



# Teaching Guide

*on*

International  
Terrorism:  
Definitions,  
Causes, and  
Responses

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United States Institute of Peace

## Objectives of the Teaching Guide

- To assist students in gaining an understanding of terrorism and its role in domestic and international politics
- To make students aware of various definitions of terrorism
- To acquaint students with different ways in which terrorism may be addressed
- To provide teachers with lesson plans, bibliographic sources, and factual material to assist them in teaching students about terrorism

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## Preface

Dealing with terrorism has become the centerpiece of U.S. foreign policy today. Yet terrorism, its definition, causes, and methods of dealing with it, has rarely been dealt with in high school courses. In an effort to assist teachers in helping their students identify and understand terrorism, the United States Institute of Peace has developed this three-lesson plan, which was completed in November 2001. The teaching guide is aimed at grades 11 and 12.

These lessons assume a 45-minute class period. If your school uses block scheduling, these lessons may be combined or may be used as a portion of one day's block.

While the teaching guide has been assembled to be used as is, teachers may vary the sequencing or selection of lessons to suit their own particular requirements.

### ***Caveat***

Teachers should be aware that these lessons represent only a fraction of all that could be said about terrorism. Given the events of September 11, much of this material will be emotive, both for you and the students. The objective of the

guide is to help you and the students think broadly about some basic concepts that concern terrorism.

Furthermore, throughout this guide it is important to remember that claims about Islam made by Osama bin Laden are not representative of the views of the majority of Muslims. Remind the students that they should not equate the goals of terrorists with those of Islam.

### **Teaching Materials**

Library access  
Overhead projector  
Internet access (if available)

### **Advance Preparation**

Read and review any materials related to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. A good web resource is the *Washington Post* "America Attacked" website: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/nation/specials/attacked/>

The United States Institute of Peace has prepared an excellent website on terrorism: <http://www.usip.org/library/topics/terrorism.html>

You will need to decide the following:

- Will this be a required, extra-credit, or extracurricular project for your students?
- At what point in your course will you include the material on *International Terrorism: Definitions, Causes, and Responses*?
- How many class hours can you devote to this project?
- How will the class hours be scheduled among other assignments and activities?
- Which exercises or portion of exercises will you use?
- Will you use any of the extension activities?

Make copies of the worksheets, overhead transparencies, and reference materials for the lessons you have decided to use.

Ensure that you have accounted for your students' emotional well-being in undertaking these units. You may wish to consult with the National Association of School Psychologists web page on helping children cope with stress: <http://www.nasponline.org/NEAT/grief.html>.

## **Introduction**

The topic of terrorism is both complex and emotive. It is complex because it combines so many different aspects of human experience, including subjects such as politics, psychology, philosophy, military strategy, and history, to name a few. Terrorism is also emotive both because experiences of terrorist acts arouse tremendous feelings, and because those who see terrorists as justified often have strong feelings concerning the rightness of the use of violence. Without a doubt, terrorism evokes strong feelings whenever it is discussed. A key challenge of understanding terrorism is both acknowledging the moral outrage at terrorist acts, while at the same time trying to understand the rationale behind terrorism.

Terrorism is not a new phenomenon in human experience. Violence has been used throughout human history by those who chose to oppose states, kings, and princes. This sort of violence can be differentiated from what is termed as terrorism. Violence in opposition to a government is often targeted against soldiers and those who govern. Terrorism, however, is characterized by the use of violence against civilians, with the expressed desire of causing terror or panic in the population. Terrorism is not unique to the 20th and 21st centuries. Terrorism existed in 18th century revolutionary France during the reign of terror, as well as among the Zealots of Palestine in opposition to Roman rule some 2000 years ago. Today, terrorist activity can be found in Israel, Indonesia, United Kingdom, Sri Lanka, Colombia, and the United States, to name a few. Of particular concern here are the September 11 suicide attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and the attempted attack that resulted in the plane crash in Pennsylvania.

The suicide attacks began when a passenger jetliner, hijacked en route from Boston to Los Angeles, slammed into New York's World Trade Center at 8:45 a.m. About 18 minutes after the first crash, a second plane—United Airlines flight 175, also originating in Boston and bound for Los Angeles, with 92 crew and passengers—struck the south tower. The action was so well executed that authorities concluded that the hijackers had their own pilot aboard.

Plumes of smoke filled the skyline of lower Manhattan as other terror attacks were underway. American Airlines flight 77, bound for Los Angeles from Washington, D.C. with 64 people aboard, was hijacked by men wielding knives and box cutters shortly after its takeoff at 8:21 a.m.. Veering off course, the passenger plane took aim at the Pentagon just 25 miles away, crashing into the western facade at 9:45 a.m.

Meanwhile, in New York, bedlam had gripped the financial district around the World Trade Center (also the target of a 1993 terrorist bomb, which exploded in the basement killing six). Thousands of people fled the buildings and surrounding area. Others who had not yet escaped the building, were helping the injured, or were simply riveted by what they saw fell victim to another tragedy. At about 10:00 a.m., the 410-foot-tall south tower suddenly began to collapse, one floor collapsing onto the one below. Forty minutes later the second

tower collapsed. In the meantime, there were reports of another hijacked airline, United Airlines flight 93, crashing in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, southeast of Pittsburgh.

For a time, panic set in, marked by incorrect reports of bombings at the U.S. Capitol, as well as the State Department. The White House was evacuated. The U.S.-Mexico border was closed, and the Federal Aviation Administration grounded all U.S. commercial airline flights. International flights bound for the United States were hastily diverted to Canada.

As a consequence of those attacks, the U.S. government initiated a war against terrorism and its sponsors, targeting Osama bin Laden, a Saudi-born anti-Western, Islamic militant residing in Afghanistan, and his al Qaeda organization. Al Qaeda (Arabic for “the Base”) is an organization based in Afghanistan that has a history of terrorist involvement. Al Qaeda is allied to the Taliban government in Afghanistan. Using the military, law enforcement, diplomacy (including coalition formation), the treasury department, and other instruments of state, the U.S. government undertook a campaign against bin Laden and his al Qaeda group. The U.S. government has taken great pains to state that its efforts are not directed against Islam, but against the terrorism and its sponsors.

## **Lesson I**

### **What Is Terrorism? (1–2 periods)**

#### **Objectives**

Students will:

- Identify major themes within definitions of terrorism
- Identify and understand different types of terrorism
- Understand the different objectives of terrorism

#### **Materials**

Each student will need:

- Defining terrorism (handout 1)
- Definitions of terrorism (handout 2)
- Paper
- Pen/pencil

#### **Step 1**

Distribute the recap of the events of September 11. Ask the students to read the one-page summary. (5 minutes)

#### **Step 2**

Divide students into small groups (5–10 students per group). Ask students to discuss their feelings about the terrorist attack on September 11. They should make a list of some of the major feelings as a result of the attack. (20 minutes)

#### **Step 3**

Lead a classroom discussion on the connection between how the students feel and the effectiveness of terrorism. Observe that the feelings experienced by the students were in large part expected and desired by the terrorists.

#### **Step 4**

Distribute copies of the defining terrorism worksheet (handout 1). The handout instructs students to: (a) select a reporter, (b) review the events of September 11 (10 minutes),\* and (c) develop their own group definition of terrorism (20 minutes).

#### **Step 5**

At the end of the group work, ask the reporters from each group to briefly report on their group's definition of terrorism.

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\* If you are completing all of lesson I in one class period, then skip step 4b.

**Step 6**

Compare and contrast the different definitions provided. Reinforce to the students that there is no right or wrong answer as such.

**Step 7**

Distribute to students the definitions of terrorism (handout 2). You may ask them, for homework, to discuss their group definition and those found on the terrorism definition handout with friends or family members.

## **Handout 1. Defining Terrorism Worksheet**

What is terrorism? Your task is to work in small groups and develop your own group definition of terrorism. In order to do this you should briefly discuss the events of September 11, 2001 and consider how terrorism differs from other forms of violence. For example, how is terrorism different from warfare? Different from criminal violence? Different from politics?

Recognizing that there are many points of view about what terrorism is your challenge is to try to develop a definition with which your group is comfortable.

### **Step 1**

Select a group recorder, someone who will write down your group definition and present it to class.

### **Step 2**

Take 10 minutes to review the facts of the terrorist attacks on September 11. Briefly review the day's events.

### **Step 3**

Take 20 minutes to develop a group definition of terrorism. Write down your own group definition for presentation to the class at the end of the period.



## **Handout 2. Definitions of Terrorism**

“The calculated use of violence or the threat of violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological.” (U.S. Department of Defense)

“Terrorism constitutes the illegitimate use of force to achieve a political objective when innocent people are targeted.” (Walter Laqueur)

“Terrorism is defined here as the recurrent use or threatened use of politically motivated and clandestinely organised violence, by a group whose aim is to influence a psychological target in order to make it behave in a way which the group desires.” (C. J. M. Drake)

“The unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives.” (FBI)

## **Lesson II**

### **What are some of the likely causes of Terrorism? (1 period)**

#### **Objectives**

Students will:

- Identify the role of ideology, psychology, and rationality in terrorism
- Be acquainted with the profile of the terrorist

#### **Materials**

Each student will need:

- Causes of Terrorism (handout 3)
- Profile of a Terrorist: Osama bin Laden (handout 4)
- Paper
- Pen/pencil

#### **Step 1**

Divide students into small groups (5–10 students per group). Distribute the causes of terrorism sheet (handout 3) to students. Ask them to read through the handout and briefly discuss what they have read. (15 minutes)

#### **Step 2**

Distribute the profile of a terrorist (handout 4) to the students. Ask them to first examine the profile from the psychological perspective, and then answer the question “what insight or understanding does the psychological perspective give us about this terrorist?” Then ask students to examine the ideological perspective, and answer the question “what insight or understanding does the ideological perspective give us about this terrorist?” Finally, ask students to examine the strategic perspective, and answer the question “what insight or understanding does the strategic perspective give us about this terrorist?”

#### **Step 3**

Lead a class discussion on the insights provided from the three perspectives. Are they sufficient, or are other perspectives needed?

### **Handout 3. Causes of Terrorism**

#### **Introduction**

The causes of terrorism appear to be varied. There does not appear to be one lone factor that leads people to engage in acts of terror. Scholars have categorized motivations for terrorism to include psychological, ideological, and strategic.

#### **Psychological Perspective**

Those who engage in terrorism may do so for purely personal reasons, based on their own psychological state of mind. Their motivation may be nothing more than hate or the desire for power. For example, in 1893 Auguste Vaillant bombed the French Chamber of Deputies. Prior to his conviction and subsequent execution Vaillant explained his motivation in terms of hate for the middle classes. Vaillant wanted to spoil the sense of economic and social success, by tainting it with his violence. In many respects this terrorist is interested in getting attention from others for his or her act, rather than some grand ideological or strategic goal.

#### **Ideological Perspective**

Ideology is defined as the beliefs, values, and/or principles by which a group identifies its particular aims and goals. Ideology may encompass religion or political philosophies and programs. Examples of terrorist groups motivated by ideology include the Irish Republican Army (IRA), in Sri Lanka the Liberation Tigers of Tamal Eelam (LTTE), and the Bader Meinhoff in Germany. The IRA is motivated by a political program to oust the United Kingdom from Ireland and unite Ireland under one flag. Similarly the LTTE seek to establish a separate state for their people, the Tamals in Sri Lanka. Finally, the Bader Meinhoff was a terrorist group made up of middle-class adults who opposed capitalism and sought to destroy capitalist infrastructure in Germany.

#### **Strategic Perspective**

Terrorism is sometimes seen as a logical extension of the failure of politics. When people seek redress of their grievances through government, but fail to win government's attention to their plight, they may resort to violence. From this viewpoint, terrorism is the result of a logical analysis of the goals and objectives of a group, and their estimate of the likelihood of gaining victory. If victory seems unlikely using more traditional means of opposition, then one might calculate that terrorism is a better option. For example, in South Africa the African National Congress only turned to the use of terrorism after political avenues were explored and failed. Of course, not just individuals may feel let down by the political process. States may use terrorists in the pursuit of their own strategic interests. States may sponsor terrorist groups, especially when the objectives of the state and the terrorist group are similar. For example, Libya used terrorists to explode a bomb aboard Pan Am 103 flying from London to New York in 1988, allegedly in response to U.S. and British bombing of Libya.

**Conclusion**

It is impossible to say for sure what causes terrorism. A person's psychological make-up certainly will play a role, but to what extent is unclear. Some may come to terrorism, not out of any love for violence, but rather to further their ideological goals. Others may be motivated to use terror simply because it appears to be a useful strategic alternative, or may further the state's objectives. Indeed, terrorism may occur for psychological, ideological, and strategic grounds all at once. An individual may decide terrorism fits his or her own view of the world—that it makes sense. A group may come to use terrorism because it furthers and is supported by their ideology. Finally, groups or persons may use terrorism because it fits with their strategic objectives and goals.

#### **Handout 4. Profile of a Terrorist: Osama bin Laden**

Below is material about Osama Bin Laden. The first is from a U.S. Department of State publication, and the second from an interview broadcast on ABC.

##### **From U.S. Department of State, *Patterns of Global Terrorism, 1997***

Usama [Osama] bin Muhammad bin Awad bin Laden is one of the most significant sponsors of Sunni Islamic terrorist groups. The youngest son of Saudi construction magnate Muhammad Bin Laden, Usama joined the Afghan resistance almost immediately after the Soviet invasion in December 1979. He played a significant role in financing, recruiting, transporting, and training Arab nationals who volunteered to fight in Afghanistan. During the war, Bin Laden founded al-Qaida—the Base—to serve as an operational hub, predominantly for like-minded Sunni Islamic extremists. The Saudi government revoked his citizenship in 1994 and his family officially disowned him. He had moved to Sudan in 1991, but international pressure on that government forced him to move to Afghanistan in 1996.

In August 1996, Bin Laden issued a statement outlining his organization's goals: drive U.S. forces from the Arabian Peninsula, overthrow the Government of Saudi Arabia, “liberate” Muslim holy sites in “Palestine,” and support Islamic revolutionary groups around the world. To these ends, his organization has sent trainers throughout Afghanistan as well as to Tajikistan, Bosnia, Chechnya, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen and has trained fighters from numerous other countries including the Philippines, Egypt, Libya, and Eritrea. Bin Laden also has close associations with the leaders of several Islamic terrorist groups and probably has aided in creating new groups since the mid-1980s. He has trained their troops, provided safehaven and financial support, and probably helps them with other organizational matters.

Since August 1996, bin Laden has been very vocal in expressing his approval of and intent to use terrorism. He claimed responsibility for trying to bomb U.S. soldiers in Yemen in late 1992 and for attacks on them in Somalia in 1993, and reports suggest his organization aided the Egyptian al-Gama’at al-Islamiyya in its assassination attempt on Egyptian President Mubarak in Ethiopia in 1995. In November 1996 he called the 1995 and 1996 bombings against US military personnel in Saudi Arabia “praiseworthy acts of terrorism” but denied having any participation in those bombings. At the same time, he called for further attacks against US military personnel, saying: “If someone can kill an American soldier, it is better than wasting time on other matters.”

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\* The different spelling of Osama bin Laden reflects U.S. State Department preference in 1997.

**Below is an interview with Osama bin Laden by ABC's John Miller (conducted on May 28, 1998). The interview presents a number of different insights concerning the origins of terrorism (such as the psychological, ideological, and strategic). You will note the extent to which bin Laden attempts to speak on behalf of all of Islam—which of course in reality he does not.**

JOHN MILLER Mr. bin Laden, to Americans you are an interesting figure: A man who comes from a background of wealth and comforts who ended up fighting on the front lines. Many Americans would think that's unusual.

OSAMA BIN LADEN Thanks be to Allah. It is hard for one to understand if the person does not understand Islam. In our religion we believe that Allah created us to worship him. Allah is the one who created us and blessed us with this religion, and orders us to carry out the holy struggle jihad to raise the word of Allah above the words of the unbelievers.

We believe this is a form of worship we must follow despite our financial ability. This is a response to Westerners and secularists in the Arab world who claim the reason for the awakening and the return to Islam is financial difficulties. This is untrue. In fact, the return of the people to Islam is a blessing from Allah, and their return is a need for Allah.

This is not a strange issue. During the days of jihad, thousands of young men who were well off financially left the Arabian Peninsula and other areas and joined the fighting—hundreds of them were killed in Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Chechnya. We pray Allah grants them martyr status.

JOHN MILLER You have been described as the "World's Most Wanted Man." There is word that the American government intends to put a price on your head in the millions for your capture. Do you think about that? Does it worry you?

OSAMA BIN LADEN Praise be to Allah. It does not worry us what the Americans think. What worries us is pleasing Allah. The Americans impose themselves on everyone who believes in his religion and his rights. They accuse our children in Palestine of being terrorists. Those children that have no weapons and have not even reached maturity. At the same time they defend a country with its airplanes and tanks, and the state of the Jews, that has a policy to destroy the future of these children.

Clinton stands after Qana and defends the horrible massacre that severed the heads of children and killed about 100 persons.\* Clinton stands and claims Israel has the right to defend itself. We do not worry about American opinion, or the fact they place prices on our heads.

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\* Qana is a village in Lebanon where, on April 18, 1996, Israeli artillery shelled a compound in response to an attack allegedly launched by forces housed in the village. Some 800 civilians had taken refuge in the compound, and over 100 died in the attack. The Israeli government claimed that the compound had been in the hands of Hizballah, a terrorist group opposed to Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon.

We as Muslims believe that our fate is set. If the whole world decides to get together and kill us before our time has come, we will not die, our livelihood is set. No matter how much pressure America places on the regime in Riyadh to freeze our assets and to prevent people from contributing to this great cause, we rely on Allah.

**Questions for Consideration**

What insight or understanding does the psychological perspective give us about this terrorist? What insight or understanding does the ideological perspective give us? What insight or understanding does the strategic perspective give us?

## **Lesson III**

### **What Are the Alternative Responses to Terrorism? (1 period)**

#### **Objectives**

Students will:

- Brainstorm a list of possible responses to terrorism
- Evaluate the consequences of those responses
- Understand some of the strengths and weaknesses of various responses to terrorism

#### **Materials**

Each student will need:

Ideas evaluation sheet (handout 5)

Paper

Pen/pencil

#### **Step 1**

With the September 11 World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks in mind, have the students brainstorm a list to the following question: what are some ways in which the U.S. government might respond to the terrorist attacks of September 11? Be sure to read the rules for brainstorming to the students.

#### **Rules for brainstorming**

The objective of brainstorming is to list as many ideas as possible, without regard to their effectiveness. Evaluation is withheld until all the ideas are recorded.

- list all ideas in full view of others
- no critical evaluation allowed
- go around the room one person at a time, allowing those who wish to pass to do so
- continue until all ideas are recorded or time is up
- collapse similar ideas together

#### **Step 2**

Go around the room and record student replies, allowing those who wish to pass to do so. Remind students that their replies need to be brief.

#### **Step 3**

After you have either exhausted all replies, or you have run out of time, collapse similar or identical items.

#### **Step 4**

Have students vote for the best ideas. Take the top four ideas.

#### **Step 5**

Distribute the ideas evaluation sheet (handout 5). On this sheet have the students record the top four ideas in the left-hand column. Under the next four columns,



students should list the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of each idea.

- A strength is a positive aspect of an idea.
- A weakness is a negative aspect of an idea.
- An opportunity concerns how that idea creates a new positive pathway or alternative for the future.
- A threat concerns how that idea creates a new negative pathway or alternative for the future.

**Step 6**

As a class, discuss each of the four ideas. Discuss the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of each idea.

**Step 7**

Distribute the responses to terrorism sheet (handout 6). This sheet provides some insight into different methods of handling terrorism. Have your students read through the sheet for homework and ask them to reflect on how their brainstorming exercise compares with the responses in handout 6.

### Hardout 5 - Ideas Evaluation Sheet

Use this sheet to evaluate your brainstorming ideas. You will have voted on the four best responses to terrorism, now record those five ideas in the left hand column. Then, briefly note the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of each of the five ideas.

Brainstorming Idea	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats

## **Handout 6. Responses to Terrorism**

Historically, there have been a number of responses to terrorism. These have included the use of violence to oppose terrorists, the use of negotiation, and finally the use of international conventions to create international norms in opposing terrorism. While these three are not, by any means, the only ways in which governments have sought to address terrorism, they certainly have been among the most popular.

The use of force and violence against terrorism has been demonstrated periodically. U.S. military action against the Taliban in Afghanistan is an example of the use of force against terrorism. The Taliban, harboring the al Qaeda organization, was the target of U.S. military action. In another example, in 1988 three suspected members of the Irish Republican Army were shot and killed in Gibraltar by members of the British Special Air Services. Force, in this case, was used against suspected members of a terrorist organization. The use of force is both a tit-for-tat strategy, as well as an attempt to hinder the terrorists' ability to operate.

Negotiation is a second method for dealing with terrorism. While nations may refuse publicly to negotiate with terrorist groups, they may follow a different strategy in secret. For example, Great Britain had long refused to negotiate with the Irish Republican Army and its political wing Sinn Fein. Yet, out of the public view negotiations did proceed, ultimately leading to the Good Friday Agreements, which went far in ending terrorist attacks in Northern Ireland. Another example is the negotiation that took place between the African National Congress (ANC) and the apartheid government of South Africa. The ANC had been proscribed as a terrorist organization, and the government foreswore any negotiation with the ANC. Yet, behind the scenes negotiations did take place, ultimately resulting in the end of apartheid in South Africa.

International agreements are another attempt at addressing terrorism. International organizations, such as the United Nations, pass resolutions and seek to foster greater political action among member states. For example, the 1997 International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings requires that parties to the convention must make it a criminal act to unlawfully and intentionally use explosives or other deadly devices in public with the objective of causing death or injuring a person. Another example of action by the international community was UN Security Council anti-terrorism resolution 1373, "Improving International Cooperation."

You may wish to reflect on these approaches to handling terrorism in terms of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Particular approaches or combinations of approaches may be more appropriate in a given context.

## **Resources on Terrorism**

### ***Internet***

Terrorism/Counter-Terrorism: Web Links, United States Institute of Peace  
<http://www.usip.org/library/topics/terrorism.html>

How Terrorism Ends, United States Institute of Peace  
<http://www.usip.org/oc/sr/sr990525/sr990525nb.html>

Patterns of Global Terrorism—2000, U.S. Department of State  
<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/pgtrpt/2000/>

Terrorist Group Profiles, U.S. Naval Postgraduate School  
<http://web.nps.navy.mil/~library/tgp/tgpmain.htm>

America Attacks, New York Times  
<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/national/dayofterror/>

Response to Terrorism, U.S. Department of State  
<http://www.usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/terror/>

### ***Books and Articles***

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Smith, James M., and William C. Smitt, eds., *The Terrorism Threat and U.S. Government Responses: Operational and Organizational Factors*. Colorado: U.S. Air Force Academy Institute for National Security Studies, 2001.

Stern, Jessica. *The Ultimate Terrorists*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999.

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## United States Institute of Peace

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