ what the term meant.²¹ Again others acknowledged that the search for a universal definition of ‘terrorism’ had not been fruitful and provided a definition of their own with varying degrees of complexity and ambiguity. Walter Laqueur, for instance, explained to readers, fairly late into his book:

¹⁹For histories of the field of Middle East Studies, see especially Lockman, *Field*; and Khalil.

²⁰Critical ‘terrorism’ scholars active in the 1990s include Adrian Guelke, Steven Livingston, Joseba Zulaika and William Douglass, and, to a certain extent, Martha Crenshaw (one of the few women scholars in the field), John Esposito, Richard Leeman, and Ehud Sprinzak.

²¹See, e.g., Clutterbuck; Crenshaw, “Logic;” O’Ballance; Nacos, *Terrorism*.

[T]errorism has been defined in many different ways, and little can be said about it with certainty except that it is the use of violence by a group for political ends, usually directed against a government, but at times also against another ethnic group, class, race, religion, or political movement. Any attempt to be more specific is bound to fail, for the simple reason that there is not one but many different terrorisms. (*New* 46)

Instead of attempting to define the term, many authors followed approaches similar to Laqueur's and provided typologies in order to distinguish between different types of 'terrorism' or simply focused on case studies.²² A third, albeit quite small, group of scholars outright rejected defining the term or simply stated that they would not attempt to define it at this point.²³ Harvey Kushner, for example, explained in the introduction to his edited volume *The Future of Terrorism* (1998) that "[t]hose authors who contributed to this book did not become bogged down in a morass of verbiage in trying to craft the universal definition of terrorism. They chose instead to discuss terrorism without detailed discussions about the problem with the problem definition" ("Preface" vii).

The 'critical' faction of 'terrorism' scholars, however, disapproved of all three approaches and warned that these practices meant that "the concept of terrorism had become so elastic that there seemed to be virtually no limit to what could be described as terrorism" (Guelke 1). Steven Livingston pointed out that "[w]hat was regarded as 'terrorism' often had more to do with the geopolitical calculations of the moment and far less to do with any assiduously followed conceptualization of terrorism" (13), thus effectively arguing that 'terrorism' as a concept was first and foremost a political construction. Joseba Zulaika and William Douglass maintained that "[t]he problem with terrorism [wa]s that its basic categories [we]re so devoid of conceptual fixity and moral consensus that the entire discourse turn[ed] on ad hoc definitions framed as mere appendages to whatever international and national policy [wa]s at hand" (94).²⁴

Zulaika and Douglass were also the first scholars to conceptualize 'terrorism' as a discourse, explaining that "[o]ur goal [wa]s not to elaborate yet another typology, but rather to redirect the study of terrorism into an examination of the very discourse in which it [wa]s couched" (xi). They drew attention to "the cultural, political, [and] tactical contexts" in which 'terrorism' was embedded (98). Zulaika and Douglass argued that the

²²See, e.g., J. Green; Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* 1998; Kegley; Lustick, "Terrorism;" and Reich.

²³See, e.g., Arquilla et al.

²⁴Other examples include Leeman and Sprinzak.

'terrorism' discourse was shaped by different "writers of terrorism" (35), including not only the 'terrorists' themselves, but also journalists, fictional texts, films, and – notably – the 'terrorism experts' and the 'counter-terrorists' themselves. However, their seminal study *Terror and Taboo* (1996) was largely ignored by their contemporaries, which is perhaps not quite unsurprising, given that Zulaika and Douglass criticized 'terrorism experts' as abusing their powers and legitimizing the political establishment and its agenda: "By claiming the moral high ground in the name of scientific objectivity and universal ethics, the terrorism expert in effect is close to proclaiming the political status quo to be sacrosanct" (112). Consequently, neither Walter Laqueur nor Bruce Hoffman cited their work in their own analyses and thus effectively sidelined more critical and self-conscious approaches to the study of 'terrorism.'

Hence, in the mid- to late 1990s, the academic discourse on 'terrorism' problematized 'Islamic terrorism' as 'new' threat for the post-Cold War era, dismissing and muting other, more critical approaches to the topic. It also reinstated the dominance of the 'traditional,' 'orthodox' academic 'terrorism' discourse over other interpretative paradigms, overcoming the quieter early years of the decade. The academic discourse conceptualized 'Islamic terrorism' as tool in the "Clash of Civilizations" in which the Middle East, representing 'Islamic civilization,' challenged 'the West.' In this framing, 'Islamic terrorism' responded to cultural and religious differences between the two civilizations which were so fundamental that they could never be resolved through mediation, tolerance, or compromise; rather, one civilization would have to defeat the other in violent struggle. 'Islamic terrorism,' framed as more indiscriminate, more lethal, loosely organized, and using modern technology, was used against the United States for that precise purpose. These particular conceptualizations of '(Islamic) terrorism' also spread into political discourses on the issue which I discuss in the following section.

4.4 Taking “the Fight against Terrorism” to the Political Forefront – The ‘Terrorism’ Discourse in U.S. Politics in the Mid- to Late 1990s

The academic field of ‘terrorism’ studies was not the only discursive agent to conceptualize ‘(Islamic) terrorism’ in this particular manner. Similar framings also informed political approaches to the issue in the mid- to late 1990s as ‘(new) Islamic terrorism’ was constructed as a serious threat requiring immediate political attention. While this meant that the political discourse about the phenomenon became increasingly central as the decade wore on, President Clinton also found ways to harness its power for his own political purposes, effectively exploiting the discourse for political gain.²⁵ In this section, I therefore analyze how the Clinton administration engaged with the discourse on ‘terrorism’ by examining presidential rhetoric on the issue as well as the government reports *Patterns of Global Terrorism*.

Unlike his predecessor, President Bill Clinton could not (and would not) evade the influence and reach of the ‘terrorism’ discourse. As Figure 4.1 above already showed, Clinton mentioned ‘terrorism’ on average 106 times per year – a remarkable 231 % increase compared to the previous administration. This demonstrates that the ‘terrorism’ discourse had returned to its dominant position in U.S. politics and that it offered a central paradigm through which Clinton shaped and interpreted his policies. Indeed, a closer look at Figure 4.1 suggests that, as his presidency wore on, ‘terrorism’ became an increasingly central framework, since Clinton mentioned ‘terrorism’ at a higher rate in later years than in the early years of his administration. 1995, 1996, and 1998 stand out with above-average references to ‘terrorism’ in presidential statements and speeches. In fact, Clinton was the president to most often speak about ‘terrorism’ before the events of September 11, 2001, another sign for return to power of the ‘terrorism’ discourse in the mid- to late 1990s.

Since Clinton mentioned ‘terrorism’ remarkably often during his tenure as President of the United States, a detailed look at how he conceptualized and used the term is indispensable. Upon closer analysis, it appears that Clinton was aware of the term’s power and therefore careful with regard to how he spoke about it. Indeed, during his

²⁵For a general analysis of his presidency, see, e.g., Bierling, Feste, Herrnson, and Phillips.

two terms, the United States experienced several violent incidents which the majority of the ‘terrorism’ discourse participants constructed and explained as incidents of ‘Islamic terrorism’ against America. Clinton, however, approached the issue of ‘terrorism’ with great caution, especially when it came to what others labeled ‘Islamic terrorism.’²⁶ From his public statements on these incidents it becomes clear that Clinton was quite hesitant and initially avoided using the term ‘terrorism’ to describe what had happened. For instance, after the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, Clinton spoke of “the tragedy that struck Manhattan yesterday” and did not refer to ‘terrorism’ as a possibility at all (“President’s Radio” 27 Feb. 1993). When a reporter a few days later asked him outright whether this was “a terrorist incident,” Clinton replied defensively, saying,

I am not in a position to say that now [...]. [...] I can tell you this: that we have put the full, full resources, the Federal law enforcement agencies, all kinds of agencies, all kinds of access to information at the service of those who are working to figure out who did this and why and what the facts are. But I cannot answer your question yet. (“Remarks and a Question-and-Answer”)

In that same exchange with reporters, Clinton explained further, “it’s also important that we not overreact to it. [...] If they get you ruffled, if they get us to change the way we live and what we do, that is half the battle. I would discourage the American people from overreacting to this” (“Remarks and a Question-and-Answer”). Similarly, when reporters persistently kept asking, “Can we assume that it is terrorism?” Clinton merely responded that he “d[id]n’t think you should assume anything until you hear[d] the statement today” (“Remarks on Receiving”), effectively evading having to give a definite, quotable answer.

This trend of not immediately and consistently labeling the incidents ‘terrorism’ also repeated itself in the events which occurred in the next years. Hence, President Clinton initially referred to the Oklahoma City bombing as “an act of cowardice, and it was evil,” and called the then still unknown perpetrators “evil cowards” and “killers” (“Remarks on the Bombing”). He also spoke of “this senseless act of violence” and “this tragedy” a day later (“Memorandum on Employees”). Similarly, Clinton depicted the attacks on the U.S. embassies in Africa in 1998 as “the bombings” (“Memorandum on Assistance”) and

²⁶See Tsui for the first book-length study on Clinton’s ‘terrorism’ rhetoric. Unfortunately, even though Tsui’s book ventures into virtually unstudied territory, it remains predominantly descriptive in its approach and does not offer much valuable analytical insight. It also does not situate Clinton’s rhetoric into its historical context and thus does not address the issue of ‘Islamic terrorism’ adequately.

when he sent an official “Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on the Deployment of United States Forces in Response to the Embassy Bombings in Kenya and Tanzania,” he did not use the word ‘terrorism’ once. He rather talked about “the terrible tragedy that occurred at our Embassies in Tanzania and Kenya” and promised “to deal with the problems so horribly manifested in what we went through with our Embassies in Africa and all the losses of life” (“Remarks on the Patients’ Bill;” “Remarks at a Victory”), again avoiding any references to ‘terrorism.’

After some time, however, the president began acknowledging that the bombings and other violent incidents could be interpreted as acts of ‘terrorism’ against the United States, but usually tied it to calls for policy reform, more funding for government agencies, or simply the passing of a piece of legislation stuck in Congress. When speaking about the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, for instance, Clinton argued that “the United States ha[d] to review a lot of its policies in view of what happened at the World Trade Center to try to make sure we [we]re doing everything we c[ould] to minimize the impact of terrorism in this country” (“President’s News Conference with President”). He also acknowledged, “Terrorism once seemed far from our shores, an atrocity visited on people in other lands. Now, after the attack on the World Trade Center, we know that we, too, are vulnerable” – but immediately linked ‘terrorism’ to crime and drug trafficking and continued by saying, “Violent crime has been frightful but limited. But now armed drug gangs stalk the streets of our cities, equipped like mercenary armies, randomly cutting down innocent bystanders in a primitive struggle for territory” (“Remarks on the Swearing-In”).

Similarly, a few weeks after the Oklahoma City bombing, Clinton finally recognized that “[i]n Oklahoma City, we suffered a terrible wound because it was an act of terrorism” (“Remarks at the Women”). But this characterization of the incident as case of ‘terrorism’ came in the wake of the Clinton administration’s attempts to have Congress pass the Omnibus Counterterrorism Act as well as the Antiterrorism Amendments Act: “I [...] sent a counterterrorism – a piece of legislation to Capitol Hill which I hope Congress will pass. And [...] I am going to send some more legislation to Congress to ask them to give the FBI and others more power to crack these terrorist networks, both domestic and foreign”

(“Interview”). Clinton explicitly linked the passing of his legislation to the Oklahoma City bombing in later statements, writing:

Today I am transmitting for your immediate consideration and enactment the Antiterrorism Amendments Act of 1995. This comprehensive Act, together with the Omnibus Counterterrorism Act of 1995, which I transmitted to the Congress on February 9, 1995, are critically important components of my Administration’s effort to combat domestic and international terrorism.

The tragic bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City on April 19th stands as a challenge to all Americans to preserve a safe society. In the wake of this cowardly attack on innocent men, women, and children, following other terrorist incidents at home and abroad over the past several years, we must ensure that law enforcement authorities have the legal tools and resources they need to fight terrorism. The Antiterrorism Amendments Act of 1995 will help us to prevent terrorism through vigorous and effective investigation and prosecution. (“Message”)

This suggests that Clinton only started to use the ‘terrorism’ terminology because he hoped it would help him achieve concrete political ends.

Thus, while Clinton eventually acknowledged that ‘terrorism’ constituted a serious threat to U.S. national security, he did not conceptualize it as a form of war as Ronald Reagan had done (see again Chapter 3). Clinton rather spoke of “the fight against terrorism”²⁷ and only used more militarized rhetoric in a handful of occasions.²⁸ This constituted in many ways a de-escalation of the political rhetoric of the previous decade and allowed Clinton to rather frame ‘terrorism’ as a criminal and legal issue. He used and exploited this rhetorical strategy, for instance, in the case of the Oklahoma City bombing in order to urge Congress to pass his proposed legislation. In the statement quoted above, Clinton asserted that “we [had to] ensure that law enforcement authorities ha[d] the legal tools and resources they need[ed] to fight terrorism” (“Message”), thus conceptualizing ‘terrorism’ as a crime which could only be fought adequately if Congress passed his legislation.

Hence, I propose to read Clinton’s rhetoric on ‘terrorism’ in a more nuanced manner than Winkler who has simply argued that “[b]y adopting the prophetic tradition, Clinton elevated terrorism into a crime against God’s will” (*In the Name* 154). Winkler’s claim that Clinton framed ‘terrorism’ in a religious manner is, in my view, not borne out by

²⁷Examples for statements in which Clinton spoke of “the fight against terrorism” include, e.g., “Remarks on the Terrorist;” “Remarks on International;” “President’s Radio” 10 Aug. 1996; “Remarks Announcing;” and “Remarks to the 51st Session”

²⁸See, e.g., “President’s Radio” 20 May 1995; and “Remarks to the Community.”

the evidence. Moreover, Clinton did not exclusively refer to ‘terrorism’ as a crime. In this context, Tsui has asserted that “[i]n contrast to Winkler’s definition and observation, [. . .] Bill Clinton adopted both the crime frame and the war metaphor to construct his political discourse on terrorism” (53). I would also caution to overstate the impact of Clinton’s use of the “war metaphor” since, as the examples above illustrate, he was not consistent in his labeling of ‘terrorism’ as war and rather used more ambiguous terminology for specific political purposes.

As the decade wore on, the ‘terrorism’ discourse became continuously more established and powerful, predetermining to a certain extent the interpretation of incidents as acts of ‘terrorism,’ but also enabling President Clinton to harness this framing for political purposes. This dynamic comes particularly to the fore in the case of the al-Qaeda bombings of the American embassies in Africa. Here, Clinton was noticeably quicker in referring to these incidents as ‘terrorism.’ On August 8, 1998, one day after the attacks, he already stated, “I want to talk to you about the terrorist bombings yesterday that took the lives of Americans and Africans at our Embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; to tell you what we are doing and how we are combating the larger problem of terrorism that targets Americans” (“President’s Radio” 8 Aug. 1998). Moreover, he justified the retaliatory strikes against supposed al-Qaeda bases in Sudan and Afghanistan by saying that he

ha[d] said many times that terrorism [wa]s one of the greatest dangers we face[d] in this new global era. We saw its twisted mentality at work last week in the Embassy bombings in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, which took the lives of innocent Americans and Africans and injured thousands more. Today we [. . .] struck back.

The United States launched an attack this morning on one of the most active terrorist bases in the world. (“Remarks in Martha’s Vinyard”)

Clinton’s quick move to characterize the incident as act of ‘terrorism’ demonstrates how pervasive the discourse had become by the end of the decade.

But Clinton’s construction of the embassy bombings as cases of ‘terrorism’ also served a political purpose. At the time of the attacks, the (by now infamous) Lewinsky scandal had reached a new peak and domestically, the president had come under significant attack for his (mis-)conduct in office. Clinton ordered the retaliatory strike against al-Qaeda only three days after publicly admitting to his affair with White House intern Monika

Lewinsky and received widespread public support for his ‘tough’ stance against ‘terrorism’ (Hendrickson 107). The ‘terrorism’ rhetoric, and Clinton’s attempts to position himself as patriotic defender against it, constituted a savory political tactic as the retaliatory strikes were not only extremely popular, but also quieted his domestic enemies who did not want to be seen as “preventing the president from using force against a Muslim fundamentalist linked to embassy bombings who had also declared war on the United States” (Hendrickson 111).

Thus, while Clinton was careful and calculating in his usage of the ‘terrorism’ discourse, he could nevertheless not escape its influence and reach. This becomes apparent when examining how he conceptualized the term itself. After the attacks in Tokyo and Oklahoma, President Clinton noticeably started to frame ‘terrorism’ as ‘new’ and ‘different,’ clearly tapping into and echoing academic constructions of the term. Thus, he also spoke of “the changing nature and scope of the threat of terrorist actions” and maintained that “[o]ur generation’s enemies [we]re the terrorists and their outlaw nation sponsors” (“President’s Radio” 20 May 1995; “Remarks on the 50th Anniversary”). During the 1996 “State of the Union” speech, he warned his audience:

The threats we face today as Americans respect no nation’s borders. Think of them: terrorism, the spread of weapons of mass destruction, organized crime, drug trafficking, ethnic and religious hatred, aggression by rogue states, environmental degradation. If we fail to address these threats today, we will suffer the consequences in all our tomorrows. (“Address”)

Similarly, he cautioned the public that “in an open world of easy information, quick technology, and rapid movements, we [we]re all more vulnerable than we used to be to terrorism and its interconnected allies, organized crime, drug running, and the spread of weapons of destruction” (“Remarks at the University”). In his 1996 address to the United Nations General Assembly, he informed his audience that “[t]his [wa]s also an age of new threats: threats from terrorists, from rogue states that support them; threats from ethnic, religious, racial, and tribal hatreds; threats from international criminals and drug traffickers, all of whom w[ould] be more dangerous if they gain[ed] access to weapons of mass destruction” (“Remarks to the 51st Session”). As these statements illustrate, in his understanding of ‘terrorism,’ President Clinton followed the discursive framing of the issue as ‘new,’ propagated by independent groups relying on ‘weapons of mass destruction.’

He even spoke of “terrorist networks” at times (e.g. “Interview”), thus clearly tapping into discursivizations of the issue developed in the 1980s as well as more contemporary adaptations.

Where he differed, however, from the dominant discursive construction of ‘new terrorism’ was with regard to the role of Islam. He repeatedly stated that he did not think an intrinsic connection existed between Islam and ‘terrorism,’ as the ‘new terrorism’ discourse would have it. Rather, he spoke of “the opportunity to beat back the forces of radicalism and terrorism that unfairly ha[d] been identified with Islam by so many people” (“Remarks at a Democratic”). Moreover, he declared that “even though we ha[d] had problems with terrorism coming out of the Middle East, it [wa]s not inherently related to Islam, not to the religion, not to the culture” (“President’s News Conference in Jakarta”). During an address to the United Nations General Assembly in 1998, Clinton argued the following:

Some people believe that terrorism’s principal fault line centers on what they see as an inevitable clash of civilizations. It is an issue that deserves a lot of debate in this great hall. Specifically, many believe there is an inevitable clash between Western civilization and Western values, and Islamic civilizations and values. I believe this view is terribly wrong. False prophets may use and abuse any religion to justify whatever political objectives they have, even cold-blooded murder. Some may have the world believe that Almighty God himself, the Merciful, grants a license to kill. But that is not our [America’s] understanding of Islam. (“Remarks to the 53rd Session”)

Clinton’s phrasing here, his references to a “fault line” and “an inevitable clash of civilizations,” constituted an unequivocal rebuttal of Huntington’s theses. This means that the Clinton administration was, on the one hand, aware of the hegemonic construction of ‘new terrorism’ and exploited central tenets of it (like the supposed threat from WMDs) whenever it proved politically expedient.²⁹ On the other hand, Clinton also positioned himself explicitly against its core claim that the ‘new terrorism’ was predominantly ‘Islamic’ in nature.

However, Clinton’s nuanced approach to ‘terrorism,’ particularly ‘Islamic terrorism,’ did not influence the administration’s discourse on ‘terrorism’ in a lasting way. This becomes evident when considering the official annual government reports on ‘terrorism,’

²⁹See S. Wright for an impressive analysis of how the Clinton administration came to discursively frame the threat of ‘terrorism’ with ‘weapons of mass destruction.’ Wright, however, does not address the theme of ‘Islamic terrorism’ or the larger, general discourse of ‘new terrorism’ of the 1990s in which the fear of ‘WMD terrorism’ was embedded.

in the 1990s entitled *Patterns of Global Terrorism*. Following the dominant discursive interpretation of the issue, these reports constructed ‘terrorism’ in the 1990s as ‘new’ and predominantly ‘Muslim’ and ‘Islamic’ in nature and adapted their framing of the ‘terrorism’ threat to fit the discursive mandate. In their framing, the reports also evoked past constructions of ‘Arab’ and ‘Middle Eastern terrorism’ to further imbue the concept of ‘Islamic terrorism’ with power.

Thus, the editions of *Patterns of Global Terrorism* in the 1990s singled out ‘Muslim extremism’ and ‘Islamic terrorism’ (used synonymously) from the very beginning. The reports were littered with references to “[t]errorist and militant Moslem groups” (*Patterns 1991* 3), “Islamic extremists” (e.g. *Patterns 1992* 15, *Patterns 1993* 16, *Patterns 1996* 19), “[e]xtremist Muslim groups” supposedly at work in the entire Middle East (*Patterns 1994* 13), and “Islamic militants and terrorists” (*Patterns 1995* 3). At times, the reports focused on and praised different Middle Eastern governments as “publicly committed to taking the necessary actions to counter terrorist threats, particularly from religious extremists” (*Patterns 1997* 28). The multitude of these examples not only shows the pervasiveness of the trope of the ‘Islamic terrorist,’ but also indicates that government officials and ‘terrorism’ experts had fixated on ‘Islamic terrorism’ as the foremost threat against the United States and its interests in the Middle East. As a side effect, this also fixed the new threat geographically and maintained a narrative coherence with ‘terrorism’ reports from previous decades, suggesting that the Middle East continued to be a hotbed for ‘terrorism,’ now of the religious kind.

The reports constructed ‘Islamic terrorism’ as the predominant menace of the decade in unequivocal terms and represented it as embodiment of the ‘new’ kind of ‘terrorism’ confronting the United States. *Patterns 1994*, for instance, noted that “[t]errorism continued to menace civil society in 1994. Although international terrorism declined worldwide, there was an upsurge of attacks by Islamic extremist groups” and discerned “a trend in recent years of a decline in attacks by secular terrorist groups and an increase in terrorist activities by radical Islamic groups” (iii). Similarly, *Patterns 1995* maintained that “[t]errorism by extremist individuals or groups claiming to act for religious motives continued to dominate international terrorism in 1995” (iii) and warned:

Many of these terrorists – some loosely organized and some representing groups – claimed to act for Islam and operated, increasingly, on a global scale. These transnational terrorists benefit from modern communications and transportation, have global sources of funding, are knowledgeable about modern explosives and weapons, and are more difficult to track and apprehend than members of the old established groups or those sponsored by states. (iii)

Patterns 1996 also found that “the trend continued toward more ruthless attacks on mass civilian targets and the use of more powerful bombs. The threat of terrorist use of materials of mass destruction [wa]s an issue of growing concern” (iii). The report for 1996 additionally argued that “[t]errorism by religious fanatics and groups manipulating religion, especially Islam, for political purposes continued to dominate international terrorism in 1996” (*Patterns 1996* iii). The annual ‘terrorism’ reports thus constructed ‘Islamic terrorism’ following the already established discursive conventions of the issue as ‘new,’ prone to use ‘weapons of mass destruction,’ and guided by extreme religious fervor instead of political motives. It also tapped into discursivizations of ‘terrorism’ from the previous decade, particularly notions of international ‘terrorism’ networks, thus exploiting this discursive continuity to make the claims appear as ‘logical.’

In this context, the reports eventually also began singling out Osama bin Laden (spelled “Usama Bin Ladin”) and al-Qaeda, presenting bin Laden as a sponsor of ‘terrorism’ with the same power and influence as was previously accorded evil state sponsors of ‘terrorism’ (see previous chapters). He was mentioned for the first time in *Patterns 1995* in the section “Overview of State-Sponsored Terrorism” where Sudan’s official status as ‘state sponsor of terrorism’ was justified with his ‘terrorist’ activities in the country:

Khartoum also permitted Usama Bin Ladin, a denaturalized Saudi citizen with mujahedin contacts, to use Sudan as a shelter for his radical Muslim followers and to finance and train militant groups. Bin Ladin, who lives in Khartoum and owns numerous business enterprises in Sudan, has been linked to numerous terrorist organizations. He directs funding and other logistic support through his companies to a number of extremist causes. (27)

This argumentation constitutes an inherent contradiction in the reports’ construction of ‘terrorism’ and ‘state-sponsored terrorism’ in particular. *Patterns of Global Terrorism* defined ‘state-sponsored terrorism’ as “[t]he provision of funding, safehaven, and weapons and logistic support to terrorists by sovereign states” and deemed it “crucial to the operation

of many international terrorist organizations” (*Patterns 1994* 19).³⁰ But the discursive framing of ‘new (Islamic) terrorism’ as predominantly perpetrated by independent groups without any fixed ties to friendly governments made the category of ‘state-sponsored terrorism’ somewhat obsolete. *Patterns* responded to this problem by expanding the concept to include “international terrorist financiers such as the Saudi dissident Usama Bin Ladin” (*Patterns 1996* iii), thereby developing the notion of ‘state sponsorship’ further to include individual persons as facilitators of ‘terrorism,’ endowing them with global power and influence. What is more, this rhetorical strategy successfully tapped into notions of ‘terrorism’ sponsors (whether independent nations or individuals) as operating in international networks. These ideas were first circulated during the Reagan years and now updated so that they could be applied to bin Laden.

Thus, over the course of the decade, bin Laden and al-Qaeda were constructed as the epitome of the ‘new Islamic terrorism’ targeting the United States and American interests in the Middle East and beyond. For instance, *Patterns 1996* recorded that “[i]nternational terrorist financier Usama Bin Ladin publicly threatened US interests in the Gulf, including Kuwait, in September and again in December. US and Western establishments received numerous telephoned and faxed bomb threats during the year” and that bin Laden had “publicly called on his supporters to attack US interests in Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf states” (20, 21). In the report for the year 1997, bin Laden received his own sub-category in the section on ‘state sponsorship of terrorism,’ which is noteworthy since the report was published before the bombings of the U.S. embassies in Africa in the summer of 1998. There, he was described as “one of the most significant sponsors of Sunni Islamic terrorist groups” (*Patterns 1997* 30), a characterization which constructed him as powerful leader of an international ‘terrorism’ network comprising a multitude of Islamic ‘terrorist’ groups out to attack the United States. This clearly evoked central knowledge claims about ‘terrorism’ from the 1980s and exploited them to full effect to assign meaning to the present situation.

Patterns 1998, in response to the embassy bombings, listed bin Laden and al-Qaeda in its “Appendix B: Information on Terrorist Groups,” a clear indicator that the group was

³⁰The other annual reports for the decade all included similarly phrased statements. In the 1990s, Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Sudan, and Syria were officially designated as state sponsors of ‘terrorism.’

now considered an established threat against the U.S. Moreover, the report for 1998 stressed bin Laden's far-reaching influence and power. *Patterns 1998* acknowledged that "there was troubling evidence of a growing collaboration in other countries between Egyptian extremists [...] and Usama Bin Ladin," taking it as an indicator of "the global reach of Usama Bin Ladin [...] and his network" (23, 29). As the report made clear,

Bin Ladin leads a broad-based, versatile organization. [...] The diverse groups under his umbrella afford Bin Ladin resources beyond those of the people directly loyal to him. With his own inherited wealth, business interests, contributions from sympathizers in various countries, and support from close allies [...], he funds, trains, and offers logistic help to extremists not directly affiliated with his organization. (29)

The threat emanating from bin Laden was further enhanced in subsequent reports. *Patterns 1999*, for instance, mentioned bin Laden when discussing 'WMD terrorism,' writing that "*Usama Bin Ladin spoke publicly about acquiring such a capability and likened his pursuit of those weapons to a religious duty.*" The report for the year 2000 similarly warned that while "[m]ost terrorists continued to rely on conventional tactics, such as bombing, shooting, and kidnapping, [...] some terrorists – such as Usama Bin Ladin and his associates – continued to seek CBRN [chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear] capabilities" (*Patterns 2000*). In this manner, the annual government reports on 'terrorism' constructed Osama bin Laden as quintessential 'new Islamic terrorist' while simultaneously tapping into already firmly established discursivizations of 'terrorism' as requiring the support of a wealthy and powerful third party.

Overall, then, the political discourse on 'terrorism' in the mid- to late 1990s confirmed the dominant conceptualization of the issue as a 'new' and unprecedented threat. It also reflected and enhanced already existing concerns over so-called WMDs and a supposed increased lethality and brutality in 'terrorist' attacks. With regard to the perpetrators, however, it is noteworthy that President Clinton clearly did not follow the discursively constructed threat of 'Islamic terrorism' as emblematic of this 'new' terrorism. Nevertheless, his influence on the discourse was not substantial enough to challenge or even change the dominant framing of the issue. This means that the political discourse on 'terrorism' essentially stabilized these constructions about 'Islamic terrorism' and helped spread them further. The next section examines how these conceptualizations of 'Islamic terrorism' were reflected and reworked in news and cultural discourses of the decade.

4.5 “There Will Never Be a Last Cell! It’s Just the Beginning.” – The ‘Terrorism’ Discourse in U.S. News Media and Popular Culture in the Mid- to Late 1990s

Academic and political discourses on ‘(Islamic) terrorism’ also seeped into media and cultural discourses, influencing how they framed the issue at hand. The American news media regularly referred to scholars of ‘terrorism’ and government officials when reporting on and analyzing violent incidents. Particularly in the latter half of the decade, these cross-references worked to stabilize ‘Islamic terrorism’ as dominant discursive concept in news media and cultural discourses. In this section, I discuss how the ‘terrorism’ reporting in *The New York Times* evolved and increasingly focused on Islam in explanations and characterizations of events and perpetrators. Then I examine how Hollywood productions in the mid- to late 1990s engaged in a similar discursivization of ‘terrorism,’ foregrounding Islam as motivating force behind ‘terrorism’ and constructing ‘Islamic terrorism’ as ‘new’ threat against the United States.

As the discussion above has shown, *The New York Times* reported less on ‘terrorism’ at the beginning of the decade and overwhelmingly linked it to ‘Arabs,’ the Middle East, and Islam. However, as the decade wore on, the ‘Islamic’ component in conceptualizations of ‘terrorism’ became increasingly dominant and eventually the main attribute to depict the issue and the perpetrators. This becomes evident when comparing the reporting in *The New York Times* on specific incidents which were constructed as acts of ‘Islamic terrorism’ targeting the United States in the mid- to late 1990s, departing from previous constructions which combined references to the perpetrators’ religion with their ethnicity and origins.

Indeed, as Figure 4.4 visualizes, the spikes in reporting on ‘terrorism’ in the mid- to late 1990s are also clearly related to concrete incidents of violence which were discursivized as acts of ‘(Islamic) terrorism’ against the United States. Thus, in 1993, of the 1,696 articles on ‘terrorism’ which were published by *The New York Times*, 895 pieces referred to the bombing of the World Trade Center that year, i.e. 53% of the overall reporting. Two years later, the Oklahoma City bombing dominated the news. 764 articles linked the event to ‘terrorism,’ i.e. 38% of the writing on ‘terrorism’ that year. The embassy bombings in

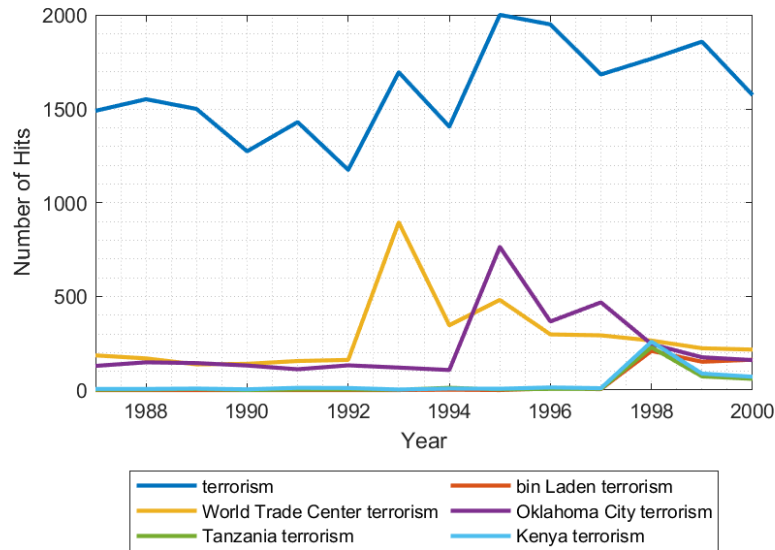


Figure 4.4: Reporting on ‘terrorist’ incidents in *The New York Times*, 1987-2000

Tanzania and Kenya in 1998 similarly impacted the coverage of ‘terrorism’ in *The New York Times*. Taken together, articles mentioning either Tanzania or Kenya in connection with ‘terrorism’ made up 27% of the overall writing on the topic for that year (although there is bound to be some overlap with articles listed in both searches). Moreover, 1998 marks the year when *The New York Times* began to report increasingly on Osama bin Laden. While there were only 5 pieces which mentioned his name in connection with ‘terrorism’ in 1997, a year later, this number had increased to 209 articles, i.e. 12%, suggesting that the higher journalistic interest in his person was related to the attacks on the U.S. embassies in Africa. The data thus not only indicates that these different incidents were understood as acts of ‘terrorism’ but also that they constituted important events which seemingly proved central knowledge claims of the ‘terrorism’ discourse, namely that ‘Islamic terrorism’ was emerging as a new threat against the United States.

This becomes apparent when examining the reporting in *The New York Times* about these incidents. Thus, when a bomb blew up the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma on April 19, 1995, *The New York Times* immediately informed its readers that state officials assumed “that the bombing was a terrorist attack against the Government” (Johnston A1). What is more, that same article reported on “the possibility that the attack had been the work of Islamic militants, like those who bombed the World Trade

Center in February 1993” (B8). Johnston further relayed to his readers that “[s]everal news organizations, including CNN, reported that investigators were seeking to question several men, described as being Middle Eastern in appearance, who had driven away from the building shortly before the blast” (B8). Here, Johnston linked the “Islamic militants” of the World Trade Center bombing to the “Middle Eastern” men connected to the Oklahoma bombing, implying that what happened in Oklahoma the day before constituted an act of ‘terrorism’ committed by ‘Islamic terrorists’ from the Middle East.

In fact, many of his colleagues at *The New York Times* immediately drew parallels to the World Trade Center bombing. John Kifner, for instance, commented on the fact that “today’s bombing [...] was similar in intensity to the World Trade Center bombing in New York two years ago” (“12 Victims” A1). Another article stressed that “[t]he scene was eerily like the surreal world in lower Manhattan in the hours after a van packed with explosives blew up in the garage of the World Trade Center” (“Savagery” A22). The same contribution, tellingly entitled “Savagery in Oklahoma,” went even further in stating that “the gutted building and the cars burning in the streets were more reminiscent of war-torn Beirut than a city in America’s heartland. A fate like Beirut’s Americans and their Government must never tolerate” (A22). This constituted a clear reference to the 1983 Marine barracks bombing and evoked the subtext of ‘Arab’ and ‘Islamic terrorism.’

Some journalists went to considerable lengths to represent ‘Islamic terrorists’ as prime suspects. Malcom Browne, for example, wrote:

Several experts [...] saw similarities between the type of damage sustained here and the damage done to buildings in London in two bombings carried out in 1992 by the Irish Republican Army. This does not demonstrate a link between the bombings, they said, but the I.R.A. is widely suspected of having coached Islamic fundamentalist terrorists in the making and use of powerful bombs. (A25)

Browne took similarities between the Oklahoma bombing and similar attacks perpetrated by members of the Irish Republican Army as evidence for “Islamic fundamentalist terrorists” behind the events in Oklahoma. This suggests that the discourse of ‘Islamic terrorism’ had become the hegemonic model to explain incidents like the one in Oklahoma and that, unconsciously or not, reporters of *The New York Times* attempted to construct events to fit the prescribed narrative.

This development reached an endpoint of sorts in 1998 with the coverage of the almost simultaneous bombings of the U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on August 7, 1998, which killed 224 people and injured more than 4,000 persons. These incidents, the rescue efforts, and the investigation into possible culprits dominated the headlines of *The New York Times* for days and the newspaper explained to readers that these blasts were another instance of ‘terrorism’ targeting the United States. From the beginning of the coverage, journalists referred to the bombings as “coordinated terrorist attacks” (McKinley A1), “the terrorist bombing” (Weiner, “Experts” A1), “the terrorist explosion” (McFadden, “Sergeant” A8), and announced that the United States was living in “an age of global terrorism” (McKinley A1). An opinion piece published the day after the bombings asserted that “[t]he deadly terrorism that struck United States embassies in Africa yesterday stunned Americans. It came as an unwelcome reminder that, in a terrorist’s eyes, the world’s most powerful country remains the world’s number one target” (“Embassy” A14). Thus, the bombings were unequivocally explained as ‘terrorism’ against the United States.

With regard to possible perpetrators, the suspicion came to rest immediately on Osama bin Laden whom reporters constructed as dangerous ‘terrorism’ sponsor who provided financial and logistical support to ‘Islamic terrorists’ all over the globe after having declared a ‘holy war’ (or jihad) on the United States for religious reasons. James McKinley labeled bin Laden a “Saudi Arabian Islamic militant” and informed readers that the State Department had officially identified him as “a sponsor of terrorism” (A6), thus linking Islam and ‘terrorism’ in the persona of bin Laden. His colleague Philip Shenon told readers that bin Laden “ha[d] sworn to wage a holy war on the United States and its interests abroad” and also quoted from the State Department’s description of the man as “one of the most significant financial sponsors of Islamic extremist activities in the world” (“Focus” A8). Shenon also confirmed to readers that the suspect “ha[d] close ties to Muslim extremist groups in Sudan” (“Focus” A8).

Similarly, in his article, Tim Weiner extensively quoted Milton Bearden, “a retired senior C.I.A. official who was the ranking officer for the agency in Afghanistan” as warning:

This [the embassy bombings] in all likelihood was not state supported, and if it is not, ‘Terror Inc.’ is beginning to creep in [. . .]. Whether or not Bin Laden was in on it[,] there may be an emerging linkage between Bin Laden, the Islamic Jihad guys and the Islamic Group out of Egypt. If so, these people are close to becoming a state unto themselves. (“Sophisticated” A8).

John Kifner, in turn, described bin Laden as “a multimillionaire Saudi businessman who fought in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union and [who] ha[d] a worldwide network of Islamic terrorists” (“Wealthy” A11), unequivocally marking Osama bin Laden as aligned with ‘Islamic terrorists.’ Indeed, similar to academic and political constructions, in the writing of *The New York Times*, Osama bin Laden was presented as dangerous leader of an international ‘terrorism’ network which operated much like the ‘terrorism’ networks of the 1980s. An important difference, however, was that this ‘new’ type of ‘terrorism’ network did not require state support and was instead led by a wealthy individual with a religiously motivated agenda. Osama bin Laden seemingly epitomized these ideas.

These constructions of ‘Islamic terrorism’ not only influenced journalistic writings on the topic. In a similar development, Hollywood productions also evolved to focus on ‘Islamic terrorists’ as villains in successful movies in the latter half of the decade. In the early 1990s, Hollywood productions still represented ‘terrorism’ as an amalgam of stereotypes about ‘Arabs,’ Islam, and the Middle East generally. From the mid-1990s onwards, however, these constructions increasingly shifted to focus predominantly on religion in order to illustrate ‘terrorist’ motivations, marginalizing political explanations of ‘terrorism’ or references to ethnicity and nationality. This effectively fortified and spread the trope of the ‘Islamic terrorist’ who wanted to destroy the United States as principal representative of ‘the West’ in a Huntington-esque “Clash of Civilizations.” These narratives were most dominantly developed by two successful Hollywood productions, *Executive Decision*, released in 1996, and *The Siege*, which hit the theaters two years later. Both films performed well at the box office; *Executive Decision* had a budget of \$55 million and made \$122 million worldwide while *The Siege* cost \$70 million to make and earned \$116 million across the globe (“Executive;” “Siege”). This suggests that audiences worldwide continued to be interested in movies about ‘(Islamic) terrorism,’ meaning that the issue maintained its powerful position in cultural discourses about ‘terrorism’ and violence.

When *Executive Decision* arrived in American movie theaters in 1996, these discursive tendencies to construct ‘Arab terrorists’ from the Middle East as ‘Islamic’ was even more pronounced than in movies like *Navy SEALs* or *True Lies* from the beginning of the decade. *Executive Decision* (1996), directed by Stuart Baird and starring Kurt Russell, features a group of ‘Islamic terrorists’ who take over Oceanic Airlines Flight 343 en route from Athens to Washington, D.C., ostensibly in order to pressure the U.S. government to release their leader El Sayed Jaffa who was captured in the beginning of the movie. But ‘terrorism’ expert Dr. David Grant (Russell) suspects that this is a ruse by Jaffa’s second in command, Nagi Hassan (played by David Suchet) who really wants to detonate barrels of stolen Soviet nerve toxin DZ-5 in a suicide mission which would eradicate not only the entire population of Washington D.C., but “half of the Eastern Seaboard” (1:08:38), as Grant realizes soon. In order to stop Hassan and his group of ‘terrorists,’ Grant and a multi-ethnic special forces ‘counter-terrorism’ team find a way to secretly board Flight 343 mid-air with the help of a special stealth aircraft provided by the U.S. army and begin an operation to take out the ‘terrorists’ and regain control over the hijacked plane. Once on board the plane, the team around Grant also realizes that Hassan has hidden a remote-controlled bomb on board the plane, meaning that there is a ‘sleeper’ among the passengers who can detonate the nerve gas via a small hand-held electronic device. Eventually, with the help of stewardess Jean (Halle Berry), Grant and his team manage to take out the sleeper, kill all other ‘terrorists,’ and land the plane safely in D.C.

The ‘terrorists’ in *Executive Decision* are unequivocally depicted as ‘Islamic’ and Hassan is represented as being on a divine mission from Allah to attack the U.S. From the beginning, Hassan is characterized by Grant as “an extremist in every sense” (22:08), a characterization the movie confirms in a later sequence which shows Hassan to have a small Koran in the pocket of his jacket on board the hijacked plane. One scene shows him reading in it, focused and calm, while another scene depicts him praying in a secluded corner of the plane, again suggesting that Islam is the guiding force behind his ‘terrorist’ plans. Moreover, when the desperate crisis team back in Washington decides to free Jaffa in hopes that he can persuade Hassan to give up his plans, Hassan tells Jaffa via phone that “Allah has blessed us. [...] All the people of Islam will embrace you as its chosen

leader. I am your flame, the Sword of Allah – and with it I will strike deep into the heart of the infidel” (1:20:05-20:23). Hassan’s speech makes it clear that he sees himself as on a divine mission in the name of Islam. By characterizing the United States as “infidel,” the conflict in the movie acquires a religious dimension – it is explicitly not about political grievances. In fact, it was Hassan himself who set his own boss up for capture, feigning a political motive so that U.S. authorities, believing that this was a hijacking for political reasons, would allow the plane into U.S. airspace where Hassan can detonate the nerve gas for even greater damage.

Hassan is not the only ‘Islamic terrorist’ in the group of hijackers. When he eventually tells his men that their boss Jaffa has been freed by U.S. authorities, they celebrate and cheer, jelling “Allahu akbar” repeatedly while the frightened passengers look on bewilderedly (1:20:45-21:00). Only one of the ‘terrorists’ questions Hassan’s motives and delivers a defense of Islam, arguing that “[t]his has nothing to do with Islam. This is not Allah’s will. You’re blinded by your hatred, and I will have nothing to do with your plan” (1:22:46-22:53). He is the only one in the movie defending Islam against the connection with ‘terrorism’ and since he is one of the ‘terrorists’ himself, his words are not convincing and undermined by his ‘terrorist’ status. Moreover, the man is immediately killed by Hassan, indicating that his more benign understanding of Islam does not represent a widely-shared view; rather, Hassan and the rest of the group have taken over Islam with their ‘terrorism’ and its defenders are powerless to stop them.

Hassan is powerful and dangerous because he is a fierce ‘Muslim terrorist.’ Minutes before killing the man opposing his plans, Hassan explains to him that “Allah has chosen for us a task greater than Jaffa’s freedom. We are the true soldiers of Islam. Our destiny is to deliver the vengeance of Allah into the belly of the infidel” (1:22:37-22:44). In fact, Hassan is such a dedicated ‘Islamic terrorist’ that in the end, when Grant and his team have defused the bomb and stormed the plane, he still kills the two pilots, hoping that the plane will crash and the gas bombs will detonate anyway. The ‘terrorists’ in *Executive Decision*, then, are constructed as ‘Islamic’ from the outset and the portrayal of ‘Islamic terrorism’ is more overt than in earlier Hollywood productions.

This development eventually culminated in the 1998 film *The Siege*, directed by Edward Zwick and starring Denzel Washington as FBI leading agent and moral compass of the film, Anthony “Hub” Hubbard, Annette Bening as CIA agent with a dark past, Elise Kraft/Sharon Bridger, Tony Shalhoub as Lebanese-American FBI agent Frank Haddad, and Bruce Willis as General William Devereaux. In *The Siege*, cells of ‘Islamic terrorists’ stage an escalating number of ‘terrorist’ attacks in the United States in order to force the U.S. government to release Sheik Ahmed Bin Talal who, at the opening of the movie, was accused of being the mastermind behind the bombings of the U.S. army barracks in Dharhan, Saudi Arabia, and subsequently kidnapped by General Devereaux who conducted this operation in total secret from the government itself. Over the course of the movie, it is revealed that CIA agent Elise Kraft (her real name, it turns out later, is actually Sharon Bridger) helped train these ‘terrorists’ during the Gulf War as part of a CIA operation to overthrow Saddam Hussein in Iraq and have the Sheik govern in his place instead. But “there was a policy shift,” as Kraft/Bridger sarcastically tells Agent Hubbard, and the CIA mission was canceled, leaving the group around the Sheik in grave danger in Iraq. Feeling guilty, Kraft/Bridger then helped many members of the Sheik’s group come to the U.S., circumventing the ‘terrorist watch list’ on which the group was now placed and not realizing that these men were planning to exact revenge on the U.S. through acts of ‘Islamic terrorism.’

Despite these plot ambiguities, the ‘terrorists’ in *The Siege* are unequivocally depicted as ‘Islamic’ in nature. This becomes evident from the very beginning as *The Siege* makes use of the technique of “remediation” and opens abruptly with original footage of the historical bombing of the Khobar Towers on June 25, 1996, located near the Saudi Arabian city Dhahran, which killed twenty people and injured almost 500 more (Bächler 191). The footage shows the destroyed buildings and frantic rescue efforts to retrieve mangled bodies from the rubble while news commentators report on “how vulnerable U.S. troops are” (00:38) and explain that (fictional) Sheik Ahmed Bin Talal, “a radical fundamentalist cleric” (00:49), has been named as the prime suspect behind the bombings. These comments together with the image of the Sheik, bearded and wearing the typical Middle Eastern headdress and thus marked as ‘Arab,’ already reinforce the notion

that what can be seen on the screen constitutes ‘Islamic terrorism.’³¹ This is immediately confirmed by the film as the next shot shows President Clinton, originally addressing the Khobar Towers bombing, saying that “[t]he explosion appears to be the work of terrorists” (00:50-00:53). Thus, *The Siege* already establishes within the first minute of film that what audiences will see is a story about ‘Islamic terrorism’ targeting the United States by activating the political discourse on the issue, inviting audiences to compare and link ‘real’ instances of ‘Islamic terrorism’ against the U.S. with the fictional attack on screen.

This first impression is further strengthened as the film continues. The next minutes detail how the Sheik is kidnapped, ostensibly by American forces, while driving in a car in the middle of the desert as the camera frequently cuts back to the continuation of Clinton’s statement, promising quick and severe punishment for the perpetrators of the bombings. But this positive representation of American ‘counter-terrorism’ capabilities is immediately undermined as the next scenes show the Sheik sitting on a simple bed in a cell, chanting to himself with a string of Muslim prayer beads in his hands. He is clearly praying, quietly and persistently, and even the imposing presence of General Devereaux in the room does not interrupt him. The film then zooms in on the Sheik’s white clothes and head cover which slowly fade out into a glowing white screen which shows the film’s title, *The Siege*. All this time, the religious singing continues and is eventually taken up by another man, a muezzin calling his Muslim congregation to prayer. His singing is intercut with short scenes showing a Muslim family praying at home and a large group of Muslim men praying in unison in a mosque. Only then does the camera pan out to reveal that we are no longer somewhere in the Middle East, but in Brooklyn, New York City.

The long opening sequence is important because it frames the violence in the movie as ‘Islamic terrorism’ and suggests that the United States has become a primary target in a Huntington-esque “Clash of Civilizations.” These early scenes already cast suspicion over all Muslims by linking them visually to the Sheik and connecting them to Islam through the religious chants. By revealing at the end that the praying Muslims, framed as

³¹Most critics have read the Sheik as resembling Osama bin Laden (e.g. Prince, *Firestorm*; Schneider-Ludorff), but are usually writing after 9/11 where his appearance was well-known and pictures of him circulated widely. I do not disagree with this reading but would also caution against overstating this significance since *The Siege* was filmed before Osama bin Laden published his 1998 fatwa, declaring ‘jihad’ against America. In addition, the Sheik is barely mentioned again after the opening sequence and functions as more of a tool to justify the actual plot of the film.

potential ‘terrorists,’ are located in New York, the film implies that the enemy has already invaded the American homeland and infiltrated the city’s neighborhoods. Moreover, as Amata Schneider-Ludorff has pointed out, in these scenes “Islam itself is rendered a global, threatening phenomenon that, seemingly above the laws of space and time, may move from there to here” (87). The inclusion of the film’s title frame in this montage further stresses that the film’s conflict arises out of a clash between the U.S. and ‘Islam.’ As it appears in the film’s opening sequence, the United States is under (*The*) *Siege* from ‘Islamic terrorism.’

In the rest of the film, this clash slowly escalates. Different cells of ‘Islamic terrorists’ stage ‘terrorist’ attacks in the city in order to force the U.S. government to free the Sheik. At first, they explode a bomb filled with blue paint in a bus in order to send a warning to U.S. authorities. When the warning is not heeded, three suicide bombers explode themselves in a bus, this time full of people. A third attack targets New York’s upper class during an intermission in a crowded Broadway theater. The next incident is set to take place in an elementary school where a lone ‘terrorist’ has taken a classroom full of children hostage and wired it with explosives. It is only thanks to Agent Hubbard’s courageous storming of the classroom and targeted shooting of the ‘terrorist’ that no one is harmed. Finally, the last act consists of a van filled with explosives driving into the FBI ‘counter-terrorism’ offices. In each successful ‘terrorist’ instance, the number of casualties rises considerably; the bombing of the FBI building kills more than 600 people and completely destroys the complex in images reminiscent of the opening footage of the Khobar Towers bombing.

The Siege depicts these instances of violence as cases of ‘Islamic terrorism’ targeting America. After the second bus bombing, the FBI team is able to reconstruct that one of the suicide bombers was wearing an Islamic funeral shroud made of “[p]ure, unadulterated, Egyptian cotton” (31:58-32:00). Agent Hubbard immediately understands that this is “[w]hat they use in funerals. Guy was wearing a shroud” (32:03-32:08). Elise Kraft similarly explains in the next scene that “[t]he funeral shroud is the final step in the ritual of self-purification” (33:10-33:14). The implication is clear: These are ‘Islamic terrorists,’ driven by religious motives.

Moreover, *The Siege* also features twice a scene of brown hands washing themselves in a ritual manner, again a subtle coding of the events as ‘Islamic terrorism’ (Villinger 318). The first time, these hands are not only shown as purifying themselves in water, but they also connect wires to make a bomb, turn car keys in the ignition, and drive a black van through New York to eventually bomb the FBI building. The visual link between ‘terrorism’ and Islam is further strengthened as these scenes are cut in-between an important meeting at the Pentagon, which Elise Kraft/Sharon Bridger, Agent Hubbard, and General Devereaux all attend to discuss how to best respond to the ‘terrorist’ incidents plaguing the city. Kraft/Bridger hands out an official CIA report on ‘terrorism’ in the Middle East to all attending the meeting and begins to explain that

I’m sure everyone here knows the traditional model of the terrorist network. One cell controls all others. Cut off the head, the body will wither. Unfortunately, the old wisdom no longer applies. The new paradigm is each cell operates independent of the other. Cut off one head, another rises up in its place. (1:02:17-02:35)

The cutting back and forth in this sequence between Kraft/Bridger’s presentation and the preparations of the suicide driver clearly link the CIA agent’s explanation of ‘new terrorism’ to the ‘Islamic terrorism’ simultaneously targeting the FBI offices. *The Siege*, then, clearly taps into already existing discourses on ‘Islamic terrorism,’ including notions of international “terrorist network[s],” in its framing of the violence on screen.

What is more, the film also validates Huntington’s notion of a “Clash of Civilizations” between “the West and the Rest.” One high-ranking government official tellingly claims that “[t]hey are attacking our way of life” (1:09:19), effectively arguing that there can be no peaceful resolution of the conflict. Likewise, towards the end of the movie, it is revealed that Kraft/Bridger’s Palestinian contact, Samir Nazhde (played by Sami Bouajila), is not as innocent as he has always maintained, but rather the last cell and tasked with blowing himself up in the midst of a peaceful march against the government’s imposition of martial law on the city. Samir has led Kraft/Bridger to a bathhouse under the assumption that they will meet the last ‘terrorist’ cell there and persuade them to stop their plans. But Samir has duped his CIA case officer about his ‘true’ nature. When Samir begins his ritual washings in the water, the movie repeats the close up of brown hands in water – most audiences will understand that this means that Samir is one of the ‘Islamic terrorists’

before Kraft/Bridger does. When Kraft/Bridger states matter-of-factly that “you are the last cell” (1:36:01), Samir grabs a gun, points it at her, and yells that “[t]here will never be a last cell! It’s just the beginning” (1:36:33-36:38). His claims suggest that the ‘Islamic terrorist’ attacks on New York City have little relation to the abduction of the Sheik after all – it is rather about exacting punishment on the U.S. for “trying to tell the world how to live” (1:37:40), meaning that these ‘Islamic terrorists’ attack America for its values and power.

Understandably, the depiction of Muslims and Muslim Americans in *The Siege* generated much controversy at the time. Mark Caro, reporting for the *Chicago Tribune*, told readers that the Council on American–Islamic Relations’ “critique complain[ed] that ‘The Siege’ link[ed] Islamic practices to terrorism, such as by showing a character ritually washing himself before a suicide bomb mission,” indicating that advocacy groups had grown increasingly sensitive and, more importantly, vocal in their critique about Hollywood’s linking of ‘terrorism’ and Islam. Similarly, Judith Gabriel wrote at the time that “scores of major (non-Arab) film critics [...] zeroed in on the not-so-subtle racism that lurked menacingly, familiarly, throughout the film.” Judith Brennan, in turn, informed readers of the *Los Angeles Times* that “the Washington-based Council on American-Islamic Relations [wa]s protesting Twentieth Century Fox’s coming Edward Zwick film, ‘The Siege,’ as a dangerous and stereotypical depiction of Muslim Americans.” Director Edward Zwick and his team defended themselves by insisting that ‘Islamic terrorism’ existed in the ‘real’ world and that it was acceptable for Hollywood movies to take the issue up again on film (Bay). The widespread criticism regarding the representation of ‘Islamic terrorism’ in *The Siege* as well as its defense, then, is telling since both sides did not dispute the existence of ‘Islamic terrorism’ *per se*. This indicates that the concept of ‘Islamic terrorism’ had established itself firmly in American discourses on ‘terrorism’ and that fictional representations had become enmeshed with political reality.

The Siege thus marks an important moment in the discourse on ‘Islamic terrorism’ in the 1990s. While earlier productions like *Navy SEALs* and *True Lies* still represented their ‘terrorists’ as ‘Arab-Islamic’ hybrids, *Executive Decision* and especially *The Siege* did not need to explicitly address the ethnic component any longer in order to make the

threat emanating from the ‘terrorist’ enemy palpable. Instead, these last two productions could foreground the religious component, i.e. the fanatic belief in Islam, and it was clear to audiences that the ‘Islamic terrorists’ they were seeing on-screen were ‘Arabs’ from the Middle East because these attributes underwrote the concept of ‘Islamic terrorism’ itself, activating and exploiting past discourses to empower the current one.

This focus on ‘Islamic fundamentalism’ as sole motivating force of the ‘terrorists’ culminated in *The Siege*, the only film in this cycle where the ‘Islamic terrorists’ are actually successful. The ‘Islamic terrorists’ in *The Siege* manage to pull off not just one, but several devastating ‘terrorist’ attacks in the United States, coercing the nation in the process to (temporarily) suspend its ‘Western’ values and liberties. Tellingly, Agent Hubbard passionately argues with General Deveraux against torturing a ‘terrorist’ suspect in the film, reasoning that “[w]hat if they don’t even want the Sheik? [...] What if what they really want is for us to [...] [b]end the law, shred the constitution just a little bit. Because if we torture him, General... We do that and everything that we have bled and fought and died for is over. And they’ve won. They’ve already won!” (1:23:12-23:40).³² Hubbard constructs the conflict as an American, morally superior ‘us’ against an ‘Islamic terrorist’ ‘them’ and insinuates that ‘they’ have managed to destabilize American society and its proud history of democracy and freedom – and that this is worse than the large number of casualties the ‘terrorist’ attacks have caused so far.

While all four movies imagine the U.S. as under attack from ‘Islamic terrorism,’ in *The Siege* the ‘Islamic terrorists’ have set up an elaborate organization within the country and undermined the open, democratic society. In all four films, the ‘Islamic terrorists’ are eventually defeated, but in *The Siege*, they wreak considerable havoc and kill unsuspecting Americans in significant numbers first. In this regard, it is notable that *The Siege* also departs from Hollywood conventions of how violence is portrayed on screen. After the ‘Islamic terrorists’ have bombed a Broadway theater, the film is explicit in its representation of the injured and dead. As Hubbard and his team arrive at the scene, screams, crying, and voices begging for help (“Please help me!” – “I just don’t want to die!”) can be heard clearly. Scenes show bleeding, disoriented people stumbling out of the theater and even an

³²For a discussion of the use of torture in *The Siege*, see Bächler and Villinger.

elegant woman in a daze walking down the stairs who turns and is revealed to be missing half an arm. Audiences are largely accustomed to aestheticized representations of death, injuries, and violence (Wilkins and Downing 427), and by breaking with these cinematic conventions *The Siege* represents the violence of ‘Islamic terrorism’ as unprecedented and unparalleled in its ferocity and escalates the threat emanating from it for American society. In *The Siege*, ‘Islamic terrorism’ has successfully targeted the United States at home and constitutes an exceptional danger to society, testifying to the power of the discourse on ‘Islamic terrorism’ at the end of the decade and the active role Hollywood films took in shaping and distributing the discourse.

Overall, then, the discursive focus on ‘Islamic terrorism,’ which manifested itself especially in the latter half of the 1990s, framed academic, political, journalistic, and artistic accounts of the phenomenon, presenting the perpetrators as religiously motivated fanatics who wanted to attack the United States as representative of ‘the West’ in an escalating “Clash of Civilizations.” Constructed as particularly ruthless and lethal, ‘Islamic terrorists’ were presented to the wider American public as formidable foes whose motives and objectives were dismissed as vaguely ‘Islamic’ in nature and therefore unreasonable and illogical, void of any political aspects. The discourse on ‘Islamic terrorism’ enjoyed such a hegemonic status that when on a sunny Tuesday morning in September 2001 two planes, hijacked by members of al-Qaeda, flew into the World Trade Center towers while another one crashed into the Pentagon and a fourth plane was brought down by its passengers in the fields of Pennsylvania, the framework of ‘Islamic terrorism’ already predetermined how ‘9/11’ would be interpreted and narrated.

Chapter 5

“Terrorism against Our Nation Will Not Stand” – 9/11, the “War on Terror(ism),” and the ‘Terrorism’ Discourse at the Beginning of the New Millennium

September 11, 2001, started out like any other work day in the United States, but by 8:35 p.m. the nation found itself embroiled in the beginnings of another “war against terrorism,” as President George W. Bush declared in his televised address in the evening (“Address to the Nation”). That same morning, members of al-Qaeda had successfully hijacked four commercial airliners and flown two of them into the World Trade Center Towers in New York City, another one into the Pentagon building in Arlington County, Virginia, while a fourth – possibly en route to the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. – had been brought down by its passengers in fields near Shanksville, Pennsylvania. After the coordinated attacks were over, 2,996 people, including the 19 hijackers, were dead, over 6,000 people were injured, the Pentagon building was severely damaged, and the World Trade Center towers had collapsed, covering large parts of Manhattan in dust and debris. A *New York Times* op-ed called September 11, 2001 “another date that will live in infamy” (Safire), evoking Franklin D. Roosevelt’s famous “Pearl Harbor Speech” and indicating already that the events of the day would be perceived by the majority of Americans as a national trauma of historic proportions, turning the incident into a “singular event” which would spark significant developments in the ‘terrorism’ discourse (Foucault, “Questions” 77).

Indeed, as the previous chapter has shown, at the beginning of the new millennium, the ‘terrorism’ discourse had established itself as the dominant frame through which incidents of violence were interpreted. Hence, as politicians, academics, journalists, and artists were making sense of the September 11 attacks and the “war on terror(ism)” following in their wake, they tapped into discursive traditions and concepts from previous decades in order to interpret and explain what had happened. The narrative which emerged posited that the events constituted a heinous and evil attack committed by fanatical ‘Islamic terrorists’ who had acted out of their irrational hatred and found justification for their

deeds in the teachings of Islam. Unsurprisingly, then, for many discursive actors, war became the only appropriate response to this ‘terrorist’ attack, a strategy which was in part successful because it capitalized on ideas which the discourse on ‘terrorism’ had held in various forms since the 1970s and 1980s.

The dominance of the ‘terrorism’ discourse was apparent from the very beginning and it clearly shaped the political response to the attacks. Notably, on the morning of September 11, 2001 President Bush spoke of an “apparent terrorist attack on our country” within minutes of being notified that planes had crashed into the World Trade Center in New York City (“Remarks”). A few moments later, Bush asserted, “Terrorism against our nation will not stand.” At this point, information about what had happened, who had done it, and why, was still scarce, yet the president had already chosen to think of and speak about this “difficult moment for America” in terms of ‘terrorism.’ When the president eventually addressed the nation in a televised statement in the evening, the ‘terrorism’ frame was also firmly in place. Bush opened his speech by stating that “[t]oday, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts” (“Address to the Nation”). The president’s choice to interpret the attacks of 9/11 as a ‘terrorist’ attack not only foreclosed other possible meanings. It also attested to the pervasive power inherent in the ‘terrorism’ discourse at the beginning of the new millennium. In fact, the Bush administration had no other interpretative frame available to make sense of what had happened since discourses framing (political) violence as, e.g., crime against humanity were not nearly as influential as the ‘terrorism’ discourse.¹

The ubiquitous presence of the discourse on ‘terrorism’ also comes to the fore in the way the president constructed ‘terrorism’ itself. In his public statements on the matter, President Bush continuously tapped into conceptualizations of ‘terrorism’ from previous decades, exploiting these knowledge claims for his political agenda and converging them into one coherent narrative to fit his needs. In what follows, I analyze Bush’s speech before Congress on September 20, 2001 as an example of how he framed ‘terrorism’ by activating selected past discursivizations of the issue. For instance, he characterized the ‘Islamic

¹See Silberstein for the first study to examine how political and media rhetoric constructed 9/11 as singular event of such enormity that a “war on terror(ism)” became inevitable. See R. Jackson, *Writing for a more general analysis of the political discourse on the “war on terror(ism).”* Other studies of George W. Bush’s rhetoric after 9/11 include Kellner, “Bushspeak;” and Winkler, *In the Name*.

terrorist' enemy as operating in networks, an idea which was central to the 'terrorism' discourse in the 1980s and which was revitalized again in the late 1990s (see again Chapters 3 and 4). In his speech before Congress, the president claimed:

Americans have many questions tonight. Americans are asking, who attacked our country? The evidence we [...] gathered all points to a collection of loosely affiliated terrorist organizations known as Al Qaida. They are some of the murderers indicted for bombing American Embassies in Tanzania and Kenya and responsible for bombing the U.S.S. Cole. Al Qaida is to terror what the Mafia is to crime. But its goal is not making money. Its goal is remaking the world and imposing its radical beliefs on people everywhere. ("Address Before a Joint")

Here, Bush not only depicted al-Qaeda as consisting of "loosely affiliated terrorist organizations," tapping into already familiar notions of dangerous 'terror networks.' He also painted al-Qaeda as a successful "terrorist organization[]" which had attacked the United States in the past, thus openly forging a historical link between 'terrorism' of the past and the present moment. Even more noteworthy, at a later moment in his speech, the president openly decried the existence of "the global terror network" and vowed to defeat it, language eerily similar to President Reagan's statements some fifteen years earlier. In fact, by describing al-Qaeda's objective as "remaking the world and imposing its radical beliefs on people everywhere," Bush presented bin Laden's organization as extremely powerful, state-like entity which sought to spread its (religious) ideology by force – a discursive strategy which clearly echoed claims in the 1980s that the Soviet Union supposedly relied on 'terrorism' in order to advance communism in the Cold War. This framing exploited previous discursivizations of 'terrorism' and transferred them onto the current situation; characterizing bin Laden and al-Qaeda in this manner effectively tapped into already established knowledge claims and made the president's interpretation of events appear 'logical' and appealing.

Bush then expanded on this notion of a "global terror network," depicting al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden as "linked to many other organizations in different countries." He warned his listeners:

There are thousands of these terrorists in more than 60 countries. They are recruited from their own nations and neighborhoods and brought to camps in places like Afghanistan, where they are trained in the tactics of terror. They are sent back to their homes or sent to hide in countries around the world to plot evil and destruction.

Bush constructed an image of al-Qaeda as having built a highly complex infrastructure around the globe through which it sent its “terrorists” and recruits to designated training sites in order to train them properly and efficiently in “the tactics of terror.” Afterwards, the “terrorists” were deemed ready to attack any unsuspecting nation in the world, a claim first popularized in the 1970s and 1980s.

What is more, in the president’s framing of the concept, these ‘terrorists’ did not only operate in international networks, these groups were often also sponsored by ‘evil’ states or oppressive regimes, a notion which became central after the experience of the Iranian hostage crisis and which now worked to imbue Bush’s claims with power. As the quotes above show, Bush also asserted that the al-Qaeda network profited from the aid of the regime in Afghanistan which he accused of deliberately hosting the ‘terrorist’ group and providing training “in the tactics of terror.” Indeed, the president used his speech before Congress to attack the Taliban for “sponsoring and sheltering and supplying terrorists” and demanded that the regime “[c]lose immediately and permanently every terrorist training camp” in the country. By accusing Afghanistan of hosting and helping al-Qaeda, Bush depicted the country as more capable and powerful than it really was, thus augmenting the ‘terrorism’ threat emanating from a Taliban-run Afghanistan and legitimizing a forceful American response as necessary in the face of such a potent adversary.

Given the extent of the danger and threat supposedly emanating from this “global terror network,” it is unsurprising that the president’s speech was littered with references to war and military action. Bush described the ‘terrorist’ attacks as a form of war, insisting early into his speech that “[o]n September 11th, enemies of freedom committed an act of war against our country.” By framing the attacks as “an act of war,” Bush not only amplified the capabilities of the al-Qaeda “terror network” to depict them as a quasi-state with similar resources, he also legitimized a military response by the United States in turn. Accordingly, the president repeatedly used the term “war” to describe the measures the United States would take in order to counter the threat of “the global terror network.” He promised the public, “We will direct every resource at our command – every means of diplomacy, every tool of intelligence, every instrument of law enforcement, every financial influence, and every necessary weapon of war – to the disruption and to the defeat of the

global terror network.” Bush asserted, “Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated.”

The president’s conceptualization of this “war on terror” is striking because it drew on the central knowledge claim circulated by the discourse on ‘terrorism’ that ‘terror(ism)’ constituted a form of war and as such could only be fought effectively through war in return, an assertion which had come to prominence during the Reagan administrations in the 1980s. At the same time, however, President Bush adapted the discursive tradition established by his predecessors because he did not conceive of his “war on terror” in vague terms. Instead, the president outlined in his speech a clear agenda while also preparing the nation for a long, potentially endless military operation requiring every resource of the state. President Bush elaborated that “Americans should not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign, unlike any other we have ever seen.” This kind of action was necessary because, in the president’s reasoning, the enemy was ‘terrorism’ itself; al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden were merely one prominent manifestation of it. Notably, the president did not call his plans a ‘war against al-Qaeda,’ but a “war on *terror*,” indicating that he regarded the phenomenon itself as the main antagonist. Similarly, Bush pledged in the speech that “we will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to *terrorism*” (emphases added), voiding the agency of the “terrorists” and transferring it onto the concept itself. The president spoke of the need to “defeat terrorism,” indicating once more that he was much more concerned about the idea of ‘terrorism’ itself than about those who would use it.

In the speech, President Bush also outlined the reasons why ‘terrorism’ constituted such a danger to the U.S. that a war against it was necessary. To support his argument, the president tapped into ideas about ‘new terrorism’ which had been constructed in the 1990s (see previous chapter). By referencing the embassy bombings in Africa in 1998 and the attack on the U.S.S. *Cole* in 2000 (see quotes above), Bush already subtly evoked discursive constructions of these events as instances of ‘new terrorism.’ He further characterized this ‘terrorism’ as lethal and causing mass casualties, another central claim of the ‘new terrorism’ discourse of the previous decade. For instance, Bush spoke about “thousands of civilians” having become the victims of “surprise attacks” that September

morning, effectively reminding his audience that almost 3,000 people died on September 11. Similarly, the president's description, quoted above, of 'terrorists' returning from the Afghan training camps "to plot evil and destruction" suggested that these 'new terrorists' were predominantly interested in wreaking havoc on a large scale, a knowledge claim also developed first in the 1990s.

Moreover, the president applied the same reasoning which had already circulated in the 1990s that the 'terrorism' the nation was currently witnessing was 'new' and unprecedented in its reach and impact. For instance, he claimed that "Americans have known the casualties of war, but not at the center of a great city on a peaceful morning. Americans have known surprise attacks, but never before on thousands of civilians. All of this was brought upon us in a single day, and night fell on a different world, a world where freedom itself is under attack." His observation that "night fell on a different world" on September 11 effectively characterized what had happened as an event which had changed the entire globe, marking the attacks as unparalleled in their nature and their impact. Likewise, Bush asserted later in his speech that "we face new and sudden national challenges," once more portraying the attacks as unprecedented and, literally, "new." This insistence that 9/11 constituted a singular event clearly tapped into conceptualizations of 'new terrorism' developed in previous years and applied them successfully to the present situation as a way of ascribing meaning to it.

Most importantly, however, the president subtly coded the 'terrorism' threatening American security and stability at home and abroad as 'Islamic.' In his statements, the president was careful to distinguish between a 'good' form of Islam and a 'bad' interpretation of Islam which the 'terrorists' (erroneously) used to justify their deeds. As Bush noted during his address to Congress,

[t]he terrorists practice a fringe form of Islamic extremism that has been rejected by Muslim scholars and the vast majority of Muslim clerics, a fringe movement that perverts the peaceful teachings of Islam. The terrorists' directive commands them to kill Christians and Jews, to kill all Americans, and make no distinctions among military and civilians, including women and children.

The term "Islamic extremism," of course, functioned as synonym for 'Islamic terrorism' and was already in use in the 1990s, meaning that the term activated previous constructions of 'terrorism' and reinforced discursive continuity. What is more, President Bush created

a dichotomy between “peaceful” Islam and the “fringe movement that pervert[ed] the peaceful teachings of Islam” to which the “terrorists” belonged in his view. He noted that this “fringe form [...] ha[d] been rejected by [...] the vast majority of Muslim clerics,” stressing that Islam in its entirety was not to blame for what had happened.

Throughout the rest of his speech, President Bush continued to distinguish between ‘good,’ virtuous Islam and ‘bad,’ ‘terroristic’ Islam. Hence, Bush explicitly used his speech before Congress to “speak tonight directly to Muslims throughout the world.” He told them:

We respect your faith. It’s practiced freely by many millions of Americans, and by millions more in countries that America counts as friends. Its teachings are good and peaceful, and those who commit evil in the name of Allah blaspheme the name of Allah. The terrorists are traitors to their own faith, trying, in effect, to hijack Islam itself. The enemy of America is not our many Muslim friends; it is not our many Arab friends. Our enemy is a radical network of terrorists, and every government that supports them.

Here, the president clearly differentiated between “good and peaceful” Islam and the religious beliefs of the “terrorists.” President Bush sought to distinguish between versions of Islam practiced by “Muslims throughout the world” and the “terrorists” who adhered to a ‘bad’ form of Islam.

However, a closer look reveals that this rhetorical move only *appeared* to express tolerance and a nuanced world-view. Both excerpts quoted above are notable for their ambiguous language. The president’s assertion that “[t]he terrorists practice[d] a fringe form of Islamic extremism that ha[d] been rejected by Muslim scholars and the vast majority of Muslim clerics” can also be understood to suggest that “Islamic extremism” is a widespread phenomenon and only the “fringe form” practiced by the “terrorists” has been “rejected by Muslim scholars.” Likewise, when President Bush insisted that “[t]he terrorists [we]re traitors to their own faith, trying, in effect, to hijack Islam itself,” he also suggested that Islam was vulnerable to such hijacking in the first place. Bush’s claim that the “terrorists” belonged to “a fringe movement that pervert[ed] the peaceful teachings of Islam” made a similar insinuation by implying that Islam could be easily “pervert[ed]” and put into the service of ‘terrorism.’ This means that the president’s public insistence that one should not condemn Islam in its entirety for facilitating ‘terrorism’ against the United State functioned first and foremost as a rhetorical cover which protected the administration

against charges of Islamophobia, discrimination, and the like. At the same time, however, it enabled the administration to spread a conceptualization of ‘terrorism’ as motivated by belief in Islam under the guise of distinguishing carefully between different forms of Islam.

This characterization of ‘terrorism’ in the wake of 9/11 as ‘Islamic’ in nature exploited central knowledge claims circulated by the ‘terrorism’ discourse in previous years, particularly Samuel Huntington’s warnings of an imminent “Clash of Civilizations” (see previous chapter). For instance, the president’s contention that “[t]he terrorists’ directive command[ed] them to kill Christians and Jews, to kill all Americans, and make no distinctions among military and civilians, including women and children” not only characterized the “terrorists” as indiscriminate and cruel (“Address Before a Joint”). It also depicted the conflict as one between ‘Islamic terrorists’ and “Christians and Jews,” meaning “all Americans” who were subtly coded as representing the Judeo-Christian alliance in conflict with Islam. Similarly, President Bush warned, “They [the ‘terrorists’] want to drive Israel out of the Middle East. They want to drive Christians and Jews out of vast regions of Asia and Africa,” once more depicting the conflict in religious terms and aligning Judaism and Christianity as markers of ‘Americanness’ against the ‘Islamic terrorists’ of the Middle East.

Ultimately, then, President Bush successfully tapped into and activated specific conceptualizations of ‘terrorism’ which were established and circulated in the 1980s and 1990s in order to make sense of the events of September 11, 2001. He merged these different knowledge claims about ‘terrorism’ into one coherent narrative which posited that the attacks constituted an act of war which required a response in kind and maintained that the ‘terrorists’ were motivated and guided by their belief in Islam which, in turn, put them in clear opposition to superior ‘American’ values and ideals. The president then sought to exploit this narrative in order to not only initiate a lengthy military campaign in the Middle East, but also to pass policies regulating American life at home like the foundation of the Department of Homeland Security or the controversial PATRIOT Act.

The president’s framing of the attacks as well as the need to fight a “war on terror(ism)” in order to defeat the ‘terrorist’ enemy quickly became the dominant political discourse as the other members of his administration adopted his approach as well. Vice

President Dick Cheney, for instance, consistently echoed Bush's rhetoric and described the perpetrators as 'terrorists' who had attacked the United States out of hatred and misguided religious beliefs. He also supported the "war on terror(ism)," arguing, "The United States has entered a struggle of years – a new kind of war against a new kind of enemy. The terrorists who struck America are ruthless, they are resourceful, and they hide in many countries. [...] In Afghanistan, the Taliban regime and al Qaeda terrorists have met the fate they chose for themselves" ("Full Text"). As this example shows, Cheney employed the same kind of rhetoric as Bush, thus contributing to its dominance in American politics. All other members of the Bush administration followed suit and, as the successful passing of the PATRIOT Act and other policy initiatives showed, even Congress supported the president's construction of events and his course of action. As a consequence, the framing of the 9/11 attacks as the beginning of a "war on terror(ism)" between the United States and '(Islamic) terrorism' became the hegemonic discursivization in U.S. politics.²

Before I continue, however, a quick word on terminology is in order. I use the expression "war on terror(ism)" throughout this chapter because the Bush administration (and many other discursive agents) employed 'terror' and 'terrorism' synonymously. President Bush, for instance, sometimes called the military operation a "war against terrorism," as he did in the evening of September 11, 2001, and referred to a "war on terror" in his September 20 address to a joint session of Congress. This oscillation between 'terror' and 'terrorism' is telling because it suggests a conflation of the two terms with powerful consequences. While 'terrorism' denotes a practice, 'terror' refers to a state of mind which is, incidentally, often thought to be brought about by 'terrorism' (Schmid, Introduction 2). The term 'terror' ultimately encompasses both the practice, 'terrorism,' as well as its outcome, 'terror.' Geoffrey Nunberg even argued in a 2004 article for *The New York Times* that "terror is still more amorphous and elastic [than 'terrorism'], and alters the understanding not just of the enemy but of the war against it." In this way, the "war on terrorism," i.e. fighting a practice, 'terrorism,' through another social practice, 'war,' simultaneously also becomes a "war on terror," i.e. using a social practice to eradicate an

²For studies focusing on the political developments in the wake of 9/11 and the "war on terror(ism)," see, e.g., K. Booth and Dunne; Chomsky, *Hegemony, Imperial, and Pirates*; J. Collins and Glover; Feste; Kellner, *From 9/11*; Lansford et al.; Little; Lustick, *Trapped*; McAlister; and Rockmore.

abstract idea and feeling. It abstracts the physical threat emanating from ‘terrorism’ to the human body to include a deeply personal, intense psychological response. This charges the concept of ‘terrorism’ affectively and makes it a powerful discursive tool because it addresses both the fear of harm to the body as well as harm to the mind.

Equally important is the distinction between a “war *against* terror(ism)” and a “war *on* terror(ism).” As Nunberg points out, waging a war *against* an enemy implies that the enemy is a human actor. By contrast, the noun phrase “war *on* X” is usually followed by an abstract concept which is, invariably, a negative social ill. Examples include the “war on drugs,” the “war on poverty,” and, most recently, the “war on terror(ism).” I agree with Nunberg here that “a ‘war on terror’ suggests an enduring state of struggle,” a struggle which is coded as targeting both ‘terrorism’ as well as its effect. The elasticity of both ‘terror’ and ‘terrorism’ make this a war against a broad, ill-defined social problem and both the ending and the outcome of this particular war remain unclear. Moreover, the oscillation between whether the war is waged *against* ‘terror(ism)’ or *on* ‘terror(ism)’ enables discursive agents like the president to either escalate or mitigate the threat level emanating from ‘terror(ism)’ depending on the exigencies of the moment. References to a “war *against* terror(ism)” suggest a clear political agenda and an impending military confrontation, augmenting the sense of danger, while the phrase “war *on* terror(ism)” evokes a generalized, more abstract political initiative which does not necessarily lead to serious military engagement, effectively lessening the perceived threat from ‘terror(ism).’

In the rest of this chapter, I analyze how the discourse evolved in the wake of the 9/11 attacks and the ensuing “war on terror(ism)” while also tracing how the conceptualization of ‘terrorism’ itself was affected by these events. That ‘terrorism’ became the main discursive frame through which one made sense of what had happened is, by now, widely accepted and confirmed knowledge. I am therefore more interested in highlighting how the post-9/11 discourse on ‘terrorism’ has continued constructions and conceptualizations of the issue from previous decades and exploited them for maximum benefit. Likewise, I want to explore in this chapter the consequences this unprecedented dominance had for the ‘terrorism’ discourse-at-large and how it influenced the meaning of the term ‘terrorism’ itself. Thus, in the first section, I turn to academic and political responses to 9/11 and the “war on

terror(ism)” in the first half of the new decade. Then I examine how the news media and popular culture engaged with 9/11, the “war on terror(ism),” and the issue of ‘Islamic terrorism’ in its wake. In the third section, I investigate how the discourse continued to dominate political and academic approaches to ‘(Islamic) terrorism’ in the latter half of the decade before analyzing in the last section how the American news media and cultural texts engaged with the discourse in those later years.

5.1 An “Age of Terrorism”? The ‘Terrorism’ Discourse in U.S. Academia in the Early 2000s

The conceptualization of ‘terrorism’ advanced by the Bush administration in response to 9/11 was mirrored by other discursive fields. In this section, I analyze how the academic community (re)confirmed ‘Islamic terrorism’ as dominant threat facing the United States, perpetuating a particular set of knowledge claims about the issue. In particular, the academic field, clearly influenced by the political discourse on the issue, put forth a noticeably similar framing of the issue and, in the process, confirmed and expanded the hegemonic position of the discourse, further muting critical voices and alternative framings of the issue. As a direct consequence of the 9/11 attacks, the field of ‘terrorism’ studies experienced a significant influx of new people and increased government funding, which had complex consequences for the production of knowledge about ‘terrorism’ as well as the architecture of the field itself (e.g. Duyvesteyn 30).³ The expansion of the field in the wake of 9/11 and the ensuing “war on terror(ism)” harbored the potential for greater diversity and heterogeneity with regard to views about the nature of ‘terrorism,’ but these hopes were disappointed especially in the first years of the new millennium. Rather, the dominant discourse about ‘Islamic terrorism,’ which had developed in the previous decade, further cemented its hegemonic position, leaving little room for dissenting views and different analyses. In this section, I analyze how the academic field of ‘terrorism’ studies approached the concept of ‘Islamic terrorism’ in the aftermath of 9/11 and examine the effects this had on the meaning of ‘terrorism’ itself.

³See also R. Jackson et al., *Terrorism*; Ranstorp, Introduction; and Schmid, “Literature.”

As the previous chapter has shown, in the 1990s, the academic community overwhelmingly agreed that a ‘new terrorism’ had emerged and was threatening the United States in its manifestation as ‘Islamic terrorism.’ The events of 9/11 confirmed the validity of the ‘new Islamic terrorism’ paradigm for many scholars who saw the attacks as corroborating the knowledge claims produced in the previous decade and they subsequently used this particular narrative to make sense of what had happened. Yet, scholars also viewed the 9/11 attacks as an unprecedented caesura and a ‘terrorist’ attack of unparalleled proportions, thus treating the attacks as discursive *event* which constituted a rupture and break away from previous understandings of the issue. David Rapoport, for instance, stated that “September 11, 2001, [wa]s the most destructive day in the long, bloody history of terrorism. The casualties, economic damage, and outrage were unprecedented” (“Four Waves of Modern Terrorism” 41). His colleague Yonah Alexander similarly opined that “[t]he most devastating terrorist carnage ever recorded occurred on September 11, 2001” (Introduction 1). Brian Jenkins also asserted that “[t]he attacks of Sept. 11 ha[d] no precedent in the annals of terrorism. [...] We ha[d] crossed a threshold” (“This Time”). As a result, the emerging narrative both stressed continuity between the previous decade and the current historical moment while also, at the same time, insisting that 9/11 marked a rupture and departure from previous interpretative paradigms.

These two dimensions existed in an uneasy tension since their inherent contradiction could not be easily resolved. Bruce Hoffman’s work is, perhaps, the best example of this. In 1998, Hoffman had written *Inside Terrorism*, a study which had quickly become an authoritative and often-quoted text in the field (see previous chapter). In response to the 9/11 attacks, Hoffman revised and updated his classic text, adding new chapters and rewriting others because “it soon became clear to me that a more extensive treatment of the trends and developments in terrorism that had unfolded since September 11, 2001, was needed” (*Inside Terrorism* 2006, ix), suggesting that 9/11 marked the beginning of a different kind of ‘terrorism.’ However, Hoffman then proceeded to argue that his central claim from the 1998 edition, i.e. that “the nature and character of terrorism was changing because new adversaries with very different rationales and motivations had emerged,” was

“clearly validated” by 9/11 (*Inside Terrorism* 2006, ix), thus also constructing a continuity between pre-9/11 and post-9/11 ‘terrorism.’

This tension between framing 9/11 as, on the one hand, a rupture and, on the other, a continuation of ‘new Islamic terrorism’ was characteristic for post-9/11 scholarly texts on ‘terrorism’ and reflected the larger struggle in the academic field over what the events of 9/11 actually meant. Nevertheless, this tension was also successfully exploited by the academic community because it allowed scholars to claim that they had been correct in their assessment of ‘(Islamic) terrorism’ all along. It validated the existence of the field itself while also enabling the community to advocate for more funding since this ‘new’ phenomenon required more research to be fully understood.

Indeed, the great majority of scholars actually agreed that Islam was the principal driving force behind ‘terrorism’ and offered different explanations for this claim. Most scholars proceeded to outright cast Islam in its entirety as causing ‘terrorism’ against ‘the West.’ David Rapoport’s wave model, for instance, was one such approach which proved quite influential. Rapoport discerned four major waves of ‘terrorism’ in modern history: the anarchist wave of the 1880s in Russia, the anticolonial wave from the 1920s to the 1960s, the New Left wave from the 1960s until the end of the 20th century, and, finally, the religious wave which, in his view, began in 1979 with the Iranian revolution and could possibly last until 2025 (“Four Waves of Modern Terrorism” 41). In his discussion of the religious wave, Rapoport claimed that “Islam [wa]s at the heart of the wave. Islamic groups ha[d] conducted the most significant, deadly, and profoundly international attacks” (51). Rapoport also attested that ‘Islamic terrorism’ was predominantly aimed at the United States and more ruthless in doing so: “From the beginning, Islamic religious groups sought to *destroy* their American targets, usually military or civilian installations, an unknown pattern in the third wave” (53).

Rapoport’s wave model was widely publicized in the academic discourse and became a prominent explanation for ‘terrorism’ after 9/11 which laid the emphasis on Islam as a whole.⁴ Rapoport’s model thus attempted to historicize ‘terrorism’ while

⁴Versions of the article appeared as “The Fourth Wave: September 11 and the History of Terrorism,” “The Four Waves of Rebel Terror and September 11,” and “The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism.” These numerous publications in different academic outlets ensured that Rapoport’s claims were not only widely

also acknowledging the particular dangers of ‘Islamic terrorism,’ a rhetorical maneuver which reflected the underlying tensions characterizing much of post-9/11 scholarship on ‘terrorism.’ It effectively claimed that ‘Islamic terrorism’ constituted an exceptional threat to American national security while also arguing that it followed a discernable pattern which could be understood and appropriately managed.

Other scholars expressed their views more bluntly. Walter Laqueur, for instance, warned that “[a] review of wars, civil wars, and other contemporary conflicts show[ed] indeed a greater incidence of violence and aggression in Muslim societies than in most others” (*No End* 19). In a clear nod to Bernard Lewis’ eponymous 1990 essay in *The Atlantic*, “The Roots of Muslim Rage,” Laqueur contended that “[t]he roots of Muslim rage [we]re known, and they [we]re unlikely to disappear in the foreseeable future” (*No End* 212). He concluded from this, disparagingly, that “[i]n view of the time-honored tradition in the Muslim world to put most or all of the blame of its failures on foreigners rather than on their own shortcomings and not to engage in self-criticism, jihad against the infidels ha[d] been the preferred mode of action” (*No End* 212). The eminent ‘terrorism’ scholar thus consistently linked ‘terrorism’ to Islam, suggesting that the Muslim faith engendered violence while implying that the Judeo-Christian traditions did not.

These sentiments were echoed widely across the academic field. Javier Jordan and Luisa Boix, for instance, argued that al-Qaeda ‘terrorism’ could have serious “repercussions [...] for co-existence within societies with important Islamic populations” (1), implying that Muslims everywhere were potential al-Qaeda recruits and ‘terrorists.’ Abdelaziz Testas, in turn, analyzed “the factors behind terrorism in 37 Muslim countries” (253), effectively presupposing a connection between Islam and ‘terrorism.’ Brynjar Lia discussed how “selected works by leading jihadi theorists” addressed “the topic of training and

disseminated but also received the imprint of validity and importance from the academic community, making his contribution a powerful discursive voice. Responses to Rapoport’s model include Rasler and Thompson who confirmed Rapoport’s findings in their 2009 article by using data on ‘terrorism’ from the ITERATE database. More recently, Parker and Sitter argued that the wave model proved inadequate and proposed instead the medical metaphor of the ‘strain’ to describe the perceived dominance of different types of ‘terrorism’ at different historical moments. Their article invited responses from Rapoport himself (“It Is Waves”) as well as Townsend and J. Kaplan. These examples indicate that the wave model, even though not uncontested, remained a central frame through which ‘Islamic terrorism’ was explained and theorized.

preparation for jihad” (518), presenting the connection between Islam and ‘terrorism’ as deliberate and based on central tenets of the Muslim faith.⁵

The notion that Islam as a whole engendered ‘terrorism’ was, however, not universally accepted. Many scholars disagreed with such a sweeping condemnation of Islam and instead argued that one needed to distinguish between the ‘good’ elements of Islam and the ‘bad’ ones which caused ‘terrorism’ and had to be condemned. Writing for the RAND corporation, Cheryl Benard, for instance, listed the “ideological spectrum for contemporary Islamic views” (16). She distinguished on the one end of the spectrum between “radical fundamentalists,” “scriptural fundamentalists,” and “conservative traditionalists” who all wanted to build an autocratic state based on conservative Islamic law and only differed in their evaluation of ‘terrorism’ as a means to achieve this goal (17). The other end of the spectrum featured “reformist traditionalists,” “modernists,” “mainstream secularists,” and, finally, “radical secularists” who were more tolerant, rejected ‘terrorism,’ and considered belief in Islam a private matter out of the jurisdiction of the state (17). Benard’s typology is one among many different ones proposed by scholars which attempted to neatly separate the disparate ‘kinds’ of Muslims into manageable categories in order to make assessing the threat of ‘Islamic terrorism’ more practical.

Not all scholars favoring this approach developed typologies, but many equally advocated against equating Islam in its entirety with ‘terrorism’ and violence against ‘the West.’ John Esposito, for example, warned that “[i]mproving our understanding of the faith of our fellow citizens and neighbors w[ould] require that we look[ed] at Muslims with new eyes and judge[d] Islam by the totality and teachings of the faith, not just the beliefs and actions of a radical few” (*Unholy* 120). Daniel Pipes stated in 2002, “I take a strong stand on militant Islam, which I see as very different [...]. I see militant Islam as a global affliction” (*Militant* xiii), insinuating that while “militant Islam” posed a considerable threat to American security, ‘normal’ Islam was unproblematic. With statements like these, many scholars in the academic community appeared to advocate a more nuanced approach to the problem of ‘Islamic terrorism’ instead of sweeping condemnations and generalizations – a discursive strategy which clearly mirrored political practice, indicating

⁵For more examples of articles discussing writings by designated ‘jihadist terrorists,’ see, e.g., Burki, Moghadam, and Venkatraman.

that ideas about ‘Islamic terrorism’ continued to travel successfully through the different discursive fields.

However, as with George W. Bush’s rhetoric, it is important to be precise here. This approach to praise ‘good’ Islam while condemning ‘bad’ Islam for causing ‘Islamic terrorism’ advanced by these scholars only seems to criticize the academic position advanced by David Rapoport, Walter Laqueur, and others that Islam in its entirety caused ‘terrorism.’ For instance, Benard’s typology, discussed above, basically disparaged those groups of Muslims who practiced their beliefs in one form or other and singled them out as (potential) ‘terrorists.’ Only the secular, i.e. non-practicing, communities were seen as compatible with American interests. As a consequence, just as it did in the political field, the distinction between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ Islam functioned first and foremost as a rhetorical strategy with which authors could present themselves as tolerant and self-aware because they were not universally condemning Islam as sole cause for ‘terrorism.’ Yet references to Islam were used to explain post-9/11 ‘terrorism’ since these scholars did acknowledge that Islam supposedly had this ‘terrorist’ potential. Thus, a noticeable amount of ‘terrorism’ scholars arguing against equating Islam with ‘terrorism’ actually subtly reinforced the notion that Islam in particular facilitated ‘terrorism’ against the United States and the rest of ‘the West’ while couching it in pseudo-enlightened and quasi-tolerant terms. What this meant for the academic discourse on ‘terrorism’ was that the seeming diversity of approaches masked the fact that the core explanation for ‘terrorism’ – Islam allegedly caused it – had become firmly entrenched since the 1990s and received a ‘boost’ by the events of 9/11. The different arguments and explanations offered by scholars created the appearance of healthy debate within the field, but in practice actually solidified the hegemony of the ‘Islamic terrorism’ paradigm.

This had consequences for the meaning attributed to the concept ‘Islamic terrorism’ itself. Ultimately, the ‘Islamic’ component in ‘Islamic terrorism’ came to refer to anything remotely connected to Islam, such as a perpetrator’s assumed religious belief which, in turn, was simply derived from his or her nationality as a citizen of a Muslim-majority country. Likewise, the ‘terrorism’ element in ‘Islamic terrorism’ came to encompass many

other forms of political violence like ‘insurgency,’ ‘jihad,’ or ‘militant extremism.’⁶ These linguistic shifts further broadened the applicability of the term ‘Islamic terrorism’ to an even wider array of situations involving Muslims and some form of violence. The two terms ‘Islamic’ and ‘terrorism’ existed in a quasi-symbiotic relationship, one constantly evoking the other. ‘Islamic’ became the main characteristic for any sort of political violence while references to ‘terrorism’ (or its synonyms) often directly implied an ‘Islamic’ nature. This made the threat of ‘Islamic terrorism’ appear all-pervasive, omnipresent, and completely out of control as it could be applied to practically any situation involving violence and someone from a Muslim-majority country.

5.2 “Events Occur in Real Time” – The ‘Terrorism’ Discourse in U.S. News Media and Popular Culture in the Early 2000s

Similar to the political and academic discourses on ‘terrorism,’ the American media and the field of popular culture responded to the experience of the September 11 attacks and the ensuing “war on terror(ism)” by applying previous discursivizations of the issue to make sense of what had happened. In that process, the American media as well as cultural texts not only reaffirmed already circulating constructions of ‘terrorism’ as ‘Islamic’ in nature, they also contributed to the concept’s unparalleled dominance ever since. In this section, I therefore analyze in more detail how *The New York Times* reported on ‘terrorism’ in the early 2000s and, using the example of the successful TV series *24* (9 seasons; 2001-2010, 2014), discuss how cultural texts engaged with the issue of ‘(Islamic) terrorism’ after 9/11.⁷

Like political and academic actors, *The New York Times* immediately framed the attacks of 9/11 as instance of ‘terrorism’ against the United States. Figure 5.1 visualizes the changes and developments in the reporting on ‘terrorism’ in *The New York Times* since 1999. As becomes immediately obvious, the number of articles addressing ‘terrorism’

⁶Examples of scholars discussing the phenomenon of ‘Islamic terrorism’ by using related concepts like ‘Islamic extremism,’ ‘radical Islam,’ ‘jihad,’ ‘Islamic fundamentalism’ as synonyms include, e.g., Cook; Jenkins, “Jihadists’ Operational;” Laqueur, *No End*; Palmer and Palmer; Sageman, *Understanding*; Taylor and Horgan; and Wiktorowicz.

⁷For analyses of the media landscape since 9/11, see, e.g., Chermak et al.; Katovsky and Carlson; Monahan; Nachtigall; Nacos, *Mass-Mediated*; Redfield; and Zelizer and Allan. For examinations of how American popular culture responded to 9/11 and the “war on terror(ism),” see, e.g., Croft; Denzin and Lincoln; Dickenson; Dixon; Holloway; A. Martin and Petro; Prince, *Firestorm*; D. Simpson; and Spigel.

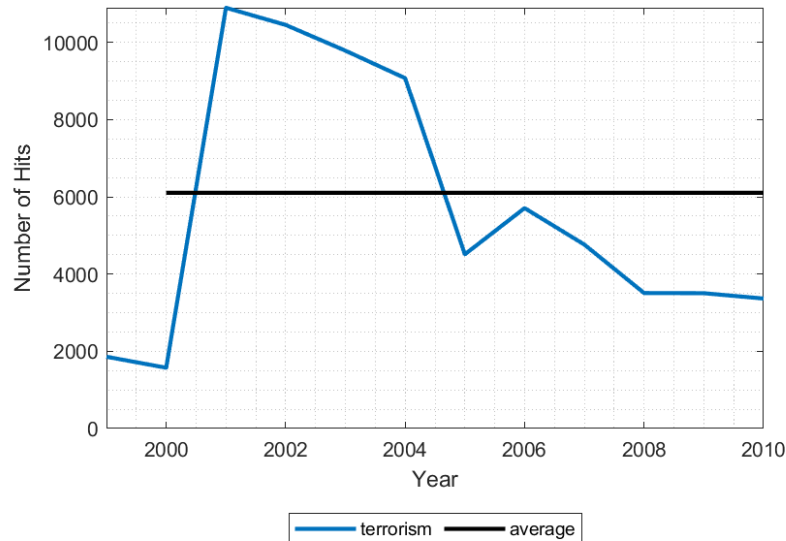


Figure 5.1: Reporting on ‘terrorism’ in *The New York Times*, 1999-2010

in some form or other skyrocketed in 2001. While there were 1,574 articles on the issue in 2000, the database records a record high of 10,898 pieces for the following year, a staggering increase of 592%. Indeed, in subsequent years, *The New York Times* continued to report on ‘terrorism’ at a similarly elevated level, with 10,453 articles in 2002, 9,786 pieces in 2003, and 9,074 publications in 2004. From 2005 onward, the overall amount of reporting on the issue abated significantly, but the average of 6,378 articles per year for the first decade of the new millennium (2000-2009) constituted an all-time high signaling the omnipresence of the issue of ‘terrorism’ in American news media. (I continue the discussion of this particular aspect in the corresponding section further below.) Generally speaking, these numbers reflect the dominance of the ‘terrorism’ discourse in American news media and suggest that it constituted the dominant paradigm through which journalists interpreted what had happened. What is more, the discourse then cemented its hegemonic and powerful position in American politics and culture in the following years.

Regarding the content of the pieces on ‘terrorism’ *The New York Times* the events of September 11, 2001, obviously constituted the predominant journalistic focus. As Figure 5.2 shows, the overall spike in reporting on ‘terrorism’ was related to a surge in articles which also mentioned the World Trade Center and, once the term was coined, 9/11. Of the 10,898 articles on ‘terrorism’ published in 2001, 4,608 (or 42% of all articles)

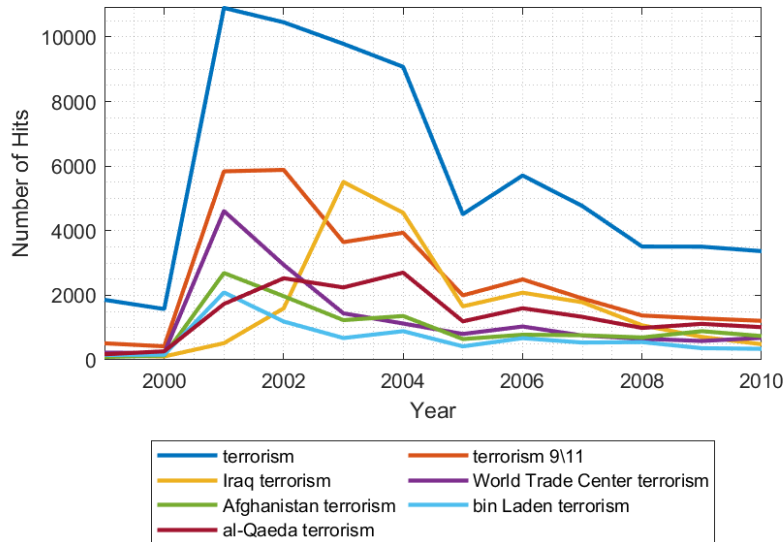


Figure 5.2: Reporting on ‘terrorism’ in connection to the events of September 11, 2001 and the “war on terror(ism)” in *The New York Times*, 1999-2010

also contained a reference to the World Trade Center.⁸ For that same year, 5,838 pieces on ‘terrorism,’ i.e. 54%, also mentioned 9/11, a further sign for how the events of September 11, 2001 dominated the reporting on ‘terrorism’ in *The New York Times*. Moreover, in 2001, 2,088 articles (19%) referred to Osama bin Laden, the financier and planner of the attacks, thus confirming previous discursivizations of him as dangerous ‘Islamic terrorist.’ Conversely, al-Qaeda was also increasingly linked to ‘terrorism’ in the reporting of *The New York Times*. In 2001, 16% of all articles on ‘terrorism’ already mentioned al-Qaeda. A year later, that number rose to 24% and to 28% in 2004, indicating that the group remained central to news reporting on the issue, particularly as the “war on terror(ism)” wore on.

Similarly, the first two military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq in response to the 9/11 attacks constituted another journalistic focus in the first half of the decade. Articles which not only mentioned ‘terrorism’ but also Afghanistan regularly made up between 13% and 25% in the newspaper during the years of the first Bush administration. Journalists of *The New York Times* wrote about ‘terrorism’ in relation to Iraq even more frequently; in 2003, the year of the invasion of Iraq, 56% of all publications on ‘terrorism’

⁸The phrase “World Trade Center” has been put in quotation marks to ensure that the search of the newspaper archives only shows articles which contain the entire phrase.

also contained a reference to Iraq. In 2004, every second article featured both terms and a year later, 37% of all writings on ‘terrorism’ in *The New York Times* still mentioned Iraq as well, demonstrating that the political consequences of the 2001 attacks continued to form a central tenet of the ‘terrorism’ discourse.

Moreover, references to ‘terrorism’ in connection to Islam, the Middle East, and the ‘Arab’ ethnicity of perpetrators remained central to the discourse. Indeed, as the graphs in Figure 5.3 show, journalistic writings addressing ‘Islamic terrorism’ directly made up between 13% and 14% of the overall reporting on ‘terrorism’ between 2001 and 2004. Likewise, articles in *The New York Times* mentioning ‘Muslim terrorism’ constituted 11% to 13% of the total writings on ‘terrorism’ while ‘Arab terrorism’ appeared in 13% to 14% of all articles on the issue. ‘Terrorism’ in relation to the Middle East was discussed somewhat less frequently, making up 8% to 12% of all pieces on ‘terrorism’ published in *The New York Times* during the first Bush administration. Taken together, articles on ‘terrorism’ in relation to the perpetrators’ ethnicity, religion, and geographic origins made up between 47% and 49% of all reporting on ‘terrorism’ in the years of the first Bush administration, indicating that these conceptualizations of ‘terrorism’ as ‘Islamic’ and connected to being ‘Arab’ and from the Middle East continued to remain relevant to discursivizations of the issue.

Yet, while these numbers indicate that ‘Islamic terrorism’ in and from the Middle East constituted a permanent topic in the newspaper’s reporting on violence, the terms themselves did not feature too prominently anymore. The visualizations in Figures 5.2 and 5.3 also suggest that the link between Islam and ‘terrorism’ did not need to be made overtly anymore. Instead, conceptualizations of ‘terrorism’ as violence directed against the United States and committed by Muslim fanatics were activated via references to concrete incidents. This meant that instead of writing directly about ‘Islamic terrorism’ and tapping into the powers of the discourse in this way, journalists activated these particular meanings of ‘terrorism’ by, for instance, publishing articles on ‘terrorism’ in the context of 9/11, the “war on terror(ism),” or Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda. Readers of *The New York Times* were already familiar with constructions of ‘terrorism’ as predominantly ‘Islamic’ from previous years and, given the discourse’s dominance at the onset of the new millennium,

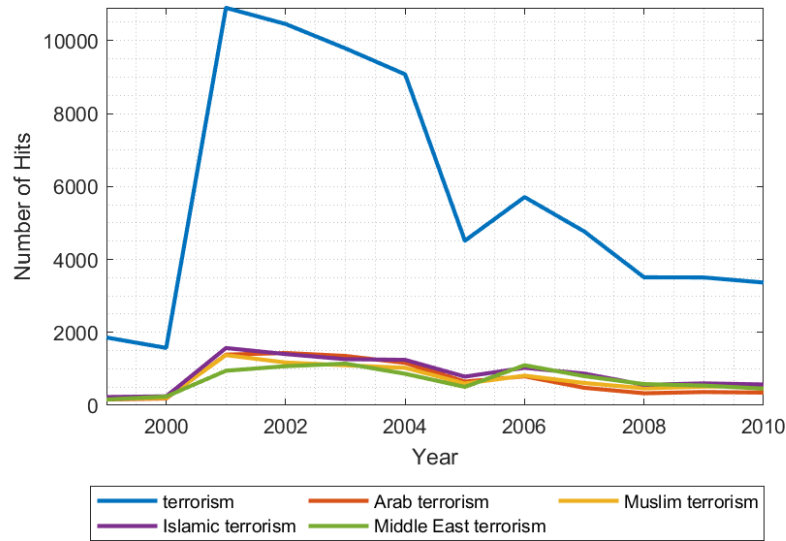


Figure 5.3: Reporting on ‘terrorism’ in and from the Middle East in *The New York Times*, 1999-2010

could be expected to infer on their own that the ‘terrorism’ that the newspaper was writing about was supposedly motivated by belief in Islam. This shows that the concept ‘Islamic terrorism’ functioned in the same kind of quasi-symbiotic relationship as it did in academic and political discourses on the topic, pointing to the interconnectedness of the different discursive fields. Evidently, then, conceptualizations of ‘(Islamic) terrorism’ continued to travel successfully through these different fields in the early 2000s to the point where direct and overt references were not needed anymore.

These trends are also confirmed when taking a closer look at individual articles from *The New York Times* from that time period. Indeed, the newspaper immediately used the terms ‘terrorism’ and ‘terror’ in its coverage of the attacks on September 11, 2001, pointing to the power and pervasiveness of the discourse at the beginning of the new millennium. The main headline of the next day read “U.S. Attacked: Hijacked Jets Destroy Twin Towers and Hit Pentagon in Day of Terror.” “A Day of Terror” even became the official title for the sections in the newspaper dedicated to coverage of the attacks, indicating the perceived singularity of the event as well as its significant psychological and emotional impact. Other articles referred to “yesterday’s terrorism” (Uchitelle C1) or “the worst terrorist attack in the nation’s history” when covering what had happened (Stevenson and Labaton C6).

Clearly, the ‘terrorism’ discourse was already firmly in place when the attacks occurred, meaning that journalists writing for the newspaper had a readily available interpretative frame through which they could make sense of the events for their readers.

What is more, *The New York Times* connected the events of September 11, 2001 immediately to ‘Islamic terrorism.’ In an article on the front page, Serge Schmemmann not only called what had happened “the worst and most audacious terror attack in American history” (1). Schmemmann also discussed the possible identity of the perpetrators, writing that

[n]obody immediately claimed responsibility for the attacks. But the scale and sophistication of the operation, the extraordinary planning required for concerted hijackings by terrorists who had to be familiar with modern jetliners, and the history of major attacks on American targets in recent years led many officials and experts to point to Osama bin Laden, the Islamic militant believed to operate out of Afghanistan. Afghanistan’s hard-line Taliban rulers rejected such suggestions, but officials took that as a defensive measure. (14)

By identifying Osama bin Laden as “Islamic militant,” Schmemmann suggested that belief in Islam had motivated the attacks, framing them as ‘Islamic terrorism’ targeting the United States. Moreover, the reference to “the history of major attacks on American targets in recent years” created a sense of discursive continuity, firmly situating the attacks of the day before into the familiar narrative from the previous decade which posited that the United States found itself at odds with ‘new Islamic terrorism,’ of which Osama bin Laden was the main antagonist.

Equally noteworthy, the newspaper collected evaluations and opinions from acknowledged ‘terrorism’ experts and discussed them in several articles already on the next day. Tim Golden opened his article provocatively, writing that “[i]t was, in the annals of terrorism, an exquisitely choreographed operation” and that “the attacks represented a new weapon in the terrorist arsenal, an ingenious marriage of old-school hijacking and the ever-more-familiar suicide bomb” (13). Golden then proceeded to quote various “terrorism experts,” “officials,” and “authorities” who surmised, for example, that the “terrorists” must have trained how to fly a plane. Similarly, Erica Goode, in an article appearing on the same page, cited “experts on the psychology of terrorism” as asserting that the perpetrators were “perfectly sane people” (13). She related evaluations by, among others, Jerrold Post, Ariel Merari, and Harvey Kushner, all prominent contributors to the established ‘terrorism’

discourse since the 1980s and 1990s. In this manner, *The New York Times* became a space in which a variety of discursive agents from different fields could freely present their views which were then legitimized and disseminated by the newspaper. It not only validated this particular construction of the attacks as an instance of ‘Islamic terrorism,’ but also, given the interconnectedness of the different discursive fields, contributed to the coherence of the narrative as it was being forged.

This general trend continued in the next months and years. When the United States launched its war against Afghanistan on October 7, 2001, *The New York Times* again offered explanations and analyses noticeably in line with the Bush administration’s narrative about the need to fight a “war on terror(ism).” The reporting also continuously linked the (supposed) threat from Islam to the threat of ‘terrorism.’ For instance, Andrew Sullivan’s op-ed piece in *The New York Times Magazine* on the day of the invasion argued that “the religious dimension of this conflict [the looming war in Afghanistan] [wa]s central to its meaning.” Even though Sullivan purported to see the scope of the conflict in general terms as “a war of fundamentalism against faiths of all kind that [we]re at peace with freedom and modernity,” his opinion piece subtly marked Islam as a threat and depicted it as a religion prone to condoning violence and ‘terrorism.’ Sullivan repeatedly quoted “the great scholar of Islam” Bernard Lewis to bolster up his claims that there existed “in Islam a deep thread of intolerance toward unbelievers.” He distinguished between “the perversion of Christianity” when it was used to condone “extreme repression, and even terror,” from “bin Laden’s selective use of Islam.” The wording here is telling because it depicted the use of “terror” in the name of Christianity as a “perversion” of the “expressively nonviolent teachings of the Gospels,” implying that Christian ‘terrorism’ was misguided and misunderstanding the central tenets of the faith. In the case of Islam, however, bin Laden’s use of Islam to justify his deeds constituted a “selective use” of the religion’s teachings, suggesting that there were elements in Islam which expressively approved and even authorized violence and ‘terrorism.’

Not only in the *Magazine* but also in the regular paper, *The New York Times* confirmed the central claims of the established ‘terrorism’ discourse. For instance, on the first day after the invasion of Afghanistan, the main headline in *The New York Times* read

“U.S. and Britain Strike Afghanistan, Aiming at Bases and Terrorist Camps; Bush Warns ‘Taliban Will Pay a Price.’” This already suggested that the campaign would be ‘clean’ – and therefore ‘good’ and legitimate – because it targeted “terrorist camps” and other military sights, but not innocent and defenseless civilians. Patrick Tyler’s accompanying article equally maintained that “the United States and Britain launched a powerful barrage of cruise missiles and long-range bombers against Afghanistan today to try to destroy the terrorist training camps of Osama bin Laden’s Qaeda network and the Taliban government that has protected it” (1). It linked al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden, whose motivations were already firmly established as ‘Islamic,’ to the Taliban and ‘terrorism.’ The rest of the article extensively quoted President Bush and other top government officials justifying the invasion as necessary to fight ‘terrorism’ and free Afghanistan from the oppression of the Taliban. Tyler did not provide any mediating commentary or context for these remarks, thus not only amplifying the unfiltered reach of a powerful discursive agent, the U.S. government, but also framing it as uncontested truth claim about the need to fight ‘Islamic terrorism’ as a war.

Tyler’s article also subtly reinforced the notion that Islam played a central role in the first episode of the “war on terror(ism).” He pointed out that “no Muslim government [was] taking part in the attack – in contrast to the case a decade ago when Arab forces helped to eject Iraq’s Army from Kuwait – Mr. Bush nonetheless stated that ‘we [we]re supported by the collective will of the world’” (3). Here, Tyler conflated Muslims and Arabs into one homogeneous agent and managed to imply that, since no major Muslim nation had joined the coalition, this meant that the ‘Islamic world’ in its entirety did not support the “war against terror(ism).” This phrasing evoked the notion of Huntington’s “Clash of Civilizations” since it positioned ‘the West,’ lead by the United States, against all these “Muslim government[s]” who were suspect for not wanting to fight ‘(Islamic) terrorism’ as part of a global alliance.

As these examples demonstrate, journalists writing for *The New York Times* framed the events of 9/11 and the ensuing “war on terror(ism)” as instance of ‘Islamic terrorism,’ testifying not only to the discourse’s dominance at the beginning of the new millennium but also actively supporting its continued spread and power to ascribe meaning to historical

incidents. By conceptualizing ‘terrorism’ in the wake of the September 11 attacks as motivated by belief in Islam, U.S. news journalism reaffirmed previous knowledge claims about the issue and provided a platform for other discursive agents to do the same. As a result, ‘Islamic terrorism’ appeared as a pervasive threat facing the United States and requiring a “war on terror(ism)” to defend the nation against its manifestations.

In a similar development, cultural texts after 9/11 also engaged with the issue of ‘Islamic terrorism.’ In the rest of this section, I discuss how cultural texts conceptualized ‘Islamic terrorism’ as a pervasive threat, using the TV series *24* as an example. *24*, created by Joel Surnow and Robert Cochran and produced for FOX, ran for eight seasons from 2001-2010, was rebooted in 2014 for a ninth one, and constituted a core cultural text for post-9/11 America since it actively participated in the struggle to conceptualize ‘(Islamic) terrorism.’ The series was popular with audiences, in large parts because of its innovative approach. Each season of *24* chronicled one day, hour by hour, in the life of ‘counter-terrorism’ agent Jack Bauer (Kiefer Sutherland) as he attempted to defend the American homeland from devastating terrorist attacks and to capture the ruthless ‘terrorists’ before the clock ran out on a horrific doomsday scenario. The distinguishing characteristic of the series is that “events occur in real time,” as Kiefer Sutherland’s voice explained at the beginning of each episode. This meant that, commercial breaks included, episodes lasted exactly one hour and detailed the actions of Jack Bauer and his colleagues during that hour as they hunted the ‘terrorists.’ Time was of the essence and to add to this sense of urgency, a clock featured prominently at the beginning as well as the end of each episode and also began and ended each commercial break. Moreover, episodes were edited in a manner which further contributed to this feeling of pressure. Split-screens appeared regularly which showed simultaneously what different characters were currently doing. Fast cuts between scenes and locations also indicated the high levels of stress under which Bauer and his colleagues operated. As Sara Brady has pointed out, “[t]he entire concept of the show enable[d] a constant ticking time bomb scenario” (112). The series was extremely successful both commercially and with critics and won several Emmy and Golden Globe awards. On average, 11.5 million viewers tuned in to watch Jack Bauer fight ‘terrorists’ and save America from utter destruction (Brady 112).

24 was very much a product of its times, i.e. a series that engaged consistently with the consequences of 9/11 and the “war on terror(ism)” and was generally seen as reflecting the established discourse’s take on the problem of ‘Islamic terrorism.’ Originally developed before the events of September 11, 2001, the first season featured Serbian warlords on a personal revenge mission against Jack Bauer, meaning that ‘terrorism’ was not an issue yet. But *24* responded to the attack on America by changing its roster of villains and the nature of the conflicts. Notably, from the series’ second season onwards, ‘terrorists’ from the Middle East became the main antagonists to Jack Bauer and his team. Season 2 (2002-2003) features a ‘terrorist’ group sponsored by three unspecified Middle Eastern countries who planned to detonate a nuclear bomb in Los Angeles. In Season 4 (2005), several sleeper cells are activated by Habib Marwan, a ruthless Middle Eastern ‘terrorist’ freshly arrived in the U.S., in an attempt to assassinate the current president as well as launch another nuclear missile against Los Angeles. Season 6 (2007) shows how a series of devastating suicide bombings shake the United States as the main ‘terrorist’ enemy Abu Fayed prepares to detonate five nuclear suitcase bombs across the country. He successfully explodes one of the five bombs before Jack Bauer and his team can stop him. In Season 8 (2010), the first female President of the United States, Allison Taylor, and President Omar Hassan of the fictional Islamic Republic of Kamistan (IRK) meet at the UN in New York City to negotiate a lasting peace agreement while IRK ‘terrorists’ attempt to sabotage this diplomatic endeavor by assassinating President Hassan. In addition, the IRK ‘terrorists’ have acquired nuclear rods and plan to detonate a ‘dirty bomb’ on U.S. soil. Even Season 9 (2014) features fanatic ‘terrorists’ with ties to the Middle East in that Margot Al-Harazi continues her dead husband’s plans to destroy ‘the West’ by taking control over U.S. drones loaded with missiles and firing them on various destinations in London. As these examples show, in *24*, ‘terrorism’ from the Middle East threatening the United States at home and abroad constituted a central theme.

Notably, in all of these seasons, ‘terrorism’ is only loosely defined as acts of violence committed by ‘evil’ antagonists against Americans and American interests. *24* does not offer more information on how it conceptualizes ‘terrorism’ and it does not really have to. Jack Bauer works for CTU, the Counter-Terrorism Unit in Los Angeles, meaning that,

per definition, he fights ‘terrorism’ against the United States. This indicates that in the early 2000s, the discourse on ‘terrorism’ and the term itself had become ubiquitous enough to not require further explanation. Audiences tended to accept the narrative premise without requiring further set-up or information. Moreover, the series made recurrent use of stereotypical markers of ‘terrorism,’ especially with regard to the villains. The ‘evil’ antagonists in most seasons of *24* are depicted as vaguely ‘Middle Eastern,’ meaning that they are dark-skinned and have stereotypical ‘Arab’ names such as Syed Ali (Season 2), Kalil Hasan and Omar (Season 4), Abu Fayed (Season 6), Farhad Hassan (Season 8), and the Al-Harazi family in Season 9. They often also speak with an accent marking them as non-American and therefore suspicious. These narrative elements code the conflict matter unequivocally as ‘terrorism’ in nature and tie the threat to the Middle East and a vaguely ‘Arab,’ meaning non-white, ethnicity.

The series also works to connect the ‘terrorism’ committed by these Middle Eastern characters to their faith in Islam. In Season 2, for instance, main ‘terrorist’ Syed Ali enters a mosque to pray before continuing his mission. Jack Bauer and his colleagues follow him there and prepare to capture him (Episode 11). As they arrive in the mosque, however, they discover that Ali has set himself on fire, presumably to avoid capture. The man they find is kneeling on the ground, burning brightly without uttering a word or moving at all – an eerie picture welcoming Jack Bauer and his fellow agents as they storm into a room usually used for children’s play and littered with toys and colorful kids’ drawings and posters taped to the walls. This sequence works to establish clearly the religious fanaticism of the ‘terrorists’ by suggesting that Ali was willing to burn himself alive rather than be arrested by U.S. law enforcement and potentially forced to divulge his secrets and ‘betray’ his group. This notion of Muslims as fanatic believers and ‘terrorists’ is further enhanced when, at the very end of the episode, Jack Bauer realizes that the burnt man is actually not Ali and that it was all a ruse to allow Ali to escape and continue his mission. It posits Ali as an incredibly charismatic, dangerous leader who can convince others to sacrifice themselves for his cause and paints all Muslims as radical zealots who can be easily recruited to become ‘Islamic terrorists’ against the United States.

Notably, *24* not only represented ‘terrorism’ after 9/11 as predominantly ‘Islamic’ in nature, but also depicted it as successful in attacking the American homeland. In the seasons under discussion here, the ‘Islamic terrorists’ strike the American nation directly at home and succeed in detonating nuclear bombs in some form or other. Season 4, for instance, opens with a train crash orchestrated so that ‘Islamic terrorists’ can rob a small briefcase containing nuclear codes and manuals, enabling them to later initiate a wave of meltdowns in nuclear reactors across the country. CTU agents are unable to stop some reactors from melting down, meaning that an enormous amount of territory is radiated and the number of Americans needing to be evacuated is too large so that many are left behind, eventually dying of radiation poisoning. What is more, in Season 4, the ‘terrorists’ manage to shoot down Air Force One, almost killing the president on board, and to steal the nuclear codes from the wreckage. As a consequence, Habib Marwan and his group gain control over several nuclear warheads which they plan to unleash against the United States. Only then does Jack Bauer manage to stop them. In Season 6, a series of suicide attacks on buses and trains as well as in shopping malls has shaken the nation and at the end of the fourth episode, Abu Fayed and his group detonate a small nuclear bomb which wipes out Valencia, a large neighborhood in Santa Clarita, California, as Jack Bauer watches helplessly with tears in his eyes. Subsequent episodes also depict the aftermath of the attack, the human loss, and the danger from winds blowing the radiation to other parts of the country. Overall, the series depicts the American home space as vulnerable to ‘terrorist’ attacks from ‘Islamic terrorists,’ reflecting and even furthering the general sense of insecurity and anxiety circulating after the real-life attacks of September 11, 2001.

24 shows an American nation threatened from an enemy that has already undermined the social fabric. Season 4’s ‘Islamic terrorist’ Habib Marwan received a prestigious education in London and pretended to be an immigrant to enter the United States. His sinister motives are only discovered when it is too late. Navi and Dina Araz, together with their son Behrooz, have lived in the U.S. for years, but really form part of Habib Marwan’s long-developed plans to attack the country from within. In Season 6, a family of white Americans defends their Arab immigrant neighbors from harm as the neighborhood singles them out as possible ‘terrorists’ involved with main villain Abu

Fayed. In a plot twist, however, it is revealed that the Arab son Ahmed does indeed work for Fayed. Ahmed eventually takes his benefactors hostage and forces them to help him deliver a crucial device to Fayed. The series thus depicts the ‘Islamic terrorists’ as skillfully exploiting the openness of American society as well as American hospitality and good-will, suggesting that the United States is engaged in a large-scale conflict with ‘Islamic terrorism,’ much like the Bush administration interpreted the events of September 11, 2001.

Perhaps aware that its portrayal of the ‘Islamic terrorist’ villains opened the series up to charges of oversimplification, xenophobia, and Islamophobia, ²⁴ also included positive examples of Muslims and Middle Easterners throughout its seasons. For example, in Episode 13 of Season 4, Jack Bauer is on the run from mercenaries out to kill him after he escaped with important witness Paul Raines from the buildings of defense contractor McLennan-Forster. In the previous episode, McLennan-Forster had tried to obscure Habib Marwan’s work in the company by detonating an EMP bomb which crippled their computer systems and plunged the entire neighborhood into darkness and chaos. Episode 13 finds Jack and Paul taking shelter in a gun store owned by two Arab brothers with the mercenaries on their heels as riots break out in the streets. The brothers had barricaded themselves in their store in order to fight off looters. After Jack tells the two young men that he has vital information about “the terrorist attacks” (15:24) which he needs to get to the authorities before more attacks will occur, the two brothers confer and then volunteer to help Jack and Paul fight off the approaching mercenaries despite the risk to their own lives. The two brothers explain to Jack (and the audience) that “[f]or years we’ve been blamed for the attacks by these terrorists. We grew up in this neighborhood. This country is our home” (17:17-17:23). Here, the series goes to considerable length to portray these dark-skinned young men with Middle Eastern roots as important part of American society, clearly depicting them as ‘good’ Muslims who recognize the wrongdoings of their ‘bad’ counterparts. This distinction between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ Muslims reflects similar notions which circulated in the political and academic fields as well as the news media at the time and stipulated that one could not condemn Islam in its entirety for facilitating ‘terrorism’ against the United States, demonstrating once more how discursive agents influence each

other in a reciprocal exchange of ideas. The inclusion of these token ‘good Muslims’ thus enables *24* to continue its portrayal of ‘Islamic terrorism’ as pervasive and powerful under the cover of nuance and tolerance.

In a similar vein, *24* reflects and represents other central ideas about ‘terrorism’ which circulated at the time, most notably the ideas that ‘terrorists’ operated in networks and were often sponsored by governments hostile to the United States. As I have shown above, President Bush took up these notions from conceptualizations of ‘terrorism’ developed in previous decades and made them central themes in his own framings of the issue. In *24*, these ideas appear as well, pointing to the continued dominance of the ‘terrorism’ discourse and the interconnectedness of the different discursive agents and fields. Hence, throughout the series, it is usually revealed towards the end that the ‘Islamic terrorists’ had received substantial support, weapons, and money from either the Chinese or the Russians, long-established antagonists in American politics and culture.

In Season 2, for instance, it becomes apparent at the end that a conglomerate of oil companies wanted to start a war in the Middle East by instigating a ‘terrorist’ attack on American soil which would force the U.S. government to respond militarily. A war in the Middle East would make oil prices spike, leading to enormous profits for the conspirators. In Season 4, it is ultimately revealed that the ‘terrorists’ around Habib Marwan also received help from Chinese freelance agent Lee Jong, leading to another action-filled subplot in which Jack Bauer storms the Chinese embassy to capture Jong and bring him to CTU for interrogation. This sets off a narrative thread which runs through subsequent seasons in which the Chinese government continues to hunt Jack Bauer in revenge for his assault on the embassy in which a high-ranking Chinese official was killed, eventually capturing him, extraditing him to China, and torturing him there for over a year. In Season 6, ‘Islamic terrorist’ Abu Fayed receives vital support and guidance from Russian agents who set up an elaborate scheme to use Abu Fayed as henchman to do the dirty work for them. The Russians also provide the ‘terrorists’ in Season 8 with nuclear rods to use against the United States. In this manner, *24* suggested that the real threat did not emanate so much from obscure ‘Islamic terrorists,’ but from clandestine operations sanctioned (and even explicitly ordered) by the Chinese and Russian governments, powerful

political players wanting to de-throne the United States as global leader and hegemon by relying on ‘Islamic terrorists’ to do their bidding. In accordance with previous discursive traditions, the threat rather emanated from a ‘state-sponsored’ ‘terrorism’ network instead of the ‘(Islamic) terrorist’ client groups.

Unsurprisingly, then, *24* has been overwhelmingly read as affirming the discourse on ‘(Islamic) terrorism’ and the “war on terror(ism)” after 9/11.⁹ Indeed, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Vice President Dick Cheney confirmed they were both fans of the show (Prince, *Firestorm* 239; Downing 72; J. Mayer). Jane Mayer also noted that “many prominent conservatives sp[oke] of ‘24’ as if it were real,” suggesting that *24*’s representation of ‘terrorism’ and Jack Bauer’s fight against it affirmed long-postulated, established conceptualizations of the issue. Famously, during a debate between Republican presidential candidates in South Carolina on May 15, 2007, Tom Tancredo of Colorado responded to a question on how he would handle a hypothetical terrorist attack as President of the United States that he would be “looking for ‘Jack Bauer’ at that time, let me tell you” (qtd. in Brady 108). *24* thus functioned as a powerful vehicle to communicate central tenets of the established ‘terrorism’ discourse, in particular the need to fight it ruthlessly as a “war on terror(ism)” against ‘Islamic terrorists’ out to destroy the United States.

Ultimately, the picture which emerges is that the ‘terrorism’ discourse cemented its dominant position in U.S. politics, academia, news journalism, and popular culture in the wake of 9/11 and the early stages of the “war on terror(ism).” Hegemonic conceptualizations of ‘terrorism’ combined central ideas and themes which had circulated in previous decades, framing it as ‘Islamic’ in nature, new and unprecedented, often financed by an influential government which helped the ‘Islamic terrorists’ to organize themselves in international networks. These ‘Islamic terrorists’ then presumably singled out the United States for attack because of their own misguided, fanatical beliefs in Islam, forcing the nation to respond militarily. In the rest of this chapter, I turn to how these knowledge claims about

⁹See the edited collection by Peacock (although admittedly of somewhat dubious quality), Downing, and especially Žižek’s article in *The Guardian*. Many critics have focused on the depiction of torture in *24*, usually arguing that it affirms claims by the Bush administration about its usefulness as a tool in interrogation despite evidence to the contrary. See here especially J. Arnold; Brady; Dershowitz; A. Green; Häntzschel; Howard; J. Mayer; O’Mathúna; and Prince, *Firestorm*. Some critics have even suggested that the show’s depiction of torture as an acceptable practice of interrogation has influenced how U.S. soldiers treated prisoners in Iraq. See Brady, Häntzschel, and J. Mayer as well as the contribution “Is Torture” published on the website of *Democracy Now*.

‘(Islamic) terrorism’ developed as the “war on terror(ism)” became even more entrenched in the second half of the decade.

5.3 “The Global Jihadist Movement [...] Remains the Preeminent Terrorist Threat to the United States” – The ‘Terrorism’ Discourse in U.S. Politics and Academia in the Mid- to Late 2000s

In the second half of the decade, the discourse on ‘Islamic terrorism’ maintained its hegemonic position and continued to dictate the ways in which (political) violence against the United States could be interpreted. The Bush administration’s framing of the events of 9/11 as an instance of ‘Islamic terrorism’ reverberated throughout the American public sphere. The discourse posited that 9/11 had been committed by an evil ‘terrorist’ network which had recruited fanatic ‘Islamic terrorists’ to attack the United States by tapping into their misguided religious beliefs. This also served as rationale for declaring a “war on terror(ism)” and, in the process, it had cemented a conceptualization of ‘(Islamic) terrorism’ which merged discursive elements from previous decades into one coherent tale, endowing knowledge claims about ‘terrorism’ with considerable power. In this section, I therefore look more closely at how the discourse on ‘(Islamic) terrorism’ continued to dominate political and academic engagements with the issue in the mid- to late 2000s.

The president and his administration were not the only discursive actors to tap into notions of ‘Islamic terrorism’ in order to make sense of the 9/11 attacks and frame the resulting policy decisions, especially the initiation of a “war on terror(ism)” with first installments in Afghanistan and Iraq. Notably, the official government reports on ‘terrorism,’ entitled *Patterns of Global Terrorism* until 2003 and then renamed *Country Reports on Terrorism* from 2004 onward, depicted the threat of ‘Islamic terrorism’ in a similar manner, highlighting the extent to which the discourse dominated U.S. politics in those years. Following the knowledge claims made by the Bush administration, the reports also portrayed ‘terrorist’ groups as operating in international networks, receiving financial and logistical support from state sponsors or powerful individuals like Osama bin Laden, and, most importantly, as motivated by their religious beliefs. The reports also justified

and legitimized fighting ‘terrorism’ through war. *Patterns of Global Terrorism: 2001*, for instance, warned that

Taliban-controlled Afghanistan became a major terrorist hub, a training ground and transit point for a network of informally linked individuals and groups that have engaged in international militant and terrorist acts throughout the world. Usama Bin Ladin and al-Qaida terrorists provided the Taliban with training, weapons, soldiers, and money to use in its war to defeat the Northern Alliance. The Taliban in turn provided safehaven and logistical facilities to al-Qaida. (10)

Afghanistan was described as notorious ‘state sponsor’ of ‘terrorism’ acting in a symbiotic relationship with bin Laden’s al-Qaeda. It created the specter of a sophisticated, professional “terrorist hub” and “network” of ‘terrorist’ groups joining forces “to defeat the Northern Alliance,” i.e. the U.S.-led coalition forces, and presented both al-Qaeda and the Taliban as powerful forces relying on “international militant and terrorist acts throughout the world” to attack the United States. These elements clearly echoed the president’s discourse on post-9/11 ‘terrorism,’ also reinforcing his claims as ‘objective truth’ in turn.

Using notably similar language, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2005* claimed:

AQ [al-Qaeda] and its core leadership group represent a global action network that seeks to aggregate and exploit the effects of widely dispersed, semi-independent actors. It openly describes itself as a transnational guerrilla movement and applies classic insurgent strategies at the global level. AQ applies terrorism, but also subversion, propaganda, and open warfare, and it seeks weapons of mass destruction in order to inflict the maximum possible damage on its opponents.

The notion of ‘terrorist’ groups like al-Qaeda as operating in “a global action network” continued to be central to conceptualizations of ‘terrorism’ in these government reports. As the example also makes clear, this ‘terrorism’ was depicted as operating internationally and, in a nod to previous discursivizations of the term, warned of the dangers of “weapons of mass destruction” in the hands of ‘terrorists’ like al-Qaeda. This activated previous framings of ‘terrorism’ (especially ideas about ‘new Islamic terrorism’ from the 1990s) and made the reports’ observations appear ‘logical’ and ‘true.’ What is more, the excerpt also aligned ‘terrorism’ with related concepts, particularly ‘war’ and ‘insurgency,’ suggesting that the term’s meaning was becoming increasingly vague. In the reports, ‘terrorism’ came to describe any form of violence directed against the United States, including the *threat* of violence, as the term became emptier and even more widely applicable and powerful.

References to religion, i.e. Islam, also appeared in the reports' descriptions of 'terrorism.' Many reports labelled the perpetrators "Islamic extremists" (e.g. *Patterns 2001*, *Patterns 2003*, *Country Reports 2004*, and *Country Reports 2005*) and *Country Reports on Terrorism 2004* even warned of the dangers of "jihadist terror" and contended that "[t]he global jihadist movement – including its most prominent component, al-Qa'ida – remain[ed] the preeminent terrorist threat to the United States, US interests and US allies" (6, 7). These expressions marked the 'terrorism' clearly as motivated by belief in Islam, suggesting that the perpetrators were religious zealots who were part of a larger global movement comprised of fanatic believers in Islam and who acted out the tenets of their faith by attacking the United States.

In another example, *Country Reports 2006* asserted that "Afghanistan remain[ed] threatened by Taliban insurgents and religious extremists, some of whom [we]re linked to al-Qaida (AQ) and to sponsors outside the country." References to "Taliban insurgents and religious extremists" functioned as synonyms for 'terrorism,' thus evoking conceptualizations which explained 'terrorism' as committed by religious fanatics. This notion was then connected to al-Qaeda, a group which had been firmly established as 'Islamic terrorists,' meaning that the reports could conjure the specter of 'Islamic terrorism' without actually having to directly use those terms. In a similar manner, the *Country Reports 2008* warned:

AQ continued its propaganda efforts seeking to inspire support in Muslim populations, undermine Western confidence, and enhance the perception of a powerful worldwide movement. Terrorists consider information operations a principal part of their effort. Their use of the Internet for propaganda, recruiting, fundraising and, increasingly, training, [...] made the Internet a 'virtual safe haven.'

Here, 'terrorism' was not only depicted as sophisticated operation which made use of different venues and modern technology (once more tapping into ideas about 'new Islamic terrorism' in the process). It was also clearly linked to religion by suggesting that "Muslim populations" were particularly susceptible to becoming 'terrorists' themselves. Indeed, by indicating that one of al-Qaeda's goals was to "undermine Western confidence," the report subtly evoked the rhetoric of a "Clash of Civilizations" by presenting al-Qaeda and its allied "Muslim populations" as opposite to the "Western" coalition. Hence, even though the report stressed that "it [wa]s important to recognize that not all extremists [we]re

Muslim,” it also maintained that “we c[ould] not ignore the large number of extremists who ha[d] distorted Islam to promote terrorism” (*Country Reports 2008*), evoking familiar distinctions between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ Islam as a cover under which it could portray Islam as motivating force behind ‘terrorism’ against the United States.

Lastly, the government reports engaged in important cultural and political work because they justified and legitimized the ongoing “war on terror(ism).” The reports’ open support of President Bush and his policies in the early 2000s (see especially *Patterns 2001, 2002, and 2003*) developed into a subtler framing of needing to fight ‘terrorism’ through war in later years. In part, the mere existence of these reports indicated that ‘terrorism’ against the United States was a serious problem requiring extensive political attention. The reports also carefully tracked the development and latest installments of the “war on terror(ism).” They chronicled how Afghanistan and Iraq transformed from sponsors of ‘terrorism’ against the United States into valuable allies and modern states which rejected ‘terrorism’. *Patterns 2003*, for instance, reported:

In Iraq and Afghanistan, military force is being brought to bear against terrorists with real success. The capture of Saddam Hussein in December 2003 was a major defeat for the thugs and terrorists who supported him. Through Operation Iraqi Freedom, the United States and its Coalition partners defeated the Saddam regime, effectively neutralizing a state sponsor of terrorism and removing a government that had used weapons of mass destruction against its own people. (vii)

Here, the report styled the invasion as necessary to defeat the Iraqi regime, a notorious “state sponsor of terrorism” and stressed the positive outcome for both the United States and Iraqi society. It implied that “military force” used against “terrorists” was the most successful strategy, effectively approving the narrative of the “war on terror(ism).”

Similarly, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2004* framed the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq in explicitly militaristic terms and linked them to ‘terrorism.’ The report explained that “[t]he Middle East and North Africa region continue[d] to be the region of greatest concern in the global war on terrorism. Iraq witnessed extensive terrorism and violence by foreign jihadists, former regime elements, and Islamic extremists” (57). It effectively characterized the war in Iraq as fight against “Islamic extremists” and not only activated conceptualizations of ‘terrorism’ as religiously motivated (“jihadists” and “Islamic extremists”), it also fixated the problem geographically in the Middle East, evoking

past discourses on the issue and making the claim appear factual. Ultimately, the report's uncritical repetition of the phrase "global war on terrorism" suggested that it was the 'natural' response to the problem of 'terrorism,' a practice which recurred throughout the other reports of the decade and which worked to stabilize the notion of a "war on terrorism" as only possible response.

As this discussion demonstrates, the discursive constructions of 'terrorism' after 9/11 as 'Islamic' in nature proved so pervasive and powerful that they largely drowned out critical voices. Alternative framings of the events were marginalized and silenced, meaning that the conceptualization of 'terrorism' as 'Islamic,' operating in networks, sponsored by hostile regimes, and unprecedented in its lethality, remained practically uncontested. Eventually, however, as the decade progressed, a more organized and vocal opposition coalesced around criticism of how the "war on terror(ism)" was conducted, taking issue with the handling of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the rationale behind invading Iraq in the first place, and, when it was uncovered in the spring of 2004, the horrific torture and abuse scandal against Iraqi prisoners of war at the hands of U.S. soldiers at Abu Ghraib prison and other places.

The full extent of public dissatisfaction with the Bush administration's "war on terror(ism)" became apparent in the 2006 Midterm Elections where the Democratic Party gained control of the House of Representatives and the Senate. Nancy Pelosi became Speaker of the House, the first woman ever to hold this position. *The New York Times* called the elections "a broad realignment of power in Washington" (Broder) and acknowledged that "Democrats w[ould] now control the committees and the floor schedule" (Hulse). 'Terrorism' generally and the "war on terror(ism)" specifically were central issues in the 2006 elections, as surveys suggested: About four in ten voters viewed 'terrorism' and the war in Iraq as key issues while almost six in ten voters opposed the war in Iraq (Zeleny and Thee), suggesting that the sweeping victory for the Democratic Party also functioned as a way to express opposition to the Bush administration's leadership in fighting 'terrorism.'

Yet, importantly, in these debates the framing of 9/11 as 'terrorism' and the subsequent retaliatory military operations as "war on terror(ism)" were never questioned. Rather, politicians and their constituents disagreed over *how* to conduct the "war on

terror(ism)” and over *who* should be fighting *when* and *where*. But questions of *why* the nation should go to war in the Middle East (i.e. to combat ‘Islamic terrorism’ against the U.S.) and against *what* (‘Islamic terrorism’) it was fighting were not part of the debate. This demonstrates just how powerful the discourse on ‘terrorism’ was; it was clearly the single most dominant paradigm which not only assigned meaning to historic events, it actively constructed, shaped, and even limited political policy.

Indeed, the discourse on ‘(Islamic) terrorism’ continued to dominate debates about the issue not only in U.S. politics, but also in the academic field of ‘terrorism’ studies. As we saw above, the academic response to 9/11 and the ensuing “war on terror(ism)” focused almost exclusively on ‘Islamic terrorism,’ effectively establishing it as the dominant interpretative frame through which to make sense of what had happened. Critical voices challenging the hegemonic academic discourse on ‘terrorism’ were, as the preceding chapters in this study have shown, regularly marginalized. After the attacks of September 11, 2001, this suppression became even more pronounced. Indeed, the first attempt at formulating a meaningful opposition to the dominant academic discourse developed only in the latter half of the decade and then also mainly on European ground. This suggests that American scholars disagreeing with the main claims of the ‘Islamic terrorism’ discourse faced serious difficulties in finding ways and venues to make their voices heard within their own country. In the remainder of this section, I fill a gap in the existing research on the ‘terrorism’ discourse by discussing how, as the “war on terror(ism)” wore on, dissenting scholars slowly formed a more coherent approach to the topic with the aim of providing an institutionalized space to develop different forms of knowledge about ‘(Islamic) terrorism’ and to express discontent with the Bush administration and its handling of the “war on terror(ism).” Yet, as the analysis will also show, these efforts proved ultimately too weak to significantly challenge the established discourse in any substantial way.

American ‘terrorism’ scholars with a more critical attitude towards the political and academic approaches to ‘Islamic terrorism’ continued to voice their disagreement but were noticeably sidelined and hindered at participating fully in the dominant discourse. For instance, Martha Crenshaw, one of the few openly critical American scholars, expressed

her doubts about the utility and analytical qualities of the ‘new terrorism’ concept in her 2003 article “‘New’ Versus ‘Old’ Terrorism,” arguing the following:

[T]he distinction between the ‘new’ and the ‘old’ terrorism is not as fundamental as proponents of the ‘new’ terrorism view would have it. Differences among groups and over time do exist, but they may be attributable to a changing environment (processes associated with what is termed globalization, in particular), specific opportunity structures, and evolutionary progression, even learning. Observations about a ‘new’ terrorism often lack a basis in sustained and systematic empirical research, and they tend to neglect history.

A few years later, Crenshaw renewed her critique, maintaining that “[t]oday’s terrorism [wa]s not a fundamentally or qualitatively new phenomenon but grounded in an evolving historical context” (*Explaining* 53). With an eye to current debates, she also criticized that “[d]efining jihadist terrorism as entirely new [wa]s a way of framing the threat so as to mobilize both public and elite support for costly responses that ha[d] long-term and uncertain pay-offs” (64). Crenshaw warned that the ‘new Islamic terrorism’ argument simplified political reality and absolved its proponents from making sense of “a contradictory and confusing reality” (64).

Crenshaw’s openly critical stance towards the ‘Islamic terrorism’ discourse shows that the American scholarly community was not as homogeneous as it may appear at first glance. However, it is also evident that her voice did not have a significant impact on the discourse because it was considerably marginalized. Indeed, Crenshaw’s 2003 article appeared in the *Palestine-Israel Journal*, a surprising choice considering that Crenshaw did not mention Israel at all in the article and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine only once in passing. This suggests that Crenshaw may have had trouble finding a more topic-based journal for her article and that this could be related to its critical nature. Similarly, her study *Explaining Terrorism* was published by Routledge, a British-based company, implying that American publishing houses were not as interested in printing her often critical work.

She was not the only one; other scholars also criticized the knowledge produced after 9/11 as well as the state of the field in general. For instance, in 2004, Andrew Silke published the anthology *Research on Terrorism* in which he asserted that “[r]esearch on terrorism has had a deeply troubled past” (Introduction 1). Silke concluded, “terrorism *can* be avoided or prevented, and ameliorated when it does occur. To do all this, however,

requires the right knowledge, the right understanding and a willingness to act on the lessons already learned. Currently, we are lacking on all three of these fronts” (27). Silke’s anthology was also important because it featured a foreword by Bruce Hoffman as well as contributions by noted scholars such as John Horgan, Leonard Weinberg, Avishag Gordon, and Louise Richardson, who all criticized the lamentable state of research, indicating that a broad range of academics were concerned about the direction into which their field of interest was developing.¹⁰ However, Silke is a British scholar working at a British university and the anthology was published by Frank Cass, a British publishing house. This shows that the more critical voices which contributed to the academic discourse on ‘terrorism’ were not only predominantly located outside the U.S., they also turned to British venues in order to publish their views. Evidently, more critical approaches to the study of ‘terrorism’ were finding it challenging to participate in the field from within the United States.

Indeed, Britain proved to be a more hospitable space within which to organize a more critical approach to ‘terrorism’ studies after 9/11. Starting in 2006, a group of scholars around Richard Jackson began to break away from what they called “Orthodox Terrorism Studies” or “Terrorology” to form “Critical Terrorism Studies.” In his 2005 study, *Writing the War on Terrorism* (tellingly published in Europe by Manchester University Press), Jackson had already called on his colleagues to “resist the [dominant] discourse [on ‘terrorism’], to deconstruct it at every opportunity and continually to interrogate the exercise of power” (188). Then, in October 2006, the University of Manchester hosted a conference entitled “Is It Time for a Critical Terrorism Studies?” which brought together a wide array of scholars on ‘terrorism’ known to be critical of the developments in ‘terrorism’ studies itself and the conceptualization of ‘(Islamic) terrorism’ by the dominant discourse at the time. Speakers included an international array of scholars like Richard Jackson, Andrew Silke, Joseba Zulaika, Jeroen Gunning, John Horgan, and Marie Breen Smyth. The conference ended with the official launch of the “Working Group on Critical Studies on Terrorism,” sponsored by the British International Studies Association (*Is It Time*).

¹⁰Other examples of scholars and texts discussing the lamentable state of the field of ‘terrorism’ research include A. Gordon; Sageman, “Low” and “Stagnation;” Silke, “Devil” and “Road;” and Zulaika, *Terrorism*. Magnus Ranstorp edited a collection entitled *Mapping Terrorism Research*, published in 2007 by the British company Routledge, which equally criticized the sub-par state of ‘terrorism’ research. Scholars arguing that the state of ‘terrorism’ research has improved in recent years include Crenshaw and LaFree; Schmid, “Comments” and Introduction; and Silke and Schmidt-Petersen.

Both the conference and the Working Group were indicators that dissenting scholars were starting to organize professionally, establish networks of support, and generally institutionalize their critiques of the *status quo* in the field. That these activities occurred outside the U.S. and were initiated by European scholars, however, serves as an indicator of the extent to which American criticism of the ‘terrorism’ discourse had become silenced.

With the help of established academic tools, i.e. conferences, working groups, publications, and collaborations, this group of scholars slowly formalized a more critical approach which would, in the years to come, attempt to challenge the hegemonic conceptualizations of ‘(Islamic) terrorism’ produced by their colleagues in the United States. Following the conference in Manchester, Jeroen Gunning and Richard Jackson both published articles advocating for the creation of ‘Critical Terrorism Studies.’ Gunning’s contribution, entitled “A Case for Critical Terrorism Studies?” and published in 2007, argued that “a ‘critical turn’ in the field of ‘terrorism studies’ [wa]s necessary” (364). That same year, Richard Jackson outlined “the core commitments of critical terrorism studies” in an eponymous article, describing “Critical Terrorism Studies” as “terrorism-related research that self-consciously adopt[ed] a sceptical attitude towards state-centric understandings of terrorism and which d[id] not take existing terrorism knowledge for granted but [wa]s willing to challenge widely held assumptions and beliefs” (“Core” 244, 246). Both Gunning and Jackson presented “Critical Terrorism Studies” as a serious alternative to the *status quo* within the field by opening up a new space within which scholars could approach the issue of ‘(Islamic) terrorism’ from new directions. Incidentally, neither article was published in any of the main ‘terrorism’ studies journals, another clear indicator that the group of scholars coalescing around Jackson was forced to organize at the margins of the field.

From then on, things developed at a rapid pace: Richard Jackson became the editor-in-chief at the newly-founded journal *Critical Studies on Terrorism* whose first issue was published in 2008 by Taylor and Francis, the British publishing house which also issued *Terrorism and Political Violence*. Taylor and Francis constituted an established channel of producing and circulating knowledge about ‘terrorism,’ indicating that “Critical Terrorism Studies” was recognized by other discursive actors as alternative approach to

knowledge production, but also that non-hegemonic conceptualizations of ‘terrorism’ did not enter the American market easily and had to turn to European venues instead, leading to reduced visibility in the U.S.

In the introduction to the very first volume of *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, Marie Breen Smyth and her colleagues positioned the journal as “one small part of a much broader attempt to foster a more self-reflective, critical approach to the study of terrorism, and bring in those who stud[ied] aspects of ‘terrorism,’ but [we]re uncomfortable with or hostile to the (perceived) ontological, epistemological, and ideological commitments of existing terrorism studies” (2). Even though the authors acknowledged that “one [wa]s wary of creating a bifurcation between ‘traditional’ and ‘critical’ terrorism studies since all research on terrorism [wa]s in need of greater self-reflexivity” (2), their introduction clearly worked towards positioning their own group of scholars as open opposition to the established ways of creating knowledge about ‘terrorism.’ The first volume of *Critical Studies on Terrorism* also featured papers by, among others, Michael Stohl, Adrian Guelke, and Joseba Zulaika (also an editor of the journal himself) with William Douglass – all scholars with a reputation of criticizing the state of the field and its discursive practices. More key publications followed in the next years which further helped to institutionalize “Critical Terrorism Studies” and to endow it with much-needed political capital.¹¹

“Critical Terrorism Studies” set out with an explicitly established and carefully argued agenda. As described by its most fervent advocates, “Critical Terrorism Studies” aimed to merge two different approaches to the study of ‘terrorism’: (1) the political-economical approach which viewed ‘terrorism’ as a strategy any actor could use, including Western states, and approaches developed within anthropology, sociology, history, and (2) an approach based on insights from area studies, which focused on the importance of historical, social, and cultural contexts as well as primary research (R. Jackson, et al., *Terrorism* 31-33). “Critical Terrorism Studies” scholars professed an awareness that knowledge about ‘terrorism’ was created in a social process, contingent on

¹¹See here particularly the anthology *Critical Terrorism Studies: A New Research Agenda* edited by R. Jackson, Smyth, and Gunnings in 2009, which featured notable contributions by these three scholars as well as Ranstorp and Silke, all writers who were established as important and acknowledged ‘critical’ scholars of ‘terrorism.’ Other examples include *Terrorism: A Critical Introduction*, written by R. Jackson, Gunning, and Smyth together with Jarvis in 2011, and the *Routledge Handbook of Critical Terrorism Studies*, edited by R. Jackson and published in 2016.

social and political changes, and therefore not neutral or objective (36). They encouraged transparency about how scholars conducted research itself and also stressed the importance of primary research as well as interdisciplinarity and pluralism in research (38-39). Jackson and his colleagues advocated a broadening of the research agenda into hitherto neglected topics in addition to focusing on “the field’s underlying ideological, institutional and material interests” (43).

On paper, “Critical Terrorism Studies” offered a complex and nuanced approach to ‘terrorism’ as a concept. It conceived of ‘terrorism’ as “a socially constructed cultural object with wide-ranging effects across society” (R. Jackson et al., *Terrorism* 67). This approach to ‘terrorism’ was remarkable since it openly acknowledged its constructed nature and dependency on context. As Jackson and his collaborators suggested, ‘terrorism’ – including the threat of ‘terrorism’ – was constructed through cultural, social, and political practices (52). It operated on a discursive level, meaning that the discourse on ‘terrorism’ even had the power to restrict what could be said about it (70). “Critical Terrorism Studies” was thus clearly indebted to Joseba Zulaika and William Douglass who proposed a similar approach in their 1996 study *Terror and Taboo* (see again the previous chapter).¹²

In practice, however, “Critical Terrorism Studies” became first and foremost a space in which scholars could voice and debate their critical views of the Bush administration, its (disastrous) handling of the “war on terror(ism),” and, later, the Obama administration’s policies against ‘Islamic terrorism.’¹³ Joseba Zulaika, for example, stated that “[t]he ultimate catastrophic self-fulfilling prophecy of the War on Terror should be by now obvious to everyone: the war in Iraq” and claimed that “the ascendancy of the War on Terror as the single hegemonic agenda of U.S. policy c[ould] not be blamed on the administration alone; one ha[d] to unmask the self-righteous fictions of the very culture of counterterrorism that allowed for such massive deception” (*Terrorism* 194, 197). Lisa Stampnitzky took issue with the Bush administration’s reversed definitions of ‘pre-emption’ and ‘prevention,’ surmising that “the Bush administration’s use of the term appeared to blur the distinction deliberately” (173). Ian Lustick’s study was already tellingly entitled

¹²Richard Jackson called Zulaika and Douglass’s work “the defining text on the discourse of terrorism” (*Writing* vii).

¹³See, e.g., R. Jackson, “Culture;” McCrisken, “Obama’s Drone” and “Ten;” D. Murray; Pious; and Zulaika, “Drones.”

Trapped in the War on Terror and boldly declared in the opening of the preface, “The government’s loudly trumpeted ‘War on Terror’ is not the solution to the problem. It has become the problem” (ix).¹⁴ “Critical Terrorism Studies” thus offered a space for critiques of the conduct of the “war on terror(ism)” and the ‘terrorism’ discourse-at-large.

However, a careful evaluation of the state of “Critical Terrorism Studies” more than ten years after its initial inception indicates that the endeavor to change the approach to ‘terrorism’ in academia was not as successful as the initiators had hoped. This becomes apparent already when looking at the number of scholars actively involved in “Critical Terrorism Studies.” Richard Jackson is arguably the central figure in the field and its main discursive force. Indeed, Jackson was involved in the writing and publishing of practically all major “Critical Terrorism Studies” texts of recent years and tended to collaborate with the same group of scholars (especially Lee Jarvis, Marie Breen Smyth, and Jeroen Gunnings), suggesting that beyond this small core group, there are few scholars seriously involved in producing ‘critical’ knowledge about ‘terrorism.’ What is more, their articles are rarely quoted by the leading ‘orthodox’ scholars in the U.S., thus excluding Jackson and his collaborators from meaningful participation in the field. The established American field of ‘terrorism’ studies effectively insulated itself from critical challenges to the way it produced knowledge about ‘terrorism’ as well as the content of its knowledge claims itself. The fact that more critically-minded scholars had to organize outside the U.S. ultimately confirms that the discourse on ‘(Islamic) terrorism’ had achieved an unrivaled, uncontested hegemonic position within American academia and politics. In order to complete this analysis, I discuss in the next section how media and cultural discourses responded to the hegemonic standing of ‘Islamic terrorism’ as well as the increasing criticism of the “war on terror(ism)” from the mid-2000s onward.

¹⁴For more examples, see, e.g. Altheide, Brady, J. Collins and Glover, Croft, Holloway, and Mamdani, Silberstein.

5.4 “Islam’s Potential for Extremism” – The ‘Terrorism’ Discourse in U.S. News Media and Popular Culture in the Mid- to Late 2000s

The discourse on ‘(Islamic) terrorism’ not only dominated how the issue was understood and treated in the political and academic fields in the United States, it also continued to predetermine the ways in which the U.S. news media as well as cultural productions engaged with the topic. Reflecting the general dissatisfaction with the conduct of the “war on terror(ism),” the news media became increasingly critical about the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, but ultimately did not question the overall framing of American foreign policy as response to a threat of ‘Islamic terrorism.’ Similarly, cultural productions in the second half of the decade engaged critically with the wars in the Middle East yet did not question the overall validity of the ‘terrorism’ paradigm itself. In this last section, I examine how *The New York Times* reported on ‘terrorism’ from the mid-2000s onwards before discussing how Hollywood movies narrated and visualized the experience of the “war on terror(ism)” and the notion of ‘(Islamic) terrorism’ as a threat to the U.S.

Generally speaking, the reporting in *The New York Times* on ‘terrorism’ in the second half of the decade was characterized by an intensification of the discursive trends which had emerged in the first part of the decade (see again Figure 5.1 above). Thus, even though the overall number of articles referencing ‘terrorism’ was cut into half, going from 9,074 articles in 2004 to 4,512 articles in 2005, what nevertheless remains clear is that the issue of ‘terrorism’ not only continued to dominate newspaper coverage of (political) violence, it actually expanded its hegemonic standing. Compared to the output of previous decades, *The New York Times* still wrote about ‘terrorism’ to an unprecedented extent during the years of the second Bush administration. Indeed, the ‘terrorism’ discourse firmly maintained its dominant standing during the second Bush administration. On average, for the period 2005-2008, there were still 4,624 articles per year, or about 13 articles per day, which contained the word ‘terrorism.’ Evidently, then, ‘terrorism’ continued to be viewed as central issue even in years when there were no high-profile attacks.

Interestingly, at first glance, the data appears to suggest that, particularly from the mid-2000s onward, concepts related to ‘terrorism’ gained in popularity. As Figure 5.4

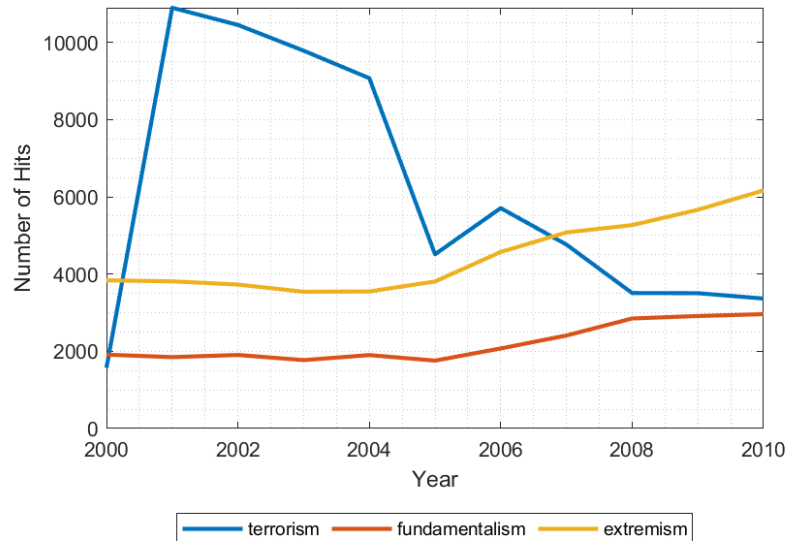


Figure 5.4: Reporting on ‘terrorism,’ ‘fundamentalism,’ and ‘extremism’ in *The New York Times*, 2000-2010

shows, starting in 2005, conceptualizations of ‘terrorism’ as violence directed against the United States and committed by Muslim fanatics were activated via terms used as synonyms, predominantly ‘extremism’ and, to a lesser extent, ‘fundamentalism.’ The graphs in Figure 5.4 show that increasingly more articles referring to ‘extremism’ were published by *The New York Times* beginning in 2005. While there were 3,808 articles in 2005 which mentioned ‘extremism,’ that number rose to 4,573 pieces a year later (i.e. an increase of 20%) and once more by 11% to 5,078 articles in 2007.

However, it is important to note that in the writing of *The New York Times*, the term ‘extremism’ also appeared in a variety of other contexts which are distinctly unrelated to issues of ‘terrorism’ and (political) violence. As Figure 5.5 shows, the majority of articles which mentioned ‘extremism’ actually connected it to sport, style, art, and traveling. Notions of, e.g., ‘Islamic extremism or ‘Arab extremism’ appeared less often, indicating that the term was actually not more dominant than ‘terrorism’ when *The New York Times* reported on violence and war.

This becomes apparent when adapting the graph for ‘extremism’ to only include the hits in the database for ‘Middle East extremism,’ ‘Muslim extremism,’ ‘Islam extremism,’ and ‘Muslim extremism.’ As Figure 5.6 shows, then, ‘terrorism’ remained the most dominant

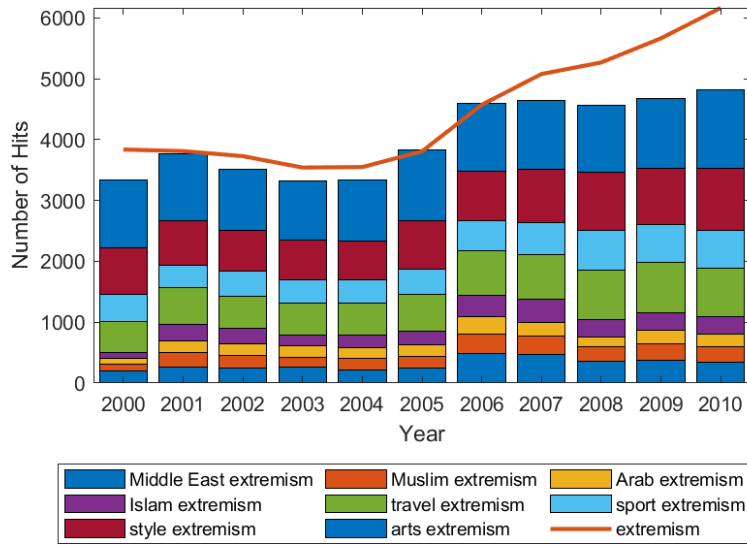


Figure 5.5: Reporting on 'extremism' in *The New York Times*, 2000-2010

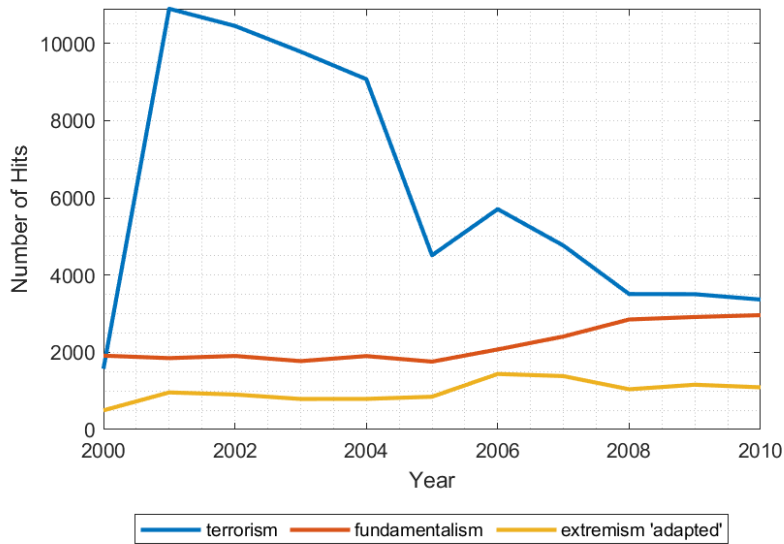


Figure 5.6: Reporting on 'terrorism,' 'fundamentalism,' and 'extremism' (adapted) in *The New York Times*, 2000-2010

concept in the reporting of *The New York Times* while references to ‘extremism’ and ‘fundamentalism’ only played a subordinate role. Nevertheless, in contexts of violence in and from the Middle East, violence involving Islam, or any other conflicts which had already been connected to ‘Islamic terrorism’ (like 9/11 or the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq), references to ‘extremism’ and ‘fundamentalism’ clearly functioned as alternative signifiers for illegitimate violence against the United States committed by fervent believers in Islam, tapping into discursive traditions already established in the previous decade (see again Chapter 4). These terms effectively activated the ‘terrorism’ discourse without having to use the actual word. Indeed, the discourse had clearly managed to diversify and incorporate related concepts as synonyms into its fields of activity. What is more, this suggests that the ‘terrorism’ discourse was starting to obscure its precise workings, its powerful mechanisms of framing and constructing meaning, and receding into the shadows where it could continue to dominate public debates about the issue while remaining unseen. This would make efforts to unmask its workings more difficult for critics in the years to come because framing the concept and pinpointing its uses and appearances were becoming more challenging.

This dynamic is also confirmed when looking at a few examples from articles published in *The New York Times* in the latter half of the decade. For instance, on September 2, 2005 *The New York Times* published an article by Laurie Goodstein in which the journalist observed that, in response to the July bombings of the London public transport system, “American Muslim leaders [...] [we]re rolling out campaigns to persuade American Muslims – especially the young – to beware of preachers peddling extremism and terrorism. They sa[id] that terrorism [wa]s a poison infecting Islam and that moderate Muslims should take responsibility to root it out.” Goodstein then related that at “the Islamic Society’s annual convention, [...] organizers w[ould] mount a new campaign against terrorism and extremism, with posters and pamphlets designed for use in mosques and Islamic schools.” She also quoted Khaled Abou el-Fadl, “an Islamic jurist and professor of law at the University of California, Los Angeles,” as admitting that “[e]xtremist Muslims from abroad used to give speeches at American mosques” where they preached the use of violence. Taken together, Goodstein’s article presented Islam as vulnerable to abuse by

‘terrorists’ and ‘extremists’ who found it easy to incite Muslims to ‘terrorism’ against ‘the West.’ What is more, the fact that American Muslim clerics were preparing a thorough “theological rebuttal to Muslim extremists who cite[d] the Koran and Islamic texts to justify violence” suggested that Islamic scripture did indeed condone violence against others. In order to create this particular impression, Goodstein’s article relied on both terms, ‘terrorism’ and ‘extremism’ and used them both to depict the threat of violence by Muslim believers, tapping into long-circulating notions about ‘Islamic terrorism.’ References to ‘extremism’ became another way to activate these discursive constructions, indicating that the ‘terrorism’ discourse was in the process of diversifying its rhetoric.

Later that same month, on September 29, 2005, *The New York Times* published an entry in its section “World Briefing” which noted that “[t]he police arrested 38 men suspected of involvement in Islamic extremism in raids across the western state of Hesse” in Germany (Plass). The short paragraph ended by informing readers that “[t]he action came days after France said it had arrested nine men near Paris who were suspected of being part of an Islamic cell planning terrorist attacks there.” This article may be brief, but it is notable for mixing the concept “Islamic extremism” with the threat of “Islamic [...] terrorist attacks” facing Europe, suggesting that these terms were regularly used together as quasi-synonyms which referred to the same signifier: illegitimate violence by Muslim zealots against a ‘Western’ nation.

These discursive trends are observable in the writings of *The New York Times* in later years as well. For instance, John Allen Jr. published in the newspaper an op-ed on September 19, 2006 in which he discussed Pope Benedict’s openly critical stance towards Islam and the pontiff’s latest public comments on Islam. Allen observed that “[t]he new pope is tougher both on terrorism and on what the Vatican calls ‘reciprocity’ – the demand that Islamic states grant the same rights and freedoms to Christians and other religious minorities that Muslims receive in the West.” From the beginning of his opinion piece, Allen presented as fact that Islam facilitated ‘terrorism’ and ‘extremism,’ a recurring theme throughout the rest of his article as well. Allen then claimed that “Roman Catholicism under Benedict [wa]s moving into a more critical posture toward Islamic fundamentalism. That could either push Islam toward reform, or set off a global ‘clash of civilizations’ –

or, perhaps, both.” His wording here is noteworthy since it evoked long-established and familiar discursivizations of ‘Islamic terrorism’ as engaged in a “Clash of Civilizations” with ‘the West.’ Indeed, another sign for the power of the ‘terrorism’ discourse is that Allen did not need to use the term itself, references to “Islamic fundamentalism” and a looming “global ‘clash of civilizations’” sufficed to evoke the context. Similarly, Allen commended the pope for having “challenged what he [Benedict] s[aw] as Islam’s potential for extremism, grounded in a literal reading of the Koran.” The allusion to “Islam’s potential for extremism” conjured once more ideas about ‘Islamic terrorism’ without having to actually employ the word. Rather, the article exploited discursive constructions of ‘Islamic terrorism’ in a subtle manner, portraying the threat in broad, all-encompassing terms which covertly activated central knowledge claims of the ‘Islamic terrorism’ discourse.

Another example is Jane Perlez’ article from August 20, 2007 in which she informed readers about special education initiatives in England directed specifically at British Muslims and which had been devised in response to the July 2005 bombings in London. As Perlez told readers, this endeavor “represented something new in Britain’s mosques: a government-financed effort to teach basic citizenship issues, in a special curriculum intended to reach students who might be vulnerable to Islamic extremism.” She continued that “the British government hope[d] that such civics classes, which use[d] the Koran to answer questions about daily life, w[ould] replace the often tedious, and sometimes hard-core, religious lessons now taught in many mosques across the land.” According to Perlez, “British officials ha[d] been struggling with how to isolate the extremist Muslim minority from the moderate majority,” a step deemed necessary by the British authorities in order to be able to fight ‘Islamic terrorism’ effectively. Perlez’s article evoked the specter of ‘Islamic terrorism’ by framing ‘extreme’ belief in Islam as a problem and the main ideological source for ‘terrorism.’ It equally tapped into notions of a ‘good’ Islam in opposition to a ‘bad’ form of Islam which relied on ‘terrorism’ and ‘extremism,’ thus relating the topic of her article within the discursive field of ‘(Islamic) terrorism’ without having to make this connection overt. Rather, readers could be trusted to draw their own inferences, even subconsciously, another sign for the power and pervasiveness of the ‘terrorism’ discourse.

Ultimately, the news media continued to engage with the issue of ‘Islamic terrorism’ in the mid- to late 2000s much in the same way as it had done immediately after the attacks of 9/11. *The New York Times* affirmed knowledge claims that ‘terrorism’ was predominantly perpetrated by Muslim ‘extremists’ who acted out their hatred for the U.S. More so than in previous years, however, these constructions were activated via indirect rhetorical links (particularly the words ‘extremism’ and ‘fundamentalism’) instead of overt references to the threat of ‘terrorism’ itself. This strongly suggests that in the second half of the decade, the ‘(Islamic) terrorism’ discourse began to recede into the background – without losing any of its dominance and omnipresence in public discourses on violence. As the analysis of cultural texts in the rest of this section demonstrates, these developments were not limited to media discourses on the issue. Hollywood movies engaged in a similar vein with the threat of ‘Islamic terrorism’ in general as well as the “war on terror(ism)” in particular.

Indeed, Hollywood also offered portrayals of the “war on terror(ism)” and the mid-to late 2000s saw the release of several high-profile blockbuster productions which tackled the issue of ‘Islamic terrorism’ and the American military engagements in Afghanistan and Iraq. For instance, *The Kingdom*, directed by Peter Berg, released in 2007, and starring Jamie Foxx and Jennifer Garner, follows the investigations of a special FBI team in Saudi Arabia after a ‘terrorist’ attack on the U.S. compound in the country kills U.S. oil workers and their families. An hour later, in a perfidious move by the ‘terrorist’ group, a second bomb explodes on the scene, killing first responders and remaining survivors. The rest of the movie concentrates on the FBI team’s efforts, at times only with reluctant Saudi help, to find and kill the perpetrators, a group of ‘Islamic terrorists’ led by Abu Hamza al-Masri, a notorious ‘Islamic terrorist.’

Already the opening sequence of *The Kingdom* leaves no doubt that the conflict in the movie is between innocent Americans and fanatic ‘Islamic terrorists.’ Scenes show the happy and relaxed American community in Saudi Arabia enjoying a warm and sunny afternoon in the park of the compound. Children play a baseball match as their parents and friends cheer them on. But these scenes are intercut with shots of a group of Saudi men (recognizable because of the stereotypical red and white headdress as well as white

flowing robes) observing the compound through binoculars, clearly waiting for something to happen. The idyllic afternoon is indeed interrupted when ‘terrorists,’ dressed in the same garb as the Arab soldiers guarding the compound, hijack a jeep and race through the streets, spraying houses, parents, and their children with gun fire. A suicide ‘terrorist,’ also dressed in a Saudi military uniform, explodes himself in the midst of fleeing Americans, his last words praising Allah. Meanwhile, the mysterious Arabs on the rooftop (later revealed to include Abu Hamza himself) observe the progress, with Hamza forcing his young grandson to keep watching the scenes of death and destruction through the binoculars, suggesting that Hamza is already grooming his young grandson to follow in his footsteps. *The Kingdom* thus establishes from the outset that the heroic American FBI agents have to fight against ruthless ‘Islamic terrorists’ who do not hesitate to cruelly and brutally kill their victims, justifying their actions with their belief in Islam.

Another notable production of the time was *Body of Lies* (2008), directed by Ridley Scott and starring Leonardo DiCaprio, Russell Crowe, and Mark Strong. The film follows CIA agent Roger Ferris (DiCaprio) as he attempts to capture notorious ‘Islamic terrorist’ Al-Saleem. Over the course of the movie, however, Ferris finds himself entangled in inter-agency conflicts, making it harder to decide who is deceiving whom. In the end, Ferris himself becomes a pawn in an elaborate scheme staged by his Jordanian counterpart who uses Ferris as bait to lure out Al-Saleem. The movie ends with Ferris, dejected and disillusioned, leaving the CIA behind to find Aisha, the Middle Eastern woman he fell in love with earlier in the movie.

Body of Lies clearly takes a more critical stance towards the “war on terror(ism).” As Robert Cettl has remarked in his review, the movie “updates the terrorist genre to address the practical, intelligence and ethical concerns of the War on Terror as waged by the Bush government” (51). This comes particularly to the fore in the development of the character Roger Ferris throughout the movie. Ferris is initially presented as patriotic, savvy CIA agent who supports of the U.S. military operations in the Middle East. But after experiencing repeated betrayal by his superiors as well as torture at the hands of Al-Saleem and his group, Ferris becomes significantly more jaded and eventually abandons the fight altogether, thus embodying the growing disillusion with the “war on terror(ism).”

Yet, importantly, while Ferris' character development in *Body of Lies* works as a foil to criticize the conduct of the "war on terror(ism)" as well as the (ab)use of power in the U.S. intelligence community, the movie does not question the 'terrorism' paradigm itself. Al-Saleem is unequivocally labelled a "jihadist" throughout the movie, framing his actions as 'terrorism' and the man as fervent Muslim. Indeed, at one point in the movie, Ferris and his compatriots even stage a fake 'terrorist' attack, purportedly committed by an 'Islamic terrorist' group which is significantly more sophisticated and better financed than Al-Saleem and his men. The intention is to draw Al-Saleem out of hiding by playing on his vanity and ego so that he can be captured. This scene provides a point of criticism for the secretive, at times morally questionable actions of the CIA in the name of combating '(Islamic) terrorism.' The existence of 'Islamic terrorists' is, however, not put into question; rather, the CIA knows the ploy will work because of the pervasiveness of 'Islamic terrorist' groups in the Middle East and beyond and because all 'Islamic terrorists' behave in a predictable manner which can be exploited.

Ultimately, then, Hollywood productions of this kind affirmed the dominance of the 'Islamic terrorism' discourse and worked to spread it further. While some of these movies expressed a markedly critical stance towards the conduct of the "war on terror(ism)," illustrating the toll the military campaigns took on both the soldiers involved as well as American standing in the world, they never questioned the veracity of the concept of 'Islamic terrorism' *per se*.¹⁵ This indicates that the '(Islamic) terrorism' discourse continued to enjoy an unprecedentedly dominant position in American popular culture as the first decade of the new millennium was drawing to a close. It clearly mirrored and reinforced discursive trends and developments occurring simultaneously in U.S. politics, the academic study of 'terrorism,' and news reporting. As the overall analysis in this chapter demonstrates, at the end of the decade, the discourse on '(Islamic) terrorism' had not only firmly established its dominance and omnipresence in debates about violence, foreign policy, and American engagement in the Middle East – it was clearly there to stay.

¹⁵Other examples of movies taking a critical stance towards the "war on terror(ism)" (to varying degrees) include *Charlie Wilson's War* (2007, dir. Mike Nichols), *Lions for Lambs* (2007, dir. Robert Redford), and *Hurt Locker* (2008, dir. Kathryn Bigelow). Movies focusing directly on the events of 9/11 include *United 93* (2006, dir. Paul Greengrass) and *World Trade Center* (2006, dir. Oliver Stone).

Chapter 6

Conclusion: The ‘Terrorism’ Discourse in the 21st Century

Given the ‘terrorism’ discourse’s current omnipresence and dominance in U.S. politics, academia, news media, and culture in the 21st century, it is an insightful exercise to recall its much humbler beginnings. Indeed, as Chapter 2 in this study has shown, in the 1940s and 1950s, ‘terrorism’ and ‘terror’ constituted two analytical concepts which were rarely used in debates about political violence at the time. In the 1940s, for instance, American presidents mentioned ‘terrorism’ on average 0.6 times per year. A decade later, this number sank to 0.4 references per year, suggesting that ‘terrorism’ was not at all central to political interpretations of international conflicts. U.S. presidents evidently did not need the term when commenting on incidents of violence whether they occurred at home or abroad.

‘Terrorism’ as a term and concept slowly became more popular in the late 1950s and early 1960s when it started to be used more regularly in analyses of political conflicts around the world. As the discussions in Chapter 2 revealed, the term ‘terrorism’ described the use of violence committed by rebelling forces in a larger political struggle, particularly in (post)colonial conflicts over national sovereignty and liberation. Typical case studies at the time were the struggle in Mandatory Palestine in the 1940s or Algeria in the 1950s and 1960s, indicating that the Middle East (geographical and imagined) was a point of interest from the very beginning. The term ‘terrorism’ appeared in analyses of conflicts of this kind and was used by journalists and scholars alike to refer to the tactics used by those groups who openly resisted against the colonizing European regimes. As such, ‘terrorism’ was understood to be one of several strategies in the arsenal of ‘rebels’ and ‘insurgents.’ Notably, these early ‘terrorism’ analysts both in academia and journalism did not condemn these ‘terrorists;’ rather, they often expressed understanding and sympathy with their causes, not only suggesting that these ‘terrorists’ had legitimate political claims, but that one ought to listen and actually attempt to negotiate a solution with the aggrieved party.

Moreover, as my analysis in Chapter 2 has demonstrated, ‘terrorism’ was also used to describe the actions of hostile states and regimes, meaning that in the contemporary understanding of the issue, the use of ‘terrorism’ was not limited to non-state actors alone. This is indeed noteworthy since the current usage of the term does not take this perspective into account at all. In the 1940s, 1950s, and even 1960s, however, academic and journalistic examinations of the political situation in, for example, the Soviet Union regularly described the state’s behavior in terms of ‘terrorism’ and characterized Stalin as ‘terrorist,’ thus establishing a discursive link which would be active and productive for decades to come. The supposed ‘terrorism’ in the Soviet Union was regularly denounced by critics who used the term in these instances to characterize the use of violence by a state against its own citizens as excessive and oppressive.

What these examples demonstrate, then, is that in the period from the 1940s to the early 1960s ‘terrorism’ was not *per se* a negative label. In the vast majority of cases, ‘terrorism’ was positively connoted or, at the very least, used neutrally to simply describe an action or strategy. It did not constitute an identity role to the extent it does today. Rather, in the understanding of those times, people relied on ‘terrorism’ to achieve a clearly defined political goal; ‘terrorist’ was not an all-encompassing characterization of who they supposedly were. This precise usage of ‘terrorism’ as an analytical concept indicates that the term itself had a specific meaning; ‘terrorism’ in the 1940s to 1960s constituted a clearly defined signifier which circulated in strictly delineated public spaces and discursive fields. Hence, while *The New York Times* reported on ‘terrorism’ in a fairly limited scope, presidents barely mentioned the word, keeping it from becoming a public problem, and the more systematic study of ‘terrorism’ in academia was still in its infancy. This meant that, as a discourse, ‘terrorism’ had only a small reach and limited influence, operating in specialized discursive fields with small audiences and few discursive contributors.

All this would, however, drastically change in the 1970s. The decade marked a period of transition in which the ‘terrorism’ discourse began to develop a more coherent narrative about the issue, spread into more public spaces, reached a bigger audience, and, ultimately, started to become more dominant in American debates about (political) violence. Two historic events in particular furthered the institutionalization of the ‘terrorism’ discourse

in the United States: the “Munich Massacre” in 1972 and the Iranian hostage crisis which lasted from 1979 to 1981. The coordinated attack by members of the Black September Organization against the Israeli team during the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich not only shocked global audiences (TV news broadcast the hostage taking and subsequent developments live, for the first time in history), it actually fueled and made visible developments in U.S. politics, academia, news reporting, and cultural productions which homogenized the ‘terrorism’ discourse and enabled it to enter the U.S. mainstream. These incidents functioned as discursive *events* which problematized ‘terrorism’ for the first time as an issue which could affect and threaten Americans directly.

The events in Munich sparked a variety of responses across different discursive fields which ultimately helped the ‘terrorism’ discourse to become more widely spread and more forceful than before. The Nixon administration, for instance, reacted to the growing public concern over ‘terrorism’ after Munich by initiating several new policies meant to create more knowledge about the issue and develop defensive measures against its threat. Most importantly, Nixon founded the Cabinet Committee to Combat Terrorism (CCCT) which became a first institutionalized space for designated ‘experts’ on ‘terrorism’ from a variety of backgrounds to meet and discuss ideas. Moreover, from 1976 onward, the government agency CIA began publishing an official annual report which presented and analyzed threats of ‘terrorism’ against the United States. In the early to mid-1970s, then, American politicians not only predominantly understood the events of Munich as a case of ‘terrorism,’ they actively contributed to the construction of ‘terrorism’ as a threat to the United States by developing policies and writing legislation meant to make the issue knowable and manageable.

In part, these political initiatives also influenced the academic field. The political demand for expertise on ‘terrorism’ helped to organize and institutionalize the group of scholars working on the issue into a more coherent, structured field of research. The U.S. government not only selected some scholars as official ‘experts’ on the topic as advisors in committees like the CCCT, it also provided the field with recognition and funding. The increased institutionalization of ‘terrorism’ studies as a field of academic research also led to the foundation of several journals in the field while international conferences

on 'terrorism' repeatedly brought together a core group of scholars who would become the elite of the field in the decades to come. Research at the time focused on classifying the issue at hand and scholars developed chronologies and typologies of 'terrorism' and collected incidents and events designated as 'terrorism' in databases. All these practices not only aimed at making 'terrorism' controllable by producing knowledge about it. They also demonstrated to the American public that 'terrorism' constituted a serious threat to American security and therefore needed to be taken seriously, effectively justifying the existence of 'terrorism' studies in the first place.

Similar developments were visible in the American news media as well as cultural productions of the time. In the case of *The New York Times*, for example, in the early 1970s, 'terrorism' became an official category for reporting in the newspaper, a step which worked to institutionalize 'terrorism' as a topic of interest for the media and which helped the discourse to reach a wider audience. This was also reflected in the increased volume of articles addressing 'terrorism' in some form or other. On average, *The New York Times* published 961 articles per year in the 1970s, a 31 % increase in reporting on 'terrorism' within a decade. This effectively confirmed to readers that 'terrorism' was indeed something they needed to be concerned about as *The New York Times* began to frame and interpret incidents of violence explicitly as 'terrorism' in greater numbers than ever before.

Likewise, American popular culture began to discover 'terrorists,' particularly 'Palestinian terrorists' as villains who threatened America (or Israel). Novels and films of the decade repeatedly imagined the United States as under attack from generically 'Arab terrorists' or, alternatively, specifically 'Palestinian terrorists.' These cultural productions also constructed the Middle East as hub for 'terrorism' and violence and increasingly linked nations and peoples living in the region to 'terrorism' against the United States. In these texts, the U.S. was presented as vulnerable to 'terrorism' from the Middle East, thus validating and furthering fears about the dangers of 'terrorism' in American society. What is more, these cultural productions successfully fused images of the 'terrorist' enemy with Orientalist stereotypes about 'Arabs' and the Middle East as backward, hateful, lecherous, violent, and dangerous, thus actively constructing and circulating tropes of 'Arab' or 'Palestinian terrorists' in American discourses on violence and 'terrorism.'

All these developments in U.S. politics, academia, news reporting, and popular culture had consequences for the meaning of ‘terrorism’ itself. Most importantly, the term acquired an inherently negative connotation in the U.S., in large parts because of American sympathies for Israel. Israel was widely seen as innocent victim of Palestinian (or rather universal ‘Arab’) aggression, a view fueled by the strong cultural, political, and economic ties between the U.S. and Israel. The “special relationship” between these two nations predetermined to a considerable extent how violence coded as ‘terrorism’ against Israel would be interpreted: inherently negative. This also meant that sympathies or understanding for the grievances of the ‘terrorist’ perpetrators, a marked characteristic of the ‘terrorism’ discourse in earlier decades, all but disappeared from conceptualizations of ‘terrorism’ in the 1970s. While ‘Jewish terrorism’ was understandable in the 1940s to 1960s, ‘Palestinian terrorists’ in the 1970s were no longer accorded this kind of empathy.

In a parallel development, ‘terrorism’ not only became a negative term expressing condemnation and repulsion with the perpetrators and their use of violence, this violence was now deemed illegitimate and immoral. The political and cultural context of these ‘terrorist’ incidents as well as the political agenda of the perpetrators was systematically denied and erased. Instead, the ‘terrorism’ discourse of the 1970s posited that the usually ‘Arab’ or ‘Palestinian terrorists’ acted because of their hatred for ‘the West’ and were driven by their base sentiments – conceptualizations and explanations clearly driven by Orientalist stereotypes about ‘Arabs’ and the Middle East at the time. Indeed, the ‘terrorism’ discourse of the 1970s singled out the Middle East, presenting the (imagined and geographic) region as hotbed of ‘terrorism’ against ‘the West.’

Since the discursive focus came to rest on these ‘Arab’ and ‘Palestinian terrorist’ groups, another element of meaning previously associated with the concept of ‘terrorism’ also faded away. In the understanding of the 1970s, ‘terrorism’ was predominantly committed by non-state actors against a nation or legitimate government. While in previous decades conceptualizations of the issue had allowed for the possibility that states used ‘terrorism’ against their own people, this meaning component practically disappeared in the 1970s. Now, ‘terrorism’ described illicit violence used by small groups fighting either their own government or attacking another nation altogether; hence, ‘terrorism’ was

also increasingly linked to '(guerrilla) war(fare)' and 'insurrection' to mark the negative connotation of the term and its more restricted applicability.

Thus, when a group of protesters scaled the walls of the U.S. embassy compound in Tehran on November 4, 1979 and took the embassy staff hostage, the 'terrorism' discourse was wide-spread and dynamic enough to offer a viable framing of the events to American audiences. Indeed, it seemed to outright 'prove' earlier knowledge claims made by the discourse that Americans were vulnerable to 'terrorism' from the Middle East (Iran, actually a non-Arab nation, had long been incorporated into the imaginary Middle East by American culture and politics) simply because of the positive values their nation supposedly represented. The Iranian hostage crisis, which lasted for 444 days and played out under unprecedented public and media scrutiny, ultimately laid the foundation for the dominance of the 'terrorism' discourse in later decades.

President Carter almost immediately called the incident an act of 'international terrorism' against the United States and then stuck to that rhetoric throughout the remainder of the hostage crisis, indicating that the discourse already enjoyed an influential position in debates about (political) violence in the late 1970s. News media outlets like *The New York Times* followed suit and equally framed the crisis in Iran as 'terrorism.' As the analysis in Chapter 2 has shown, the experience of the Iranian hostage crisis also affected the 'terrorism' discourse in another important way: It introduced two meaning components which would prove central to conceptualizations of 'terrorism' from then on. First of all, it characterized the 'terrorism' of the Iranian hostage crisis as 'international' in nature, meaning that it constituted a threat against the entire global community. It also implied that these 'international terrorists' operated across state borders and/or joined forces with 'terrorists' in other nations or regions. This considerably elevated the threat of '(international) terrorism' and effectively justified the significant amount of political attention and media coverage given to the Iranian hostage crisis over such a long period of time.

The other new meaning component comprised the notion that while states did not engage themselves in 'terrorism' against other nations, they could nevertheless *sponsor* it. Initially a rhetoric move to avoid charging the nation of Iran directly with 'terrorism' –

an accusation which would have required a strong military response, possibly war, from the United States – the Carter administration rather blamed the Iranian government for *supporting* the ‘terrorist’ hostage takers. While it remained unclear what ‘sponsoring terrorism’ actually entailed, the charge nevertheless carried political weight as it allowed the president to present himself as astute analyst of the crisis and vocal critic of the Iranian government without actually escalating the already very tense situation any further. In the end, the successful framing of the Iranian hostage crisis as ‘international terrorism’ enabled the ‘terrorism’ discourse to adapt in ways that not only strengthened its standing in debates about (political) violence but also increased its appeal and applicability, setting it on the course to become the hegemonic discourse in debates about (political) violence.

Thus, when Ronald Reagan became president in 1981, the ‘terrorism’ discourse had proven itself as a useful tool to ascribe meaning to historical events, making it easier for the discourse to manifest its dominant position in debates about (political) violence and America’s role in world politics. Indeed, this trend continued into the 1980s when ideas about ‘terrorism’ seeped into public debates about the intensifying Cold War. As the analysis in Chapter 3 has shown, particularly the first half of the decade was marked by serious and wide-spread concern about Soviet-sponsored ‘terrorism’ directed against the United States as another Soviet strategy in the conflict between the two global powers. The narrative posited that the Soviet Union, at times directly and at times through loyal proxies like Cuba, Libya, or Palestinian factions, organized and financed all major ‘terrorist’ groups across the globe so that they would attack (and defeat) the United States, deciding the Cold War in favor of the Soviet Union.

As I have demonstrated in Chapter 3, different versions of this conspiracy theory circulated through a variety of discursive fields. A ‘strong’ rendition of the narrative was propagated by a small group of scholars, journalists, and even members of the American legislative branch who all outright accused the Soviet Union of organizing, training, and financing specific ‘terrorist’ groups in Moscow, Cuba, and the Middle East to do the Soviet Union’s bidding. At the same time, a ‘softer’ version of the conspiracy theory circulated in other areas of American public life which repeated only a few of its core claims and then only in vague and ambiguous terms. Particularly President Reagan avoided accusing the

Soviet Union openly, directly, and in detail of ‘terrorist’ activities. Rather, the president remained noticeably imprecise, criticizing the Soviet Union for ‘sponsoring terrorism’ without explaining what this actually entailed in his view.

In this regard, the discussion in Chapter 3 has also illustrated that the status change of conspiracy theories from legitimate to illegitimate, marginalized knowledge meant that discursive agents who openly proclaimed and advocated conspiracy theories were risking ridicule, stigmatization, and their influential speaking position in the discourse. Hence, all proponents of the narrative of Soviet-sponsored ‘terrorism,’ whether they followed the ‘strong’ or the ‘soft’ version, studiously avoided using openly conspiracist language when arguing their case. What is more, particularly texts propagating the ‘softer’ version of the conspiracy theory purposefully relied on ambiguous language in order to appeal to both conspiracy theorists and non-conspiracy theorists so that both groups could simultaneously find their world-views confirmed.

Ultimately, the conspiracy theory fulfilled several important political functions. First and foremost, it constituted a useful tool to further escalate the Cold War by making the Soviet Union appear more dangerous and powerful than it really was. The rhetoric of a ‘good’ United States in conflict with a ‘terrorism’-sponsoring Soviet Union also reinforced the ideological opposition between the two antagonists and justified and legitimized the re-militarization of the United States both rhetorically but also practically since the Reagan administration invested heavily in offense and defense measures. Lastly, the conspiracy theory worked similar to other Red Scare tactics to unify the country, quell dissent, and manage public opinion in favor of the Reagan administration’s escalation of the Cold War.

Yet, just as quickly as the conspiracy theory about a Soviet-sponsored ‘terrorism’ network had become popular, it also vanished again from debates about ‘terrorism’ and American foreign policy. In the mid- to late 1980s, the Cold War began to thaw as both the U.S. and the USSR instigated a more conciliatory approach to their relationship. This drastic change in U.S. foreign policy eventually meant that the Soviet Union was no longer considered to be the nation’s arch-nemesis, effectively robbing the conspiracy theory of its main antagonist and collapsing the narrative all-together. Instead, the discursive focus came to rest directly on ‘terrorists’ in and from the Middle East who were singled out

based on their ethnicity ('Arab') and religion ('Muslim' or, alternatively, 'Islamic'). No longer seen as Soviet proxies and pawns, the discourse on 'terrorism' instead constructed 'Arab' and 'Muslim terrorists' from the Middle East as serious threat to U.S. interests abroad and at home.

However, the depiction of these 'terrorists' was clearly influenced by previous discursivizations of 'terrorism,' pointing once more to the power and continuity of the discourse itself which had successfully incorporated meaning components developed during the Iranian hostage crisis and the height of the Soviet 'terrorism' network conspiracy theory. Thus, the 'terrorism' discourse posited at the end of the decade that these 'Arab' and 'Muslim terrorists' operated in international networks and at times enjoyed the explicit support (both financially and materially) from 'evil' regimes in the Middle East, particularly Qaddafi's Libya. Cultural productions, the American news media, and politicians and scholars alike represented the geographical and imaginary Middle East as hotbed of anti-American 'terrorism,' thus vastly escalating the threat by suggesting an entire region of the globe relied on and exported 'terrorism' in order to achieve its goals, particularly the destruction of the United States as representative of progressive 'Western' values.

But the 'terrorism' discourse not only stabilized previous conceptualizations of the issue, it also incorporated new elements developed throughout the 1980s. During the Reagan administrations, 'terrorism' became a central political and cultural concern, indicating that the discourse had become more dominant than before. Likewise, Reagan noticeably moralized the issue, regularly calling 'terrorism' an "evil scourge." This charged the concept affectively and emotionalized the issue, making more objective analyses of incidents deemed 'terrorism' much harder to undertake and defend since one ran the danger of being accused of sympathizing with 'terrorists.' It also furthered the binary opposition between the 'good,' explicitly 'non-terroristic' United States and its 'evil,' 'terrorist' enemies.

Lastly, the 'terrorism' discourse was increasingly militarized during the 1980s. Reagan was the first U.S. president to openly declare a "war against terrorism" and consistently relied on militaristic language when talking about 'terrorism' in his official speeches and statements. These sentiments were echoed by 'terrorism' scholars, journalists,

and cultural texts like pulp novels who also tended to frame the American fight against ‘Arab’ and ‘Muslim terrorists’ as a form of war. At the end of the decade, then, ‘terrorism’ predominantly described illegitimate violence by ‘evil’ and depraved ‘Arabs’ and ‘Muslims’ who used ‘terrorism’ to wage war on the United States. These conceptualizations of ‘terrorism’ effectively escalated the threat to unprecedented proportions and legitimized a strong military response. It also stabilized the discourse’s standing in debates about American foreign policy and its global role so that at the end of the decade, ‘terrorism,’ particularly the ‘Arab’ and ‘Muslim’ kind, provided the hegemonic frame of interpretation for incidents of (political) violence.

The collapse of the Soviet Union, followed by the ending of the Cold War in the late 1980s and early 1990s, was in some ways a shock for the ‘terrorism’ discourse because its tangible material consequences also affected its dominance and power: funding for ‘terrorism’ research was significantly cut, the demand for expertise on ‘terrorism’ abated, and public and political declarations of peace and international goodwill and alliances (as, for instance, envisioned in President George H. W. Bush’s “New World Order”) created the impression that ‘terrorism’ was no longer a political and cultural problem. In the early 1990s, despite its strong standing in earlier years, the discourse on ‘terrorism’ was in danger of losing its relevance and hegemonic position in debates about (political) violence.

Indeed, as Chapter 4 of this study has illustrated, the early 1990s constituted a phase of low activity for the discourse which also led to a lower standing of ‘terrorism’ in public discourses. Newly-elected President Bush, for instance, spoke relatively little about ‘terrorism’ during his presidency and also refrained from using related concepts from the field of ‘terrorism’ and political violence. Similarly, the academic community remained fairly quiet; no major conferences were held and no significant publications appeared in the early 1990s, suggesting that ‘terrorism’ scholars found themselves marginalized in academic debates about political violence. Newspapers like *The New York Times* also reported less on ‘terrorism’ and no major cultural productions in the early 1990s focused on ‘terrorism’ as a threat to U.S. security abroad or at home; only a few minor ‘B-movies’ featured ‘terrorism’ plot lines.

However, this would change again within a few years. While ‘terrorism’ may not have been a central concern in the early 1990s, other ideas about the state of the world’s trouble spots gained prominence. First and foremost, Samuel Huntington’s hypothesis about an immanent “Clash of Civilizations” between “the West and the Rest” was widely disseminated and discussed. Huntington’s claims that conflicts between ‘the West’ and particularly ‘Islamic’ cultures (or civilizations) were inevitable because of the disparate value systems were confirmed and supported by a variety of other significant scholars of the Middle East, particularly Bernard Lewis. Importantly, these ideas about Islam underwriting the claims about a “Clash of Civilizations,” i.e. that Muslims tended to be fanatic believers, highly emotional instead of rational, cunning, and violent, not only reactivated long-established Orientalist discourses about the Middle East, they also, ultimately, reinvigorated the ‘terrorism’ discourse in the 1990s.

The mid-1990s thus saw the return of the ‘terrorism’ discourse to power, but with an adapted discursive focus reflecting both the unpleasant experience of irrelevance from earlier years and the wide-spread concerns over an immanent “Clash of Civilizations.” Hence, the discourse on ‘terrorism’ in the mid- to late 1990s stipulated that ‘terrorism’ was ‘new’ and that ‘Islamic terrorism’ was the main manifestation one needed to worry about. Clearly, claims by academics that the ‘terrorism’ of the 1990s was ‘new’ and different compared to previous forms was the result of, at least in part, efforts to demonstrate the continued relevance of ‘terrorism’ studies as a field worth funding. This ‘new terrorism’ was overwhelmingly conceptualized as relying on “weapons of mass destruction” and other new technology which also meant that it was more indiscriminate and lethal than before. At the same time, past meaning components remained active, alleging that these ‘new terrorists’ continued to operate in international networks and still relied on sponsors who could be either entire states or wealthy and ruthless individuals like Osama bin Laden. ‘Terrorism’ was also still characterized as a form of war.

The most dangerous manifestation of this ‘new terrorism’ was considered to be the threat of ‘Islamic terrorism.’ The conceptualization of ‘new Islamic terrorism’ successfully merged Orientalist notions of a “Clash of Civilizations” between ‘the West,’ i.e. the United States, and “Islamic civilization,” i.e. the imaginary and geographical Middle East, with

ideas about ‘new terrorism.’ It posited that these ‘new Islamic terrorists’ were religious zealots who did not hesitate to kill great numbers of people with modern technology, particularly “weapons of mass destruction,” in order to fight (and destroy) ‘the West.’ These ‘new Islamic terrorists’ were supposedly motivated by their faith in Islam; their interests were allegedly purely religious and not at all political. Hence, the United States as representative of ‘Western’ values and power was their prime target and scholars regularly warned of the unprecedented threat emanating from ‘new Islamic terrorism’ since these perpetrators were also seen as better organized and financed than previous ‘terrorists’ and therefore capable of carrying out large-scale ‘terrorist’ attacks across the globe.

These ideas were seemingly confirmed by a series of high-profile attacks against American targets at home and abroad, particularly the bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993, the bombings of U.S. embassies in Africa in 1998, and the bombing of the U.S.S. *Cole* moored in Yemen in 2000. When investigations revealed that these incidents had all been carried out by Middle Eastern groups with ties to Osama bin Laden, the framing of these events as ‘new Islamic terrorism’ became increasingly ‘natural’ and obvious. Political, media, and scholarly explanations dismissed the possibility of political objectives behind the attacks and instead explained that what had motivated the perpetrators was their fervent belief in Islam. Indeed, the pervasive fear of ‘new Islamic terrorism’ successfully attacking the United States at home and abroad was also reflected in an increasing number of more and more successful Hollywood movies which visualized the American fight against fanatical ‘Islamic terrorists.’ Likewise, the news media, as the example of *The New York Times* illustrated, presented and circulated similar conceptualizations of ‘new Islamic terrorism’ as main danger for American national security. Meanwhile, voices doubting or criticizing the concept of ‘new Islamic terrorism’ were regularly marginalized and silenced, assuring the practically unhindered dominance of the discourse on ‘new Islamic terrorism’ at the end of the 1990s.

Just how powerful the ‘terrorism’ discourse had become at the onset of the new millennium became clear when President Bush (and all other central discursive agents with him) immediately interpreted the September 11, 2001 attacks as ‘terrorism’ against the United States. No other interpretative frame from the realm of ‘political violence’ could

even remotely compete with the ‘terrorism’ discourse and offer an alternative interpretation. Then, once more details about the perpetrators and their preparations were made public, the discursivizations also stressed that the ‘terrorists’ had been ‘Islamic,’ i.e. Muslim zealots who had chosen to attack the United States because of the ‘Western’ values the country supposedly represented. For many, particularly in the scholarly community, the 9/11 attacks confirmed the knowledge claims made by the ‘new Islamic terrorism’ discourse in previous years. Thus, as the analysis in Chapter 5 of this study has indicated, constructions of ‘Islamic terrorists’ as evil, violent, dangerous, religious fanatics permeated American popular culture, media reporting, the academic study of ‘terrorism,’ and the political discourse on the issue, both spreading the discourse even further as well as cementing its hegemonic standing in American society.

Indeed, in some ways, the Bush administration, along with other actors such as journalists, scholars, and even artists, could not have interpreted the events of 9/11 in any other manner given the discourse’s omnipresence and power when the attacks occurred. President Bush’s decision to wage a “war against terrorism” in response to the attacks not only testified to the continued, unrivaled dominance of the ‘terrorism’ discourse at the beginning of the new millennium, it also further confirmed the discourse’s hegemony, enabling it to become even more entrenched in American politics, academia, news reporting, and popular culture. These dynamics made it more difficult than before to voice criticism or introduce alternative readings and meanings of the events. As the discussion in Chapter 5 has also shown, criticism and opposition coalesced around the conduct of the “war on terror(ism),” with the majority of Americans increasingly indignant over how the administration was handling the war. Yet, importantly, the ‘terrorism’ paradigm itself was never questioned, highlighting how forceful the discourse really was.

These dynamics also had consequences for the meaning of the term itself. Following the discursivizations of ‘terrorism’ in the 1990s, ‘terrorism’ predominantly described illegitimate violence by Muslim fanatics against the United States. In the wake of 9/11 and the ensuing “war on terror(ism),” however, the term’s meaning became increasingly vague and elastic as additional meaning components such as the recourse to “weapons of mass destruction” were stripped away. ‘Islamic’ and ‘terrorism’ now existed in a quasi-symbiotic

relationship with one concept automatically evoking the other. ‘Terrorism’ was usually ‘Islamic’ in nature and the word ‘Islamic’ appeared so often in the context of ‘terrorism’ that it displaced any other type of activity connected to it. The ‘terrorism’ under discussion was thus unquestionably ‘Islamic’ and there were no other possible ‘Islamic’ activities than ‘terrorism.’ All this greatly increased the concept’s applicability to an ever-wider array of situations and incidents, making the threat of ‘Islamic terrorism’ appear pervasive and inescapable.

In this regard, Chapter 5 has also argued that the discourse has been undergoing another noteworthy development. In the mid- to late 2000s, the ‘(Islamic) terrorism’ discourse began to slowly incorporate related concepts such as ‘extremism’ and ‘fundamentalism’ as synonyms for ‘Islamic terrorism’ into its activities. This meant that not only was ‘Islamic terrorism’ constructed as serious threat to American national security, but discursive actors also warned of ‘Islamic extremism’ and ‘Islamic fundamentalism’ as dangers for the United States. Yet, essentially, both these terms referred to the same signified as ‘Islamic terrorism’ already did, i.e. illegitimate violence by Muslim zealots against the United States who acted because of their religious beliefs. The ‘terrorism’ discourse had evidently conquered and now controlled a discursive ‘territory’ of unprecedented size while simultaneously diversifying its terminology to obscure the full scale of its reach.

These developments not only escalated the supposed threat emanating from ‘Islamic terrorism’ further, but, importantly, constituted strategies to obscure and hide the discourse’s precise operations. At the end of the first decade of the new millennium, then, the discourse on ‘(Islamic) terrorism’ was preparing to move into the shadows, concealing its manifestations and practices while continuing to predetermine, dominate, and control how instances of violence against the United States were framed and constructed. It made it much harder to unmask the methods and processes through which the ‘terrorism’ discourse ruled and further quenched criticism and opposition to its claims. Thus, when George W. Bush handed over the presidency to Barrack Obama on January 20, 2008, the ‘(Islamic) terrorism’ discourse was so firmly entrenched in American politics and culture that, as I discuss in the next section, it left the incumbent president little to no alternative approaches to the issue.

6.1 “We Will [...] Relentlessly Confront Violent Extremists” – The ‘Terrorism’ Discourse During the Obama Presidency

When on the campaign trail during his bid for the presidency in 2008, Democratic nominee Barack Obama liked to present himself as offering a fresh, improved, and more informed approach to the troubles of the 21st century, particularly the Bush administration’s ongoing “war on terror(ism).” In a speech on July 15, 2008, for instance, Obama heavily criticized the Bush administration for its disastrous conduct of the war in Iraq and the failed opportunity in the wake of 9/11 to “deploy[] the full force of American power to hunt down and destroy Osama bin Laden, al Qaeda, the Taliban, and all of the terrorists responsible for 9/11, while supporting real security in Afghanistan” (“Remarks in Washington”). Obama then offered a somber analysis of the last few years, denouncing that “[i]nstead, we [...] lost thousands of American lives, spent nearly a trillion dollars, alienated allies and neglected emerging threats – all in the cause of fighting a war for well over five years in a country that had absolutely nothing to do with the 9/11 attacks.” Clearly, then, at the time that Obama was addressing voters across the country, public opinion had shifted to such an extent that a nominee for President of the United States could openly criticize and condemn the current administration’s handling of the “war on terror(ism)” without being considered unpatriotic or ignorant. On the contrary, by denouncing the conduct of the “war on terror(ism),” particularly the war in Iraq, Obama could position himself as astute analyst and promise his audiences a more perceptive approach focused on solving a disastrous situation which caused great human and material costs and international embarrassment to the country.

Yet, while Barack Obama presented himself as fresh-faced alternative with an entirely different set of values and political as well as social objectives, closer analysis of his rhetoric actually shows that when it came to the issue of ‘terrorism,’ he agreed with, continued, and even *expanded* many of the discursive trends and developments which had emerged during the presidencies of his predecessors.¹ Like George W. Bush before him, President Obama conceptualized ‘terrorism’ as motivated by the perpetrators’ belief in Islam, assumed that these ‘Islamic terrorists’ operated in international networks with

¹See also McCrisken, “Obama’s Drone” and “Ten.”

third-party support, and never questioned the need to fight ‘terrorism’ as a war through military operations in the Middle East and beyond. Moreover, during his presidency, the discourse on ‘Islamic terrorism’ continued to expand its powerful standing while simultaneously reducing its visibility. Direct and overt references to ‘(Islamic) terrorism’ abated in favor of synonyms (e.g. ‘extremism’) and key names and events (e.g. Osama bin Laden, 9/11). These allusions and remarks triggered the discourse’s main knowledge claims without having to openly mention and explain it every single time, indicating the pervasive omnipresence of the ‘terrorism’ discourse in American society as the 21st century wore on.

These discursive trends and developments could be observed regularly in the president’s public speeches and statements. For instance, fairly early into his presidency, Obama held a widely-noted speech on June 4, 2009 at Cairo University in which he reflected on America’s volatile relationship with nations in the Middle East, covering a wide array of topics including the “war on terror(ism),” the prospect for peace between Israel and the Palestinians, the fight against ‘terrorism’ and ‘extremism’ as well as human rights and the role of women in society. The speech was clearly meant to mark “a new beginning” in relations between the United States and the Middle East and, overall, President Obama used a conciliatory tone, taking care to acknowledge that American behavior towards the Middle East had not always been appropriate, stressing that his administration would aim to correct several past mistakes and offenses like the use of torture in interrogation (“Remarks in Cairo”).

The speech is also notable for how it addressed and framed the issue of ‘Islamic terrorism.’ Even though the president repeatedly emphasized positive aspects about Islam and recognized it as one of the major religions in the United States, he nevertheless also subtly presented Islam as a motivation behind anti-American violence, ‘terrorism,’ and ‘extremism.’ Fairly early into his speech, Obama noted, for example, “We meet at a time of great tension between the United States and Muslims around the world, tension rooted in historical forces that go beyond any current policy debate. [...] the sweeping change brought by modernity and globalization led many Muslims to view the West as hostile to the traditions of Islam.” Here, the president acknowledged the opposition between “the

United States and Muslims around the world” and portrayed it as a religious conflict by grouping together Muslims in their entirety instead of casting it as a disagreement between, for example, different sovereign nations. Likewise, his references to the hostility by “many Muslims” to ‘the West’ because of the effects of “modernity and globalization” tapped into familiar Orientalist discourses about a Huntington-esque “Clash of Civilizations.”²

In this context, President Obama also addressed 9/11, saying:

Violent extremists have exploited these tensions in a small, but potent minority of Muslims. The attacks of September 11, 2001, and the continued efforts of these extremists to engage in violence against civilians has led some in my country to view Islam as inevitably hostile not only to America and Western countries, but also to human rights. All this has bred more fear and more mistrust.

The president depicted the events of September 11, 2001 as actions committed by a “small, but potent minority of Muslims” edged on by “[v]iolent extremists,” clearly employing the rhetorical strategy of his predecessor to distinguish between a ‘good’ and ‘bad’ form of Islam. In effect, Obama continued to frame Islam as consisting of a ‘good’ part which existed and thrived in American society and interpreted this as markers for American tolerance, progress, and multi-culturalism while simultaneously denouncing the ‘extremist’ elements in Islam which bred ‘terrorism’ and violence in other parts of the world. Ultimately, the president, in the rhetorical tradition of his predecessor, also suggested that Islam as a whole was suspect because it easily motivated anti-American ‘extremism’ and ‘terrorism.’

Equally noteworthy in this speech is that President Obama tapped into the ‘Islamic terrorism’ discourse and its knowledge claims via indirect references. Hence, he spoke about 9/11, immediately activating notions of ‘Islamic terrorism,’ without actually using the word ‘terrorism’ itself. Thus, when addressing his audience in Cairo, Obama did not use the words ‘terrorism’ or ‘terrorist’ at all, but he mentioned ‘extremism’ twice and ‘extremist(s)’ a total of nine times. Obama’s careful wording avoided using the highly emotionalized and politicized word ‘terrorism;’ instead, he mobilized the discourse by using coded language such as references to key events, particularly the 9/11 attacks, and related concepts which functioned as synonyms, in this case the word ‘extremism.’ This

²Indeed, at a later point in the speech, Obama even spoke of “fault lines” (albeit between Sunni and Shia Muslims and not ‘the West’ and Islam) and also disagreed with those who “suggest[ed] that it [wa]sn’t worth the effort, that we [we]re fated to disagree and civilizations [we]re doomed to clash.” This language clearly echoes Huntington’s rhetoric in *The Clash of Civilizations*, suggesting that the president’s world-view was significantly influenced by these ideas.

avoided directly offending his direct audience in Cairo while also signaling to the public at home that Obama was not afraid to denounce ‘Islamic terrorism.’ As I have discussed in Chapter 5 of this study, towards the end of the 2000s, the discourse on ‘terrorism’ began to diversify by incorporating related terms and concepts as synonyms into its narrative about ‘terrorism.’ Evidently, then, President Obama extended this practice into his own presidency to great effect.

In the speech in Cairo, this effect was predominantly achieved via references to ‘Islamic extremism.’ For instance, the president maintained, “The first issue that we have to confront is violent extremism in all of its forms. [...] I made clear that America is not, and never will be, at war with Islam. We will, however, relentlessly confront violent extremists who pose a grave threat to our security.” Here, the president engaged once more in the rhetoric of ‘good’ Islam vs. ‘bad’ Islam and then proceeded to directly link Islam to the threat of “violent extremists,” clearly evoking the specter of ‘Islamic terrorism’ through this veiled reference. Similarly, he warned at a later point in the speech, “America will defend itself, [...] and we will do so in partnership with Muslim communities, which are also threatened. The sooner the extremists are isolated and unwelcome in Muslim communities, the sooner we will all be safer.” In this instance, the distinction between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ Islam actually collapsed as “the extremists” (read: ‘terrorists’) were depicted as indistinguishable from regular “Muslim communities” and as powerful enough to infiltrate and control these social groups.

Indeed, President Obama’s speech in Cairo did not constitute an exception in this regard. He regularly linked ‘terrorism’ to Islam and continued to conceptualize the issue in the same vein as his predecessors as a form of war and as operating in international networks. In his speech announcing the successful killing of Osama bin Laden on May 1, 2011, for instance, President Obama reminisced about the impact of the 9/11 attacks, saying that

[w]e quickly learned that the 9/11 attacks were carried out by Al Qaida, an organization headed by Usama bin Laden, which had openly declared war on the United States and was committed to killing innocents in our country and around the globe. And so we went to war against Al Qaida to protect our citizens, our friends, and our allies. (“Remarks on the Death”)

In this short paragraph, Obama characterized the September 11 attacks as an act of war and justified the ensuing “war on terror(ism)” as necessary measure to defend and “protect

our citizens, our friends, and our allies.” Moreover, in this important speech, the president described al-Qaeda as international ‘terrorist’ network, claiming that after bin Laden escaped into Pakistan, “Al Qaida continued to operate from along that border and operate through its affiliates across the world.” In the president’s words, then, al-Qaeda functioned as a highly skilled ‘terrorist’ group headed by bin Laden which had attacked the United States simply because it wanted “to kill[] innocents in our country and around the globe.” According to the president, al-Qaeda was organized as an international network with many “affiliates across the world.” As these descriptions and characterizations make clear, then, President Obama conceptualized the threat of ‘Islamic terrorism’ in the same vein as his predecessors, ultimately confirming, maintaining, and expanding the discourse’s reach and power.

The only difference to previous discursivizations of ‘Islamic terrorism’ is that the *direct* discursive links between Islam and ‘terrorism’ were more muted than before. Obama could easily tap into already firmly established constructions of ‘terrorism’ as ‘Islamic’ in nature and assume that his audiences made this connection on their own, consciously and unconsciously. Hence, references to “the 9/11 attacks” and “Al Qaida, an organization headed by Usama bin Laden” sufficed to evoke the specter of ‘Islamic terrorism.’ These events and people had been thoroughly and unquestionably turned into markers for ‘Islamic terrorism’ in previous years, meaning that mentioning any of these terms automatically conjured the sub-text of ‘Islamic terrorism.’ This illustrates once more the omnipresence and dominance of the ‘terrorism’ discourse and indicates that the overt manifestations of the discourse were increasingly camouflaged and its operations more and more concealed.³

The increasing invisibility of the workings of the ‘Islamic terrorism’ discourse not only affected the president’s language about the issue. They were also reflected in the manner in which he continued the “war on terror(ism)” on a strategical, practical level. Take, for instance, the aftermath of “Operation Neptune Spear,” the mission to capture and/or kill bin Laden. The operation to find and execute the man who had orchestrated the 9/11 attacks and who had become, at least for a while, the personification of ‘Islamic terrorism’ afterwards was shrouded in secrecy. To this day, it is not entirely clear how the

³More examples of speeches in which President Obama spoke about ‘Islamic terrorism’ as threat to U.S. security in this manner include, e.g., “Remarks on Accepting” and “Remarks at the State.”

raid went down as the Obama administration put out a narrative of events which it then had to correct several times for obvious logical fallacies (e.g. R. Booth). Moreover, two SEALs who identified themselves as members of the mission team later published differing accounts of the raid, further obscuring attempts to establish an accurate version of events.⁴

Then, in May 2015, the respected journalist Seymour Hersh published a long and widely-discussed piece in *The London Review of Books* in which he claimed that

the CIA did not learn of bin Laden's whereabouts by tracking his couriers, as the White House has claimed since May 2011, but from a former senior Pakistani intelligence officer who betrayed the secret in return for much of the \$25 million reward offered by the US, and that, while Obama did order the raid and the Seal team did carry it out, many other aspects of the administration's account were false.

Given the many different versions which circulated by then about how Osama bin Laden had supposedly been killed, it became increasingly difficult to formulate an authoritative account of what had happened. Rather, public debates became caught up in related issues such as whether the order had been to 'kill *or* capture' or 'kill *and* capture' or whether the mission had been lawful under contemporary legal framework.⁵ This meant effectively that the framing of the assassination as victory over 'Islamic terrorism' was not questioned; indeed, it did not figure prominently in debates surrounding "Operation Neptune Spear" at all, suggesting that the 'Islamic terrorism' discourse remained fundamentally unchallenged.

In fact, these debates about aspects of "Operation Neptune Spear" effectively clouded the visibility of the 'Islamic terrorism' discourse and its power to shape U.S. foreign and military policy. President Obama had ordered the killing of Osama bin Laden as part of the United States' fight against 'Islamic terrorism,' yet the order of events was kept from becoming public knowledge. Apart from contradictory accounts by participants, the White House refused to release any visual evidence of bin Laden's death and classified all documents relating to the decade-long search for bin Laden as well as material about the raid itself. Requests for information by journalists through the Freedom of Information Act were also regularly denied. This demonstrates that the Obama administration preferred to operate in secret whenever 'Islamic terrorism' was concerned. The government worked to

⁴Chuck Pfarrer wrote *Seal Target Geronimo* in 2011. A year later, Matt Bissonette's book-length account of the mission, entitled *No Easy Day*, was published. Pfarrer's narrative severely contradicts the official version of events while Bissonette's book, in turn, repudiates many of Pfarrer's claims.

⁵For debates about the exact orders given to the SEALs, see, e.g., Hosenball and Spetalnick as well as Scherer. For arguments surrounding the legal constraints of the mission, see, e.g. de Vogue and Longstreth.

actively obscure and hide the conduct and extent of its practices meant to combat ‘Islamic terrorism,’ exemplified by the confusion in the aftermath of the killing of Osama bin Laden in May 2011. It also serves as example for how discursive constructions of ‘Islamic terrorism,’ which became increasingly invisible, directly affected political policies, creating a sort of feedback loop in which language and political practice continuously reinforced each other, ultimately obscuring the workings of the ‘terrorism’ discourse and making it harder (if not impossible) to lay bare its mechanisms of power.

The handling of “Operation Neptune Spear” was not the only political incident which indicated that the ‘Islamic terrorism’ discourse was becoming less and less visible while simultaneously expanding its power. On May 23, 2013, President Obama spoke at the National Defense University and outlined his vision for the continued fight against ‘(Islamic) terrorism.’ In the speech, Obama argued that “we must define our effort not as a boundless global war on terror, but rather, as a series of persistent, targeted efforts to dismantle specific networks of violent extremists that threaten America” (“Remarks at National”). Widely taken as a declaration of ending the “war on terror(ism)” (e.g. Harnden; Shinkman), the president actually argued for a *continuation* of warfare against “violent extremists,” coded language meaning ‘Islamic terrorism.’ Indeed, during his presidency, drone warfare expanded and the United States became further embroiled in the imaginary and geographical Middle East, particularly Pakistan, Yemen, and territory occupied by the Islamic State. Drones were favored by the Obama administration precisely because they promised controlled, targeted hits against the ‘terrorist’ enemy instead of lengthy and costly military operations (McCrisken, “Obama’s Drone” 106; Bowden, “Killing;” Whetham 69). This has led the French philosopher Grégoire Chamayou to claim that “[t]he drone has become one of the emblems of Barack Obama’s presidency, the instrument of his official antiterrorist doctrine” (14).

Obama’s choice to expand the use of drone technology in the war against ‘Islamic terrorists’ is highly interesting since it points once again to the growing invisibility of the ‘Islamic terrorism’ discourse in language and practice. Warfare by drones requires significantly less personnel and can be conducted from within the United States, meaning that no complex logistical programs need to be established to, e.g., transport troops

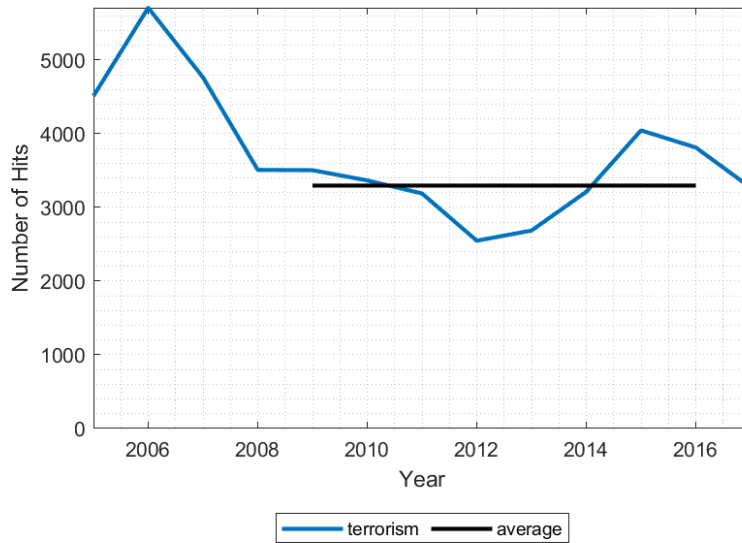


Figure 6.1: Reporting on ‘terrorism’ in *The New York Times*, 2005-2017

into another country as is the case in ‘traditional’ war. This meant effectively that the “war on terror(ism)” under the Obama administration was not waged publicly. Instead, the president and a small group of advisors decided on a weekly basis which ‘(Islamic) terrorists’ would be selected for assassination through drones (Chamayou 46-47; McCrisken, “Obama’s Drone” 101-02). Neither the names of the human targets nor the selection criteria were made public, indicating that while concern over ‘Islamic terrorism’ constituted a central part of American foreign policy, it was no longer openly talked about.

During the Obama presidency, the discourse on ‘(Islamic) terrorism’ also continued to dominate the news. As Figure 6.1 illustrates, the overall volume of reporting on ‘terrorism’ in *The New York Times* remained high during Obama’s terms in office. On average, between 2009 and 2016, the newspaper published 3,296 articles per year which contained the word ‘terrorism.’ While those numbers are significantly lower than in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks, this still meant that *The New York Times* published 9 articles a day which discussed the issue – an impressive number considering that there were almost no high-profile attacks in those years. Evidently, then, ‘terrorism’ remained a central focus of American news reporting, indicating that the ‘terrorism’ discourse remained unchallenged in these years.

What is more, the data suggests that ‘terrorism’ in the writing of *The New York Times* was almost exclusively linked to the geographical and imaginary Middle East as well as the region’s predominant religion, Islam. As Figure 6.2 outlines, most of the articles on ‘terrorism’ published between 2005 and 2017 also contained a reference to either Islam/being Muslim or an ethnic (‘Arab’) or geographical marker (‘Middle East’). Of course, there is bound to be some overlap with articles including more than one of these additional terms, but the overall tendency is nevertheless clear: Whenever *The New York Times* wrote about ‘terrorism’ in those years, it referred to ‘Islamic terrorism’ and, to a lesser extent, ‘terrorism’ involving the Middle East in some form or other. Indeed, as the graphs in Figure 6.2 make clear, specifications of the ‘terrorism’ in question tended to privilege religion over geographical markers, suggesting that the concept of ‘Islamic terrorism’ continued to dominate journalistic writings on the topic. Of course, descriptions of ‘terrorism’ as either related to Islam or the Middle East were closely interlinked as the conceptual connection between ‘Islam’ and ‘the Middle East’ had always been a fixture in Orientalist discourses, meaning that in the context of ‘terrorism,’ references to either Islam or the Middle East also automatically evoked the other term. Overall, the data in Figure 6.2 indicates that, as the years wore on, ‘Islamic’ and ‘terrorism’ continued to exist in a quasi-symbiotic relationship with one term constantly conjuring the other, a clear sign for the discourse’s on-going dominance in the American news media.

Similarly, a significant portion of the reporting on ‘terrorism’ in *The New York Times* focused on perpetrators and places clearly linked to ‘Islamic terrorism’ without actually having to use the word. As Figure 6.3 visualizes, the majority of the articles in the newspaper which addressed ‘terrorism’ also mentioned bin Laden, al-Qaeda, Iraq, or Afghanistan – all concepts already thoroughly linked to the notion of ‘Islamic terrorism’ during the Bush presidency. This meant that whenever journalists wrote about ‘terrorism’ in Iraq or Afghanistan or acts of violence committed by members of al-Qaeda, the discourse on ‘Islamic terrorism’ remained active in the background. These terms ‘triggered’ knowledge claims spread by the discourse via association. Ultimately, this has meant that the discourse on ‘Islamic terrorism,’ whether in direct or indirect manifestations, has continued to inform reporting on ‘terrorism’ in the American news media to this day.

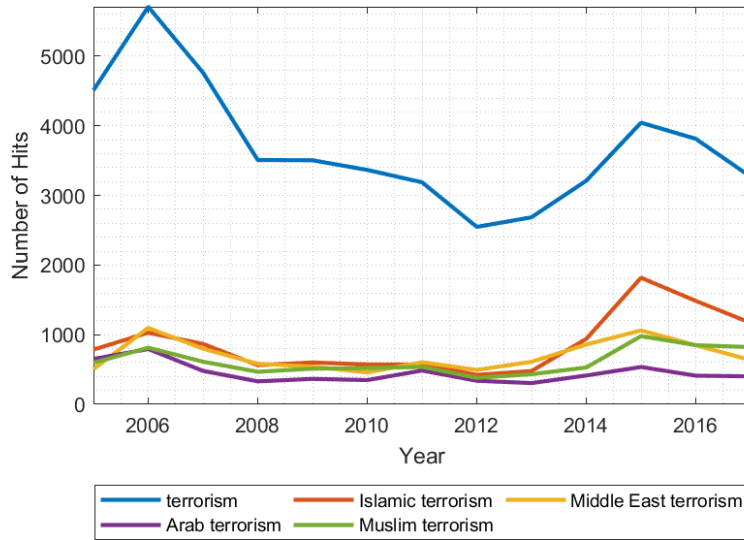


Figure 6.2: Reporting on ‘terrorism’ in and from the Middle East in *The New York Times*, 1987-2000

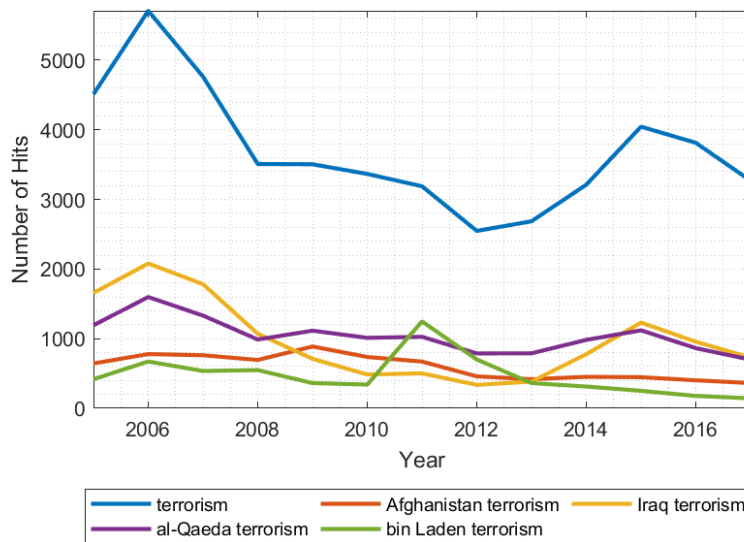


Figure 6.3: Reporting on ‘terrorism’ in connection to the “war on terror(ism)” in *The New York Times*, 2005-2017

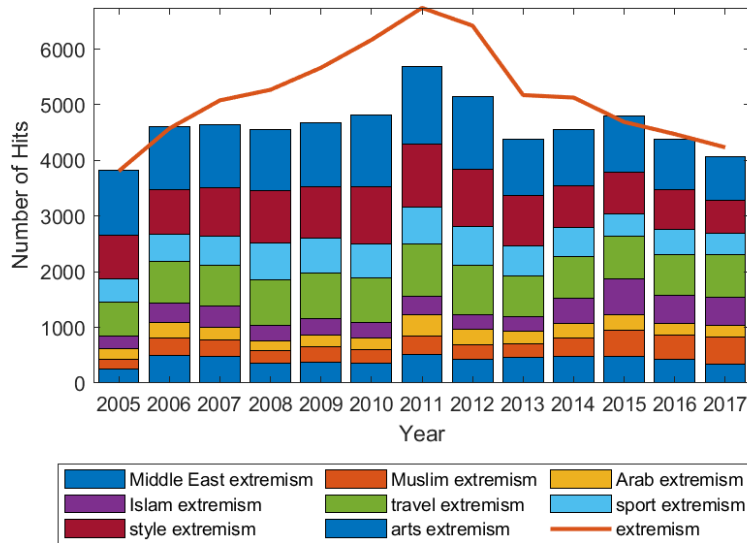


Figure 6.4: Reporting on 'extremism' in *The New York Times*, 2005-2017

Likewise, mirroring developments in political discourses on 'terrorism,' the concept of 'extremism' began to appear in similar contexts in the writings of *The New York Times*. The orange graph in Figure 6.4 depicts the overall amount of hits on the website of *The New York Times* for 'extremism.' At first glance, then, it seems that 'extremism' was actually significantly more popular than 'terrorism' as it generated higher numbers of articles per year. However, it is important to be aware that the term was also used extensively in contexts unrelated to 'terrorism' and (political) violence, so a direct comparison of the graphs for 'terrorism' and 'extremism' without further specification would actually distort the results. Hence, Figure 6.4 also enumerates in more detail about which kinds of 'extremism' the newspaper wrote in practice. As becomes immediately evident, it was non-'terrorism' related topics such as arts, sport, travel, and style which were overwhelmingly linked to 'extremism.' Issues such as 'Muslim extremism' or 'Arab extremism' were covered less often by the newspaper.

Figure 6.5 shows that 'terrorism' has remained the dominant and most popular term in news reporting on political violence in recent years. This becomes apparent when we adapt the graph for 'extremism' by only taking hits into account which also mention Islam, being Muslim, being Arab, and the Middle East. Nevertheless, whenever the term 'extremism' did appear in reporting on violence in the Middle East or in connection to

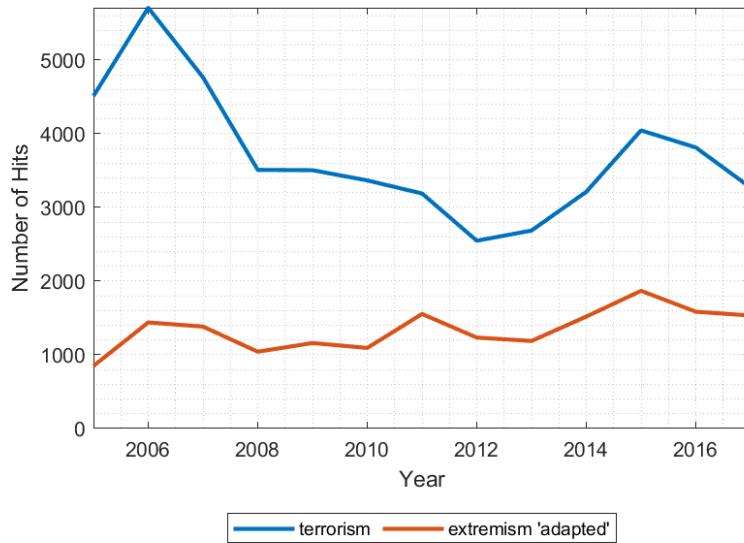


Figure 6.5: Reporting on ‘terrorism’ and ‘extremism’ (adapted) in *The New York Times*, 2005-2017

Islam/being Muslim, it clearly functioned as another ‘code word’ for ‘Islamic terrorism’ like references to al-Qaeda or ‘terrorism’ in Iraq given that these specifiers were so thoroughly constructed as markers for ‘Islamic terrorism.’ Evidently, then, the discourse on ‘Islamic terrorism’ maintained its unrivaled, hegemonic standing in U.S. news reporting while simultaneously concealing part of its appearances and visibility by increasingly popularizing coded language, synonyms, and indirect references.

To sum up, as this brief analysis shows, the ‘terrorism’ discourse continued its reign practically unchallenged into the 21st century and provided the single most dominant frame through which politicians, journalists, and academics (see again Chapter 5) interpreted and assigned meaning to incidents of (political) violence. Moreover, the concept of ‘terrorism’ itself had become inextricably entwined with the imaginary (and geographical) Middle East as well as its peoples and Islam. After decades of forging these discursive connections, these links have now become so strong that ‘terrorism’ automatically evokes ideas about the Middle East and Islam. At the same time, mentioning Islam in the context of violence ineluctably conjures the specter of ‘terrorism.’ The discourse on ‘(Islamic) terrorism’ has become so pervasive that it does not even need to use these exact terms anymore. References to related concepts or events and people, nations, or groups thoroughly linked

to ‘Islamic terrorism’ suffice to activate and exploit the power of the discourse. Meanwhile, in a related development, the meaning of the term ‘terrorism’ itself has become increasingly emptier and been stripped of most of its meaning components. ‘Terrorism’ in the 21st century basically refers to illegitimate violence committed by Muslim zealots because they hate the United States.

6.2 Coda: Trump and the Return of Race to the ‘Terrorism’ Discourse

Ultimately, the transition of power from George W. Bush to Barack Obama did not significantly alter the discourse on ‘Islamic terrorism.’ However, it is not entirely clear whether the same can be said about the presidency of Donald Trump whose stint in power may indeed reshape the meaning of the term to some extent. At the time of writing, President Trump has spent almost two tumultuous years in office and at least for the first year, ‘terrorism’ was clearly very much on his mind. For 2017, the database of *The American Presidency Project* lists 231 speeches and statements by Trump which contain the word ‘terrorism,’ a surprisingly high number for a president in any given year (see again Figure 1.1). By contrast, in 2018 (January 1 to November 17), Trump has only mentioned ‘terrorism’ 29 times, indicating that his focus has been elsewhere. Yet, as the discussion of the trends in *The New York Times* above has shown, this does not mean that the power and reach of ‘terrorism’ discourse are abating overall. Even though President Trump speaks about the issue less frequently, the topic is still very much central to academic, news media, and cultural discourses and will in all likelihood remain so for the foreseeable future.

A closer look at the president’s statements and comments on ‘terrorism’ suggests that when it comes to ‘terrorism,’ Trump may actually emphasize slightly different meaning components than his predecessors. He has continued to frame ‘terrorism’ as committed by Muslim fanatics but has also repeatedly tied to threat of ‘terrorism’ to the supposed dangers of mass immigration, particularly from the Middle East. Notoriously, during the presidential campaign, he “call[ed] for a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States” (“Statement”). Trump continued, “Until we are able to determine and

understand this problem and the dangerous threat it poses, our country can not be the victims of horrendous attacks by people that believe only in Jihad, and have no sense of reason or respect for human life.” His statement, which stirred up great controversy within the United States and beyond, linked the idea of “Jihad,” i.e. ‘Islamic terrorism,’ to uncontrolled immigration of Muslims into the United States.

Similarly, during his first “State of the Union” speech on February 28, 2017, Trump reassured his audience, “We are also taking strong measures to protect our Nation from radical Islamic terrorism. According to data provided by the Department of Justice, the vast majority of individuals convicted of terrorism and terrorism-related offenses since 9/11 came here from outside of our country” (“Address” 28 Feb. 2017). Once more, Trump connected the threat of “radical Islamic terrorism” to people who “came here from outside of our country,” clearly meaning Muslim immigrants. He insisted in his speech that “[i]t [wa]s not compassionate, but reckless to allow uncontrolled entry from places where proper vetting c[ould] not occur,” suggesting again that the ‘terrorism’ threat stemmed from uncontrolled immigration.

A year later, during the “State of the Union Speech” in 2018, Trump praised his initiative to build a wall on the border with Mexico, claiming that “our plan close[d] the terrible loopholes exploited by criminals and terrorists to enter our country” (“Address” 30 Jan. 2018). Again, Trump connected ‘terrorism’ to immigration, implying that the ‘terrorist’ enemy came from foreign countries. This theme recurred throughout the speech as Trump stressed again and again that immigration aided and abetted ‘terrorism’ against the United States. At a later point, the president warned, “two terrorist attacks in New York were made possible by the visa lottery and chain migration. In the age of terrorism, these programs present risks we can just no longer afford. It’s time to reform these outdated immigration rules and finally bring our immigration system into the 21st century.” As these examples demonstrate, in President Trump’s understanding of ‘terrorism,’ the threat emanated predominantly from (Muslim) immigration and in his view, the most effective way of fighting ‘(Islamic) terrorism’ constituted curbing immigration into the United States.

Trump's fixation with the alleged threat of immigrant-'terrorists' entering the country is noteworthy because it indicates that the '(Islamic) terrorism' discourse may be in the process of reshaping the meaning of the term. It signals that in the coming years, race and ethnicity could become more prominent again in conceptualizations of 'terrorism.' This does not mean that religious indicators ('Islamic') will entirely disappear but rather that framings of the term 'terrorism' will combine them with racial markers to construct a 'terrorist' Other who is not only foreign and dangerous because of a distinct religion (i.e. Islam) but also because he (or she) belongs to a different ethnicity or race (meaning non-white and therefore suspect).

Interestingly, President Trump may not be the only discursive agent to advance this changed conceptualization of 'terrorism.' Other actors and agents like, for instance, the TV series *Homeland*, may be following suit.⁶ *Homeland*, developed by Howard Gordon and Alex Gansa, began airing in 2011 to great critical acclaim. *Homeland* follows CIA analyst Carrie Mathison (played by Claire Danes) as she works to defend the United States against attacks by 'Islamic terrorists.' To complicate matters, Carrie Mathison suffers from bipolar disorder which she tries to hide from her employers, but which, when left untreated, sharpens her analytical skills so that she detects developments and finds clues that her colleagues simply miss. Her illness becomes an important narrative device and, as the series progresses, Carrie learns how to control and harness her disorder to her advantage in solving cases and conspiracies.

Homeland deals extensively with 'Islamic terrorism,' especially the first four seasons: The first three seasons narrate how Sergeant Nicholas Brody (Damian Lewis), held as a prisoner of war by an al-Qaeda splinter group for eight years, returns to the United States. Brody is hailed as hero and embarks on an illustrious political career; only Carrie Mathison suspects that Brody was 'turned' during his ordeal by his captors and has really been released by Abu Nazir (Navid Negahban) and his group as part of a larger plan to attack the United States. Carrie's concerns prove to be true and after she manages to 'turn' Brody again, the second season (2012) focuses on the CIA's hunt for Abu Nazir, the main 'terrorist' orchestrating a series of attacks against the United States. Season 3 (2013)

⁶For analyses of *Homeland* as well as its politics of representation, see, e.g., Bevan, Edgerton and Edgerton, Castonguay, Koch, Mittell, Niehues, Steenberg and Tasker, and Takacs.

culminates in Brody being sent to Iran in order to use his ‘terrorist’ status to assassinate the head of the Revolutionary Guard. Ultimately, the CIA wants to replace the leader of the Revolutionary Guard with another Iranian who has secretly been recruited by the CIA, thus enabling the agency to steer Iranian politics, most importantly to improve its relations with the U.S. The season ends with Brody’s hanging in a public square as murderer and traitor, deemed necessary by American officials in order to catapult the CIA-controlled Iranian politician into the country’s inner circle of power. In Season 4 (2014), Carrie works as station chief in Kabul, Afghanistan, and later in Islamabad, Pakistan, attempting to stop Haissam Haqqani (Numan Acar), a high-ranking ‘Islamic terrorist.’ However, her efforts are in vain as Haqqani and his men eventually attack and storm the U.S. embassy, killing several employees as well as acquiring “the list,” a small briefcase with detailed information about all CIA informants in the area. In the end, Haqqani’s attack does not have consequences. Instead, he strikes a deal with the CIA: the agency agrees to take him off their ‘kill list’ if Haqqani stops supporting ‘terrorists’ in Afghanistan. Disillusioned, Carrie leaves the CIA.

However, after these first four seasons, *Homeland* changed its focus away from Carrie actively involved in fighting ‘Islamic terrorism’ in the Middle East. Season 5 (2015) is set in Berlin, Germany, where Carrie now lives with her daughter, having severed all ties with the CIA after the events of Season 4. She works for a German non-profit organization which, among other projects, wants to raise funds for refugee camps in Lebanon for people fleeing from the violence instigated by the Islamic State. This season is also notable for portraying the threat of European ‘Islamic terrorists’ returning from the war in Syria and trying to launch attacks in different European cities. A group’s attempt to blow up Berlin Central Station is only stopped at the very last second. The season’s focus, however, lies on the discovery that one high-ranking CIA agent is actually a double agent, reporting to the Russian secret service, divulging secrets and actively disrupting CIA operations and plans. Season 6 (2017) finds Carrie returning to New York City where she works for another non-profit organization which defends Muslim and Arab Americans against harassment and false charges of ‘Islamic terrorism.’ What first looks like a suicide bombing by a fanatic ‘Islamic terrorist’ is ultimately revealed to have been a set-up, orchestrated

by Dar Adal (F. Murray Abraham), a high-ranking CIA official, who is plotting to keep President-elect Elizabeth Keane out of office. While Dar Adal and his co-conspirators are stopped in time, the season ends on a dark note as now-President Keane rounds up core members of the intelligence community in a burst of paranoia and fear, instigating a severe house-cleaning which leaves Carrie reeling and confused.

What this short overview suggests is that, as the series progresses, the meaning of 'Islamic terrorism' in *Homeland* changes from an exclusive focus on religion as marker for 'terrorism' to include race as indicating a character's 'terrorist' status. In the first three seasons, *Homeland* foregrounds the notion that 'terrorism' against the United States is fueled by belief in Islam. Since being Muslim is not visible in a person's outward appearance, the fact that returned prisoner of war and white American Nicholas Brody is really a dangerous 'terrorist' remains undetected until it is almost too late, turning it into a dramatic device to create suspense and tension for audience pleasure. Until it is unequivocally confirmed, the series hints at Brody's status as 'terrorist' by revealing that he converted to Islam during his years of captivity, inviting viewers to be suspicious of Brody because of that fact.

By contrast, in later seasons, the 'Islamic terrorists' (or those tricked into looking like ones in Season 6) are darker-skinned Middle Easterners, suggesting that race and ethnicity are becoming more central to cultural constructions of 'Islamic terrorists.' The plot of Season 4 is set in Afghanistan and the main antagonist is a brown Muslim 'terrorist' intent on driving the U.S. out of his country. In Season 5 and 6, the 'Islamic terrorists' are non-white men either from families who immigrated into their host country years ago or first-generation immigrants themselves, clearly echoing President Trump's conceptualizations of 'Islam terrorism' as linked to migration. As the series has progressed, then, race and ethnicity have become increasingly important, complementing religious markers of 'terrorism' and doubly Othering the 'terrorist' enemy who is suspect and evil not only because of his religious beliefs but also because of his origins and skin color.

This recent development is noteworthy not only because it signals the discourse's continued vitality and productivity. It also suggests that the discourse may indeed be returning to the spotlight after a few years of reduced visibility. Unlike religion, race is

visually and indelibly inscribed onto the ('terrorist') body. While one can change one's religious affiliation (even secretly), one's ethnicity remains fixed and constantly in view. This means that if 'terrorism' is also tied to race, a designated 'terrorist' will forever remain in that role. Following that logic, a 'terrorist' can never not be a 'terrorist,' thus stabilizing the concept while also justifying extreme measures in the fight against 'terrorism' because it makes the threat of 'terrorism' permanent and perpetual and contributes to a world-view which divides based on race. Ultimately, the discourse's expansion into debates about immigration under Trump's presidency indicates that 'terrorism' as a highly politicized concept remains in robust health and continues to extend its power and reach.

Chapter 7

Appendix

This appendix contains the data derived from my search of the online archives of *The New York Times*. I conducted the search on December 6, 2018. All numbers refer to the amount of hits a particular search term generated per calendar year (January 1 to December 31).

Year	terrorism	Afghanis- tan terrorism	Algeria terrorism	al-Qaeda terrorism	Arab Israeli terrorism	Arab terrorism
1940	770	2	3	49	0	10
1941	665	1	3	12	0	10
1942	650	1	3	19	0	7
1943	598	0	4	21	0	6
1944	788	0	1	20	0	10
1945	763	0	1	61	0	19
1946	937	2	2	58	0	123
1947	861	3	3	34	1	160
1948	639	1	2	34	16	66
1949	586	0	1	24	15	28
1950	553	3	1	44	2	11
1951	559	2	2	51	1	19
1952	591	2	2	34	3	16
1953	603	0	2	41	9	28
1954	563	0	18	52	9	52
1955	569	0	60	30	10	41
1956	802	7	67	83	40	96
1957	717	5	95	86	20	59

Year	terrorism	Afghanis- tan terrorism	Algeria terrorism	al-Qaeda terrorism	Arab Israeli terrorism	Arab terrorism
1958	600	3	76	47	6	62
1959	527	0	38	56	5	29
1960	545	2	50	46	10	37
1961	724	4	92	84	8	41
1962	909	1	367	137	3	40
1963	630	0	32	62	7	35
1964	719	0	20	137	9	33
1965	722	3	10	93	12	32
1966	780	0	7	124	31	52
1967	826	3	7	117	70	115
1968	737	1	16	69	76	91
1969	720	0	13	77	119	137
1970	849	1	18	122	104	120
1971	748	1	14	87	33	49
1972	907	6	22	96	178	205
1973	1,050	1	17	264	159	185
1974	927	5	23	227	189	214
1975	919	1	12	157	133	169
1976	990	3	15	198	129	208
1977	1,145	2	23	216	130	192
1978	926	5	24	215	134	171
1979	1,153	16	11	227	184	226
1980	1,742	137	24	242	158	241
1981	1,715	64	24	74	99	178
1982	1,396	49	14	78	177	212
1983	1,293	43	8	62	106	145

Year	terrorism	Afghanis- tan terrorism	Algeria terrorism	al-Qaeda terrorism	Arab Israeli terrorism	Arab terrorism
1984	1,476	47	11	90	138	221
1985	1,752	64	29	167	208	324
1986	2,536	85	29	293	234	506
1987	1,490	61	9	94	91	180
1988	1,552	58	28	122	198	284
1989	1,500	58	19	94	123	188
1990	1,274	15	13	128	149	230
1991	1,430	33	16	133	105	209
1992	1,175	14	17	89	79	139
1993	1,696	65	44	190	158	298
1994	1,406	25	39	127	152	201
1995	2,002	49	86	124	110	215
1996	1,951	49	27	185	165	241
1997	1,684	24	38	146	154	218
1998	1,768	183	37	181	105	228
1999	1,859	91	26	173	72	159
2000	1,574	134	33	264	108	187
2001	10,898	2,690	78	1,731	401	1389
2002	10,453	1,972	63	2,527	703	1434
2003	9,786	1,230	71	2,243	389	1353
2004	9,074	1,358	86	2,702	274	1162
2005	4,512	644	57	1,193	154	651
2006	5,709	779	38	1,598	260	794
2007	4,764	762	52	1,332	138	480
2008	3,509	694	33	988	119	330
2009	3,505	888	22	1,115	147	365

Year	terrorism	Afghanis- tan terrorism	Algeria terrorism	al-Qaeda terrorism	Arab Israeli terrorism	Arab terrorism
2010	3,366	737	28	1,012	95	348
2011	3,189	671	39	1,027	101	485
2012	2,548	459	36	788	96	338
2013	2,686	418	74	790	75	305
2014	3,212	452	39	983	114	414
2015	4,045	447	59	1,120	93	536
2016	3,813	402	27	864	74	411
2017	3,269	363	24	698	64	402

Year	bad terrorism	bin Laden terrorism	evil terrorism	Iran terrorism	Iraq terrorism	Islamic terrorism
1940	84	0	54	3	4	2
1941	55	0	41	13	12	1
1942	44	0	34	6	3	0
1943	54	0	30	3	4	0
1944	45	0	30	0	2	0
1945	106	0	60	14	3	1
1946	58	0	49	18	11	0
1947	57	0	53	11	30	4
1948	50	0	29	8	5	3
1949	34	0	32	6	4	6
1950	55	0	40	9	4	5
1951	47	0	39	34	11	11
1952	44	0	34	14	4	7
1953	49	0	50	6	3	8
1954	37	0	37	9	4	11
1955	52	0	30	6	2	10
1956	64	0	53	11	12	10
1957	53	0	34	7	12	7
1958	46	0	29	4	18	0
1959	48	0	40	2	14	1
1960	41	0	28	3	11	4
1961	61	0	29	9	8	1
1962	63	0	31	13	4	9
1963	52	0	27	6	10	7
1964	55	0	25	4	1	5
1965	69	0	38	2	7	5

Year	bad terrorism	bin Laden terrorism	evil terrorism	Iran terrorism	Iraq terrorism	Islamic terrorism
1966	114	0	44	7	7	4
1967	109	0	58	10	9	7
1968	97	0	37	5	5	6
1969	84	0	35	4	13	3
1970	129	0	64	8	9	6
1971	128	0	47	2	6	11
1972	84	0	45	8	10	7
1973	178	0	76	14	21	10
1974	147	0	64	16	16	8
1975	124	0	47	38	23	17
1976	137	0	48	35	21	11
1977	155	0	71	42	16	38
1978	134	0	68	40	36	19
1979	182	0	83	158	30	69
1980	197	0	71	255	99	126
1981	143	0	76	160	64	74
1982	122	0	51	58	50	24
1983	132	0	63	85	35	59
1984	150	0	64	143	60	115
1985	155	0	70	147	55	104
1986	195	0	96	325	149	142
1987	140	0	81	359	129	88
1988	163	0	70	178	76	68
1989	158	0	65	197	64	75
1990	143	0	65	132	193	75
1991	153	0	64	161	326	78

Year	bad terrorism	bin Laden terrorism	evil terrorism	Iran terrorism	Iraq terrorism	Islamic terrorism
1992	152	0	50	109	108	104
1993	171	0	57	131	146	305
1994	182	2	69	86	60	216
1995	219	0	124	111	88	321
1996	195	8	95	190	106	268
1997	179	5	83	161	115	228
1998	195	209	104	151	219	237
1999	228	151	113	104	135	227
2000	210	162	90	142	105	246
2001	1,018	2,088	407	458	517	1,571
2002	945	1,188	544	566	1,596	1,404
2003	890	676	361	739	5,508	1,265
2004	887	888	307	629	4,554	1,246
2005	505	418	180	351	1,657	786
2006	685	672	249	744	2,080	1,028
2007	584	536	214	594	1,783	868
2008	501	549	147	402	1,071	562
2009	441	362	128	396	711	601
2010	416	341	125	288	485	572
2011	405	1,248	146	279	502	571
2012	297	701	93	323	337	423
2013	345	362	127	274	384	478
2014	371	313	134	276	778	940
2015	430	251	158	457	1,231	1,818
2016	451	178	138	374	956	1,485
2017	475	143	189	440	728	1,170

Year	Jewish terrorism	Kenya terrorism	Lebanon terrorism	Libya terrorism	Middle East terrorism	Moslem terrorism
1940	63	4	0	12	24	7
1941	35	3	3	21	29	7
1942	30	0	2	20	26	7
1943	41	0	0	9	15	4
1944	55	0	3	3	26	0
1945	62	0	8	4	39	9
1946	204	0	12	0	45	26
1947	273	3	18	2	52	40
1948	82	3	10	3	25	21
1949	29	1	1	3	21	12
1950	15	4	4	0	19	12
1951	33	0	7	4	30	21
1952	26	41	10	2	23	11
1953	31	48	3	1	16	17
1954	20	16	4	3	16	34
1955	16	16	2	3	31	34
1956	69	10	9	7	105	34
1957	51	5	13	9	74	68
1958	24	3	44	6	50	44
1959	15	5	5	3	28	31
1960	26	13	2	1	20	49
1961	61	14	2	2	35	56
1962	46	9	10	9	33	250
1963	32	17	3	1	27	14
1964	32	17	1	0	39	10
1965	27	9	4	1	38	13

Year	Jewish terrorism	Kenya terrorism	Lebanon terrorism	Libya terrorism	Middle East terrorism	Moslem terrorism
1966	75	11	14	1	77	12
1967	78	5	13	2	111	22
1968	59	2	15	3	104	16
1969	68	0	33	2	99	14
1970	79	2	25	9	153	18
1971	52	3	7	7	65	38
1972	75	12	61	19	198	20
1973	143	14	57	32	214	26
1974	114	12	69	15	231	35
1975	109	7	71	25	180	38
1976	116	18	86	43	160	40
1977	147	34	35	26	188	48
1978	125	13	70	28	192	34
1979	194	15	72	36	261	69
1980	223	6	70	82	260	118
1981	122	20	94	161	183	66
1982	158	5	243	67	182	86
1983	77	5	330	27	299	88
1984	137	5	241	89	318	125
1985	148	3	374	86	543	156
1986	138	8	369	768	631	158
1987	100	6	212	99	311	124
1988	163	6	135	72	399	77
1989	98	8	153	84	310	8
1990	120	4	97	63	305	3
1991	96	12	106	57	434	6

Year	Jewish terrorism	Kenya terrorism	Lebanon terrorism	Libya terrorism	Middle East terrorism	Moslem terrorism
1992	95	11	81	70	167	2
1993	174	3	107	52	299	5
1994	185	8	95	21	294	2
1995	191	7	52	28	322	3
1996	173	14	128	73	437	3
1997	189	10	63	50	246	1
1998	177	258	45	64	218	1
1999	155	88	50	48	159	0
2000	171	71	72	44	240	1
2001	440	247	176	100	948	4
2002	557	108	225	94	1072	3
2003	396	99	209	98	1,143	0
2004	348	80	155	219	864	1
2005	224	37	159	46	504	0
2006	263	64	476	59	1,098	0
2007	189	61	171	52	799	2
2008	213	65	138	42	582	0
2009	212	88	122	50	541	0
2010	207	77	87	28	458	1
2011	165	69	100	251	604	0
2012	158	41	116	192	494	1
2013	129	104	135	171	611	0
2014	183	61	153	167	859	1
2015	330	91	208	232	1,061	1
2016	220	68	136	196	849	1
2017	165	50	122	189	636	1

Year	Muslim terrorism	Nazi terrorism	terrorism 9/11	Oklahoma City terrorism	Palestine terrorism	Palestinian terrorism
1940	1	288	269	343	11	0
1941	0	262	107	245	12	0
1942	0	261	86	188	8	2
1943	0	234	86	179	13	1
1944	0	254	116	197	27	5
1945	0	231	252	225	34	4
1946	0	141	244	335	204	33
1947	0	83	128	176	287	49
1948	0	78	117	274	101	17
1949	0	35	109	255	24	5
1950	0	43	154	345	7	2
1951	0	45	158	309	13	6
1952	0	39	116	273	8	1
1953	1	36	111	304	11	1
1954	0	19	109	298	15	1
1955	0	24	88	256	15	2
1956	1	52	260	317	45	3
1957	0	38	225	319	17	4
1958	0	33	95	222	8	2
1959	0	35	99	173	7	2
1960	0	46	115	245	12	2
1961	0	58	151	261	6	1
1962	1	36	323	411	3	1
1963	10	32	215	274	12	3
1964	2	34	137	299	10	0
1965	5	39	189	236	7	0

Year	Muslim terrorism	Nazi terrorism	terrorism 9/11	Oklahoma City terrorism	Palestine terrorism	Palestinian terrorism
1966	2	89	361	408	14	14
1967	3	63	366	305	25	12
1968	2	44	191	197	20	16
1969	6	37	153	136	28	32
1970	5	64	342	228	32	45
1971	5	42	207	110	12	14
1972	3	32	231	180	47	89
1973	3	79	502	223	53	114
1974	4	49	448	200	117	147
1975	3	59	394	174	83	97
1976	5	64	436	137	54	108
1977	15	88	496	160	69	110
1978	4	84	470	103	65	114
1979	5	117	588	153	138	170
1980	11	119	664	257	95	162
1981	5	67	353	168	99	111
1982	1	59	314	267	162	231
1983	3	53	243	158	96	133
1984	7	54	244	199	95	124
1985	6	102	368	139	258	297
1986	10	76	470	177	173	301
1987	1	67	300	129	81	112
1988	14	53	316	148	280	309
1989	122	58	322	144	172	214
1990	78	49	310	131	136	174
1991	104	60	322	111	88	145

Year	Muslim terrorism	Nazi terrorism	terrorism 9/11	Oklahoma City terrorism	Palestine terrorism	Palestinian terrorism
1992	127	94	272	132	55	112
1993	337	73	360	120	129	241
1994	228	80	306	107	135	205
1995	337	116	485	764	114	207
1996	217	76	410	366	92	285
1997	137	92	383	468	59	303
1998	158	77	407	245	55	258
1999	175	101	513	175	33	145
2000	201	75	419	160	43	215
2001	1,376	149	5,838	467	190	926
2002	1,173	166	5,883	212	248	1,399
2003	1,097	142	3,646	144	233	929
2004	1,028	163	3,936	172	133	624
2005	597	128	1,997	162	86	442
2006	813	130	2,492	168	130	587
2007	612	127	1,902	183	99	385
2008	467	119	1,373	195	59	240
2009	512	93	1,284	217	78	297
2010	520	98	1,209	302	49	199
2011	537	78	1,204	366	57	200
2012	381	83	860	487	40	155
2013	432	94	857	439	37	144
2014	529	108	899	360	73	252
2015	979	150	1,059	228	66	227
2016	849	136	1,064	289	44	173
2017	822	197	913	214	42	130

Year	scourge terrorism	Soviet Union terrorism	Syria terrorism	terrorism network	terror network	Tanzania terrorism
1940	3	60	11	13	13	0
1941	7	29	17	9	9	0
1942	3	23	8	17	17	0
1943	8	32	2	14	14	0
1944	6	30	2	14	14	0
1945	14	95	6	20	20	0
1946	7	127	10	5	5	0
1947	3	95	20	10	10	0
1948	2	113	20	14	14	0
1949	2	91	1	6	6	0
1950	3	94	3	12	12	0
1951	4	97	8	6	6	0
1952	4	73	5	13	13	0
1953	2	86	4	9	9	0
1954	3	61	4	12	12	0
1955	5	51	2	8	8	0
1956	7	212	18	16	16	0
1957	4	122	23	27	27	0
1958	5	100	15	23	23	0
1959	1	76	4	10	10	0
1960	2	82	5	10	10	0
1961	4	160	3	22	22	0
1962	5	128	14	41	41	0
1963	3	101	8	18	18	0
1964	1	77	3	17	17	0
1965	4	91	3	21	21	5

Year	scourge terrorism	Soviet Union terrorism	Syria terrorism	terrorism network	terror network	Tanzania terrorism
1966	6	89	24	22	22	4
1967	5	111	34	20	20	1
1968	5	108	17	17	17	2
1969	4	90	23	17	17	1
1970	2	101	23	32	32	1
1971	6	98	13	25	25	2
1972	9	112	49	27	27	12
1973	7	149	40	41	41	4
1974	5	120	80	26	26	7
1975	5	111	40	45	45	10
1976	3	119	43	63	62	19
1977	2	139	32	67	66	13
1978	1	128	31	63	63	7
1979	8	161	45	71	71	13
1980	8	251	58	99	99	7
1981	4	316	59	83	76	5
1982	11	211	91	50	44	4
1983	3	224	113	71	60	3
1984	5	250	110	77	75	6
1985	25	263	167	109	97	2
1986	28	384	281	135	124	6
1987	2	227	79	92	88	2
1988	14	234	83	97	93	3
1989	15	259	88	79	75	6
1990	9	220	91	78	76	0
1991	10	227	115	92	89	3

Year	scourge terrorism	Soviet Union terrorism	Syria terrorism	terrorism network	terror network	Tanzania terrorism
1992	5	111	68	66	65	3
1993	7	97	79	107	99	2
1994	4	68	92	72	69	12
1995	9	80	52	129	106	4
1996	8	70	129	126	100	6
1997	6	61	59	99	86	6
1998	7	83	39	172	143	228
1999	11	95	71	182	166	73
2000	7	89	63	189	170	60
2001	39	345	195	1,429	954	211
2002	39	270	225	1,113	826	52
2003	18	200	453	935	601	36
2004	27	196	223	950	638	39
2005	11	140	238	457	367	17
2006	11	156	341	467	411	29
2007	13	113	220	435	404	20
2008	11	112	156	345	318	23
2009	17	111	106	392	333	50
2010	25	79	71	428	371	50
2011	14	95	161	460	405	26
2012	19	67	257	307	266	14
2013	14	72	337	361	310	35
2014	15	87	743	363	309	13
2015	34	97	1,326	492	391	24
2016	27	98	1,061	509	441	11
2017	27	98	842	436	381	12

Year	Vietcong terrorism	Vietnam terrorism	war terrorism	World Trade Center terrorism
1940	0	0	527	2
1941	0	0	451	0
1942	0	0	473	0
1943	0	0	394	0
1944	0	0	447	1
1945	0	0	574	1
1946	0	1	478	7
1947	0	0	374	9
1948	0	0	283	1
1949	0	0	230	3
1950	0	12	264	1
1951	0	7	227	3
1952	0	4	215	1
1953	0	9	231	1
1954	0	15	179	2
1955	0	25	195	3
1956	0	8	338	2
1957	0	6	251	2
1958	0	12	223	1
1959	0	18	201	2
1960	0	16	207	35
1961	0	73	310	70
1962	15	65	366	84
1963	13	40	228	36
1964	86	154	277	61
1965	135	224	320	21

Year	Vietcong terrorism	Vietnam terrorism	war terrorism	World Trade Center terrorism
1966	138	270	382	159
1967	124	288	429	126
1968	82	208	313	48
1969	49	128	315	53
1970	51	198	376	87
1971	41	140	311	94
1972	38	179	329	113
1973	29	173	416	238
1974	16	77	371	262
1975	22	113	355	315
1976	1	71	364	373
1977	1	93	422	429
1978	3	77	356	241
1979	3	107	467	343
1980	3	101	615	472
1981	5	117	508	273
1982	6	69	485	237
1983	3	84	509	258
1984	2	86	582	258
1985	6	83	667	262
1986	6	110	832	273
1987	3	75	571	185
1988	2	91	531	169
1989	0	79	535	137
1990	1	61	503	140
1991	4	85	736	155

Year	Vietcong terrorism	Vietnam terrorism	war terrorism	World Trade Center terrorism
1992	4	54	498	161
1993	1	53	652	895
1994	2	54	554	346
1995	2	95	779	481
1996	3	59	668	297
1997	2	50	610	292
1998	1	61	691	264
1999	0	72	758	223
2000	1	54	684	216
2001	11	421	4,103	4,608
2002	7	331	4,012	2,942
2003	8	493	5,663	1,441
2004	26	545	4,668	1,125
2005	8	180	2,015	802
2006	8	256	2,820	1,033
2007	7	254	2,206	754
2008	2	171	1,691	654
2009	3	124	1,588	585
2010	2	100	1,309	681
2011	3	89	1,299	789
2012	1	71	977	427
2013	3	84	1,111	344
2014	0	106	1,344	418
2015	1	102	1,623	374
2016	2	105	1,399	386
2017	4	122	1,292	220

Year	fundamen- talism	extremism	extremism (adapted)	Arab extremism	arts extremism	Islam extremism
1940	1,894	3,072	110	20	282	5
1941	1,650	3,096	135	25	226	2
1942	1,234	2,690	134	26	191	2
1943	1,238	2,690	122	37	161	2
1944	1,146	2,543	83	18	179	1
1945	1,560	2,557	114	28	164	2
1946	1,884	2,642	142	56	200	14
1947	2,009	3,042	181	90	205	11
1948	1,710	2,748	196	121	224	3
1949	1,774	2,896	157	72	256	4
1950	1,664	2,783	135	36	224	4
1951	1,606	2,815	220	68	190	22
1952	1,430	2,682	177	59	236	17
1953	1,386	2,594	142	48	241	10
1954	1,490	2,582	160	55	275	7
1955	1,248	2,276	167	68	237	8
1956	1,359	2,431	534	229	253	12
1957	1,306	2,337	465	184	241	20
1958	1,108	2,581	377	162	272	14
1959	1,146	2,434	155	54	288	9
1960	1,286	2,597	177	79	288	14
1961	1,178	2,598	193	96	345	3
1962	1,198	2,700	150	49	321	16
1963	1,034	2,334	149	63	238	7
1964	936	2,708	160	62	215	10
1965	975	2,415	124	41	312	8

Year	fundamen- talism	extremism	extremism (adapted)	Arab extremism	arts extremism	Islam extremism
1966	1,088	2,789	200	62	418	17
1967	1,098	2,504	366	141	370	15
1968	1,213	2,631	249	79	380	11
1969	1,320	2,742	278	98	370	13
1970	1,300	2,766	498	191	386	7
1971	1,366	2,685	326	113	379	16
1972	1,357	2,786	299	108	421	13
1973	1,382	2,930	458	185	488	11
1974	1,372	2,806	564	237	424	19
1975	1,544	3,149	582	250	449	22
1976	1,450	3,155	467	210	463	18
1977	1,453	3,303	522	207	516	24
1978	1,125	2,474	437	174	414	21
1979	1,430	3,182	528	185	539	82
1980	2,229	4,989	836	289	1,079	142
1981	1,519	3,346	364	131	998	37
1982	1,672	3,322	377	127	865	27
1983	1,579	3,208	347	113	854	29
1984	1,708	3,400	411	133	923	69
1985	1,751	3,353	387	116	993	49
1986	1,860	3,488	375	116	932	47
1987	1,964	3,450	294	79	960	43
1988	1,869	3,471	431	135	962	55
1989	1,828	3,316	348	75	940	53
1990	1,787	3,311	562	152	918	62
1991	1,773	3,061	564	131	699	59

Year	fundamen- talism	extremism	extremism (adapted)	Arab extremism	arts extremism	Islam extremism
1992	1,779	3,296	404	85	764	78
1993	1,639	2,954	431	65	756	97
1994	1,464	3,104	422	73	825	81
1995	1,615	3,197	422	74	809	62
1996	1,485	3,160	395	68	779	76
1997	1,538	3,149	358	66	864	70
1998	1,739	3,491	436	67	1,055	69
1999	1,820	3,738	387	67	1,164	66
2000	1,913	3,838	496	92	1,128	95
2001	1,849	3,812	961	185	1,092	273
2002	1,905	3,729	906	193	1,011	259
2003	1,772	3,542	791	189	983	180
2004	1,902	3,550	793	170	1,007	218
2005	1,758	3,808	849	190	1,162	225
2006	2,074	4,573	1,439	288	1,120	347
2007	2,409	5,079	1,383	225	1,134	389
2008	2,850	5,269	1,042	169	1,098	282
2009	2,914	5,665	1,160	217	1,149	296
2010	2,962	6,166	1,093	207	1,283	284
2011	3,089	6,741	1,554	383	1,383	324
2012	3,030	6,421	1,234	272	1,301	273
2013	2,350	5,174	1,188	228	1,000	262
2014	2,342	5,129	1,519	262	1,004	451
2015	2,195	4,691	1,868	274	1,011	643
2016	2,027	4,474	1,585	214	897	508
2017	1,939	4,235	1,533	209	791	491

Year	Middle East extremism	Muslim extremism	sport extremism	style extremism	travel extremism
1940	85	0	151	237	239
1941	108	0	120	172	199
1942	106	0	102	157	161
1943	83	0	112	161	182
1944	63	1	57	152	156
1945	84	0	101	144	156
1946	70	2	111	156	171
1947	80	0	113	190	198
1948	72	0	115	179	187
1949	81	0	122	234	211
1950	95	0	102	197	209
1951	130	0	119	210	224
1952	100	1	126	183	208
1953	83	1	105	182	214
1954	97	1	100	216	235
1955	91	0	87	140	219
1956	293	0	112	183	247
1957	261	0	85	208	225
1958	201	0	98	224	259
1959	92	0	109	217	280
1960	83	1	97	217	264
1961	90	4	128	224	265
1962	82	3	99	220	250
1963	65	14	104	191	226
1964	77	11	109	218	225
1965	68	7	130	226	219

Year	Middle East extremism	Muslim extremism	sport extremism	style extremism	travel extremism
1966	114	7	170	285	290
1967	197	13	145	285	260
1968	149	10	125	324	227
1969	160	7	146	322	241
1970	290	10	190	365	337
1971	193	4	133	360	301
1972	176	2	148	375	290
1973	255	7	208	441	335
1974	303	5	194	381	296
1975	305	5	215	378	303
1976	237	2	192	439	329
1977	283	8	222	497	385
1978	240	2	168	421	299
1979	256	5	274	511	378
1980	401	4	308	896	577
1981	192	4	193	600	416
1982	219	4	241	576	372
1983	205	0	212	585	392
1984	200	9	210	632	378
1985	216	6	239	601	409
1986	208	4	209	645	426
1987	169	3	222	631	426
1988	227	14	225	623	409
1989	166	54	200	589	413
1990	288	60	212	621	417
1991	315	59	216	486	371

Year	Middle East extremism	Muslim extremism	sport extremism	style extremism	travel extremism
1992	145	96	238	590	428
1993	155	114	185	600	370
1994	170	98	235	575	422
1995	166	120	261	524	411
1996	157	94	277	522	415
1997	155	67	273	563	388
1998	219	81	363	790	491
1999	169	85	381	787	593
2000	202	107	440	761	518
2001	258	245	370	730	608
2002	248	206	408	668	524
2003	263	159	387	652	516
2004	216	189	383	631	524
2005	247	187	404	798	613
2006	492	312	490	812	740
2007	473	296	518	875	731
2008	359	232	663	946	810
2009	375	272	622	925	820
2010	350	252	610	1,023	803
2011	516	331	665	1,137	940
2012	422	267	687	1,037	890
2013	456	242	541	901	744
2014	481	325	530	742	755
2015	486	465	405	733	774
2016	419	444	450	721	724
2017	347	486	377	589	780

Chapter 8

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