

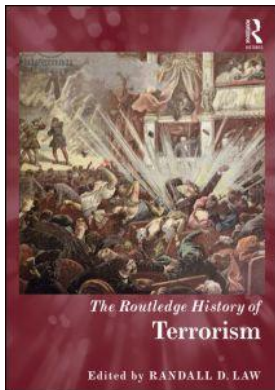
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### **The literary turn in Terrorism Studies**

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Part VI

THE HISTORIOGRAPHY  
OF TERRORISM

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## THE LITERARY TURN IN TERRORISM STUDIES

*Richard Jackson*

It is fair to argue that, notwithstanding the Reagan administration's first "war on terrorism" in the 1980s and the rise of so-called "new terrorism" in the 1990s, without the events of September 11, 2001, terrorism studies would likely have remained a fairly small though not necessarily unimportant field of study within the academy. The terrorist attacks were the impetus to a period of unprecedented growth in terrorism-related research, leading to what one observer has called "a golden age" of terrorism studies.<sup>1</sup> A study in 2006 noted that 14,006 articles about terrorism had been published between 1971 and 2002, with fifty-four percent of the articles published in 2001 and 2002.<sup>2</sup> Another study found that 2,281 non-fiction books with the term terrorism in the title had been published between September 2001 and June 2008; in comparison, only 1,310 such books had been published in the entire period prior to 2001.<sup>3</sup>

This rapid expansion in the literature, which continues apace today, has resulted in a welcome diversification in the field in both disciplinary and epistemological terms.<sup>4</sup> Once arguably dominated by social science, in particular political science and international relations, the terrorism field is now far more genuinely multidisciplinary, with important research also being contributed by, among many others, historians,<sup>5</sup> anthropologists,<sup>6</sup> psychologists,<sup>7</sup> economists,<sup>8</sup> lawyers,<sup>9</sup> and philosophers.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps more importantly, and partly as a result of increasing multidisciplinary, the field has also witnessed a growing epistemological pluralization, with increasing numbers of studies that take reflectivist, post-positivist,<sup>11</sup> as well as historical-materialist<sup>12</sup> approaches.

It is within this broader context of rapid growth and diversification that this chapter examines the so-called "literary turn" within terrorism studies. Not to be confused with the analysis of terrorism in literature,<sup>13</sup> the literary turn in terrorism studies falls within the broader "post-modern" or "post-structuralist turn" within social science. Focusing on the role of language and discourse in constructing both reality and our attempts to study aspects of it, it refers to those studies that treat terrorism (and by extension, counter-terrorism) not as a distinct, ontologically stable, trans-historical phenomenon, but rather as a social and cultural construct, defined within a particular historical-cultural context and shaped by the assumptions embedded within it. Typically, such studies employ various forms of discourse analysis or critical constructivist analysis as their primary methodological orientation.

The aim of this chapter is to survey the rise, development, and impact of the literary turn on the broader terrorism studies field, and to explore some of the ways in which it has made its presence felt in historical studies of terrorism. I also discuss a few of the key challenges to historical accounts of terrorism posed by the literary turn, and some of the ways in which

historians can contribute to a better understanding of the current terrorism *episteme* – the broader social body of ideas, narratives, and unwritten assumptions that have arisen to give shape and legitimacy to the widely accepted knowledge about terrorism at the present historical juncture.<sup>14</sup> The terrorism episteme, and its accompanying *dispositif*<sup>15</sup> – a related term that refers to the underlying logic or orientation which ties together all the discourses, laws, institutions, regulatory decisions, security practices, scientific statements, and philosophical propositions relating to terrorism in a kind of strategic apparatus – point to the role that academic research has played, and continues to play, in establishing how “terrorism” is understood, spoken about, studied, and acted upon in contemporary society. In other words, the academic study of terrorism occurs within a broader epistemological–historical context and simultaneously co-constructs that same context.

### The literary turn

The literary turn in terrorism research refers to the body of research that implicitly or explicitly adopts a social constructivist or post-structuralist ontology in relation to its primary subject, “terrorism.” Scholars in this tradition assume that “terrorism” derives its ontological status primarily from its existence as a commonly used rhetorical term and cultural construct; that is, “terrorism” is fundamentally a social fact rather than a brute fact.<sup>16</sup> Thus, while political violence is obviously experienced as a brute fact by its direct victims, its wider cultural–political meaning and its analytical–descriptive status – as “war,” “crime,” “insurgency,” or “terrorism,” for example – is decided by socially negotiated agreement and inter-subjective practices involving political authorities, investigators, judges, the media, academic experts, opinion leaders, and others.<sup>17</sup> In this sense, just as “races” do not have an independent ontological existence but classifications of humankind do, so too “terrorism” does not exist as an objective, externally recognizable phenomenon, but classifications of different forms of political violence do.<sup>18</sup> To put it another way, “The nature of terrorism is not inherent in the violent act itself. One and the same act . . . can be terrorist or not, depending on intention and circumstance”<sup>19</sup> – and, we might add, historical juncture. Who is a terrorist – Menachem Begin, Nelson Mandela, Yasser Arafat – and which acts of political violence are considered acts of terrorism – the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand or President John F. Kennedy, the atomic attack on Hiroshima, the Lockerbie bombing – are not independently verifiable facts but interpretations liable to change over time, place, and observer. Begin, Mandela, and Arafat were all transformed within their lifetimes from “terrorists” to Nobel Peace Prize winners, for example.

From the perspective of the literary turn, “terrorism” is an empty signifier; we cannot know the thing itself with any certainty, only the way in which it is discursively constructed through language usage and social practices.<sup>20</sup> Partly as a result, and parallel to this, within academia “terrorism” is also a quintessential example of a “contested concept,” as it lacks “one clearly definable general use . . . which can be set up as the correct or standard use.”<sup>21</sup> This is reflected in the well-worn observation that there are now over 200 definitions of terrorism currently in use by scholars, governments, and international organizations.<sup>22</sup> In the end, because “terrorism” exists solely as a socially constructed (and highly pejorative) label, scholars from within this perspective argue that it is the language games, narratives, and representational practices of the term that should be the primary focus of academic research, not necessarily the phenomenon itself.<sup>23</sup>

*The origins of the literary turn in terrorism studies*

The origins of the literary turn can first be found in some important research within political science on the academic and political construction of terrorism as a specific form of political violence, primarily during Reagan's first "war on terrorism."<sup>24</sup> Analyzing the rhetoric of scholarly experts, politicians, and the media, this work demonstrated some of the ways in which terrorism, as an essentially contested concept, was produced as an object of knowledge through certain kinds of rhetorical strategies and practices, and how a coherent community of experts and practitioners came together to shape public and political understandings of the phenomenon. As this and later research<sup>25</sup> demonstrated, it was during this period that terrorism was rhetorically reconstructed from being a rational insurgent (and counter-insurgent) strategy to a form of irrational, decontextualized, and essentially purposeless political violence.

For example, at the first American conference on terrorism held at the State Department in 1972, participants agreed that terrorism was a tool that both opposition forces and established regimes could employ and that it was driven by unresolved political grievances. More broadly, the violent tactics later defined as "acts of terrorism," such as bombings, assassinations, and hijackings, were at this time framed within a discourse of "insurgency."<sup>26</sup> Over the next few years, however, the discourse among scholars and policy makers changed dramatically and, by the late 1970s, terrorism had been rhetorically separated from insurgency by virtue of its inherent moral degeneracy, its irrationality, its lack of justification, and, importantly, its exclusive use by non-state actors. By the early 1980s, "terrorism" had been established as a separate, morally defined category of political violence in the media, in policy circles, and in the scholarly network of the new "terrorism experts."

Importantly, these early studies on the rise of terrorism discourse also adopted an openly critical and normative perspective in which the political effects of certain kinds of rhetoric about terrorism were traced. For example, they highlighted some of the inherent contradictions in the dominant political discourse at the time, such as the way in which the Reagan administration lauded and materially supported the Contras in Nicaragua, UNITA in Angola, and the mujahideen in Afghanistan, among others, despite the clear involvement of these groups in a great many acts of terrorism, while at the same time condemning acts of terrorism by certain other groups and so-called state sponsors of terrorism, and declaring a broader American-led "war on terrorism."<sup>27</sup> In other words, these studies demonstrated some of the ways in which the construction of terrorism fulfilled the political propagandistic function of condemning groups and states that opposed Western interests, while supporting groups and states that were friendly to Western interests. They also demonstrated the way in which the meaning and definition of the term terrorism evolved to explicitly exclude the actions of states, especially Western states. While certain anti-Western states were frequently described as "state sponsors of terrorism," the notion of "state terrorism" – that is, acts of terrorism committed directly by state as opposed to non-state agents – had largely disappeared from view in policy, media, and expert circles. In addition, these studies criticized the often violent and counter-productive counter-terrorism policies this reconstruction of the problem of terrorism engendered.

A second important early strand of the literary turn came from a series of anthropological studies on the role of terrorism, violence, and resistance within different societies, as well as studies of societies which were deemed to be "terrorist" in some way – such as Catholic Irish, Basque, Sikh, and the like.<sup>28</sup> In particular, Zulaika and Douglass's seminal work, *Terror and*

*Taboo*, provided a powerful deconstruction of terrorism as a cultural construct and modern taboo within contemporary Western society. It demonstrated, among other things, the changing meanings of terrorism over historical periods, the “reality gap” between the perception and actual risk of terrorism at the time, the role of so-called experts in constructing political and public knowledge of terrorism, the way in which terrorism functions culturally as a form of taboo, and the violent and repressive counter-terrorism policies the dominant discourse engendered.

This approach – using deconstructive theoretical tools drawn from anthropology as well as post-structuralism to analyze terrorism as a discursive cultural object – was to prove highly influential in later years, even if it did not penetrate the epistemological boundaries of the terrorist studies field at the time.<sup>29</sup> Such studies were largely ignored in the main forums of the established terrorism field, such as its major conferences, journals, and core texts, in part because the field was at the time very small and dominated by political science approaches, particularly security studies and international relations. More significantly, it was oriented towards the counter-insurgency and security agendas of the United States and its allies. As an influential review of the field concluded, much of the terrorism field’s output in the 1970s and 1980s appeared to be “counterinsurgency masquerading as political science.”<sup>30</sup> However, in combination with studies of terrorism rhetoric from political science, anthropological studies such as that by Zulaika and Douglass were to form the intellectual foundation for a proliferation of discourse-oriented studies after September 11, 2001.

### ***The critical turn in terrorism studies after 2001***

It is perhaps not surprising that within the widely documented<sup>31</sup> broader growth in terrorism studies that took place after the 2001 terrorist attacks, as discussed below, there was an important strand of research that built on earlier deconstructive studies, questioning the discursive construction of terrorism under the George W. Bush administration and the subsequent policies and practices of the global war on terrorism. This increasingly large literature emerged initially out of the sudden academic cachet generated by the spectacular attacks and their aftermath. Political, security, media, and public interests combined to make terrorism-related research, including research on its rhetorical and cultural construction, something of a glamour subject in academia, with enhanced funding, media, and professional opportunities. In addition to the enhanced status of existing “terrorism experts”<sup>32</sup> who were now in great demand, virtually overnight there were also a great many new “instant experts” on all subjects related to terrorism.<sup>33</sup> Many of the new experts brought with them the traditional security studies paradigm.

Perhaps more importantly, a widespread sense of unease and disquiet engendered by the apparent abuses and overreaction of the war on terrorism, particularly after the Abu Ghraib scandal in 2004, directly contributed to what might be termed the “critical turn” in terrorism studies.<sup>34</sup> Inspired by and drawing directly upon the earlier deconstructive literature, a group of scholars in the United Kingdom purposefully tried to spark a new debate in the field about the ontology, epistemology, and ethics of terrorism and counter-terrorism – as a way of challenging the dominant discourse of the so-called “terrorism experts” and opening up new areas of investigation. At this time, the dominant orthodox terrorism discourse largely reflected political and media discourses in which terrorism was viewed as a serious existential threat, driven by religious extremism, and requiring extraordinary measures to effectively defeat.<sup>35</sup> In contrast, terming their approach “critical terrorism studies” (CTS), this group of

scholars sought to institutionalize their activities in a scholarly network, a peer-reviewed journal (*Critical Studies on Terrorism*), regular conferences, an academic book series, an undergraduate textbook,<sup>36</sup> research, and teaching. Moreover, these activities provoked a series of scholarly debates about the nature and study of terrorism within the wider field.<sup>37</sup>

Today, and partly as a consequence of this critical turn in terrorism studies, there is a large and ever-growing body of literature that approaches terrorism as a socially constructed category or discourse, and that seeks to examine its construction; its discursive conditions; its dominance as a truth regime, *episteme*, and *dispositif*; and its broader ideological consequences in society. This literature comes out of international relations, political science, media studies, anthropology, literary studies, communication, sociology, law, and many others. It can be broadly divided into five main strands.

First, there is a fairly large literature which examines the discursive construction of terrorism within political rhetoric, particularly the war on terror.<sup>38</sup> These studies look at the way political leaders, primarily in the United States but also in other countries like the United Kingdom and Australia, deployed particular words, collective narratives, and cultural resources to construct terrorism as a specific kind of “evil,” for example, and as an existential threat to the values of society, part of the ongoing struggle between civilization and barbarism, one of the new security risks of the globalized era, and so on. More importantly, these studies examine some of the key ideological and political consequences of constructing the terrorism subject in this way, such as how it normalizes and legitimizes a “war” against terrorism,<sup>39</sup> constructs a particular sense of national identity,<sup>40</sup> contributes to the creation of a torture culture,<sup>41</sup> and normalizes a culture of fear.<sup>42</sup>

For example, there are a growing number of studies which examine the rhetorical construction of the threat of terrorism, noting how political leaders, the media, and terrorism experts have articulated public narratives that highlight the potentially catastrophic and existential threat posed by terrorism, and how the “new” brand of fanatical terrorists are eager and willing to employ weapons of mass destruction (WMD).<sup>43</sup> Moreover, these narratives are then deployed by political elites to legitimize expanding national security powers, engaging in mass surveillance, restricting civil liberties, clamping down on dissent, and pursuing foreign-policy objectives. These studies then set about deconstructing the narratives of terrorist threat by demonstrating the empirical gap between the perception and reality of the terrorist threat, countering the WMD terrorism argument, and revealing the political interests involved in maintaining public fear of terrorism.

Related to this, a number of studies have attempted to trace the continuities in political rhetoric about terrorism, noting that the Bush administration’s “war on terrorism” discourse did not suddenly emerge from a vacuum but was rooted in earlier eras.<sup>44</sup> These studies clearly demonstrate that the current “war on terrorism” or “war against extremism”<sup>45</sup> is rooted in the earlier “war on terrorism” declared by the Reagan administration, and that there was already a kind of commonsense knowledge about terrorism in American society that political leaders could appeal to and draw upon. The commonsense view of terrorism was that it was a growing scourge upon the civilized world, a major threat to the lives of Americans, and linked to both Soviet expansionism and Islamic fundamentalism following the revolution in Iran.<sup>46</sup> More importantly, they show that the terrorism discourse has been normalized and embedded in security, political, and cultural systems since 9/11, which makes it highly resistant to change. In other words, they suggest that President Barack Obama would find it extremely difficult to change the dominant language and paradigm of



terrorism, even if he was inclined to, because the terrorism discourse has become sedimented in society and institutionalized in politics and security.<sup>47</sup>

Second, there is a large and growing body of research on the cultural construction of the terrorism subject in the media.<sup>48</sup> This literature examines the way terrorism and its threat is represented in news media, film, television, novels, and other cultural forms. Importantly, it finds that with few exceptions, there is a high degree of convergence between the way terrorism is discursively constructed as a modern form of “evil” and existential threat by political leaders, and the way it is portrayed in both news and entertainment media. In part, this is because the primary media frame for stories of terrorism is as decontextualized, ahistorical, and inexplicable violence, which obviously lends itself to the exaggeration of threat and notions of “evil.” Moreover, this framing goes back to the beginnings of mass media when newspapers first covered anarchist bombings in the late nineteenth century.<sup>49</sup> Consequently, this reinforces political discourse and simultaneously provides a set of cultural resources that politicians can draw upon to construct their rhetoric and justify their counter-terrorism policies. More broadly, this research demonstrates how the terrorism discourse has been embedded into Western culture since 9/11 in particular and become part of a broader cultural–political complex that takes in security practices, political rhetoric, law, media, entertainment, and other forms of social regulation.

A third strand of research within the current literary turn focuses on academia, the terrorism studies field, and the sociology of terrorism knowledge.<sup>50</sup> Building on a number of earlier studies on the production of terrorism knowledge,<sup>51</sup> this research has focused on the role that academics and so-called “terrorism experts” have played in the construction of “terrorism” as an object of knowledge, policy, and public discourse. These studies demonstrate how terrorism studies initially emerged from counter-insurgency studies during the Cold War, an origin that has continued to shape its problem-solving, statist orientation. They also demonstrate the degree of convergence between political and academic narratives of terrorism and reveal some of the network and revolving-door linkages between political and academic elites in the “terrorism expert” network. In other words, this research demonstrates how the broader terrorism discourse is shaped and supported by academic as well as political and cultural knowledge production processes.

Fourth, there is a growing literature that examines the discourse of terrorist leaders, groups, and associated movements in an attempt to understand their motivations, worldviews, and strategic action frames.<sup>52</sup> In other words, this literature adopts a similar theoretical and methodological approach but then switches the focus to the way in which militant groups construct their own subjectivity and political action. These studies are important for the way they deconstruct and challenge dominant narratives and beliefs about terrorists and terrorism. They demonstrate that terrorist groups are not driven by bloodlust or “evil” but by, for example, a sense of duty, sacrifice, and often quite understandable political grievances. They are also important for revealing the rhetorical and normative resources common to both terrorists and counter-terrorists: both sets of actors construct and try to legitimize their violence by appealing to notions of existential threat, the right to self-defense, cosmic struggle, the demonization of “the other,” and the like. Bruce Lincoln, for example, analyzes speeches by George W. Bush and Osama bin Laden and finds that they deploy almost identical rhetorical appeals and normative arguments for why the Other is evil and why counter-violence is necessary.<sup>53</sup>

Finally, emerging from and parallel to these strands, there are a variety of discourse-focused critical studies on terrorism and counter-terrorism-related issues, including studies

on the social construction of risk and risk-management in the war on terror,<sup>54</sup> urban planning and counter-terrorism practices,<sup>55</sup> counter-radicalization programs,<sup>56</sup> profiling and border security regimes,<sup>57</sup> urban counter-insurgency practice,<sup>58</sup> and the like. This body of work reveals how counter-terrorism discourse and practice has infiltrated ever more areas of modern society, and how it is having transformative effects across a range of groups, identities, and practices. Brad Evans, for example, has explored how security management practices have expanded from attempting to control terrorism to a broader security rationality that takes in an expanding range of threats – natural disasters, disease, immigration, crime, digital security, and so on.<sup>59</sup> He argues that, paradoxically, within this logic, attempts to secure life have normalized terror whilst also creating a passive liberal subjectivity. In effect, this literature explores the ways in which counter-terrorism has morphed into an important contemporary *dispositif* or apparatus of state control and biopolitical population management.

### **Historical research and the literary turn**

For a number of understandable reasons related to ontological, epistemological, and methodological issues (see below), and perhaps also because historians of terrorism remain a small and marginalized section within the academy,<sup>60</sup> it is only fairly recently that the literary turn has started to have a noticeable impact on the historical study of terrorism. For the most part, previous research within history has tended to approach terrorism as an objective, trans-historical, and generalizable phenomenon, although there is currently a small but growing body of work which examines the discourse and social construction of terrorism in historical context,<sup>61</sup> as well as other studies that examine state terrorism, the gap between the “real” and perceived threat of terrorism, and the meaning of the term in specific cultural contexts<sup>62</sup> – even if these studies do not always explicitly employ discourse analytic tools or deconstructive approaches. However, there is no reason why the literary turn should remain a minority approach within the field, as there are a number of important real and potential intersections between the history of terrorism and the literary turn approach.

In the first instance, there is a fairly long-standing debate within the philosophy of history about the importance of narrative in the production of historical knowledge. Hayden White<sup>63</sup> has argued that narrative is the paradigmatic historical style and, in the words of David Campbell, that “through the operation of ‘emplotment,’ facts are structured in such a way that they become components in a particular story.”<sup>64</sup> This means that the narration of events is inescapably bound up in the politics of representation, and “events in a chronology do not by themselves legitimate one particular narrative over and above another.”<sup>65</sup> In other words, the historical record itself is a site of narrative contestation and discursive construction. Such an approach to historical analysis sits comfortably with the literary turn and provides the impetus and theoretical tools for historians to re-examine existing narratives (histories) of terrorism, with attentiveness to the conditions and politics of their production and with a view to assembling alternative and competing narratives.

Second, the history of ideas is an important subfield within history, and the ideas of terrorism and anti-terrorism are perfect subjects for such an analysis. It is striking that in a relatively short space of time, in historical terms, “terrorism” has come to dominate so much of Western society and global culture. Before the early 1970s, terrorism was rarely described in such terms in the media, there was no academic field to speak of, and the term was not yet

part of the diplomatic lexicon.<sup>66</sup> However, from 1972, events that were previously described as assassination, bombing, massacre, hijacking, and the like, started to be classified as “terrorism” in major news outlets<sup>67</sup> and later in academic conferences and publications. Tracing the evolution of terrorism and anti-terrorism, their conceptual development and their incorporation into legal, political, academic, and cultural discourse and understandings would appear to be an important lacuna in need of more sustained and systematic historical research. Importantly, Mikkel Thorup’s *An Intellectual History of Terror*<sup>68</sup> constructs a narrative – in the Hayden White sense – of how ideas and concepts of state, terrorism, order, disorder, territory, violence, and others have evolved over the past centuries, and how they consequently continue to influence the struggle between the modern state and its challengers.

Third, and related to the history of ideas, Michel Foucault’s broader notion of – and theoretical tools for the analysis of – “the history of the present”<sup>69</sup> provides an important impetus for a more systematic analysis of how “we” as both a global and national society reached the present historical moment in which terrorism defines social and political reality so powerfully, and constructs human subjects in particular ways. Employing Foucault’s deconstructive historical tools, including genealogy and archeology, a small but important number of studies have started to examine the origins of this present moment – in the archives of international organizations such as the League of Nations and the United Nations, for example.<sup>70</sup>

Finally, a potentially productive intersection between the literary turn and the history of terrorism lies in the so-called “new terrorism” debate,<sup>71</sup> which posits that since the 1990s, the aims, actors, and modes of terrorism have changed so substantively that there is a “new” type of terrorism in existence. Historical studies on terrorism in previous eras,<sup>72</sup> particularly comparative studies with contemporary cases,<sup>73</sup> speak directly to, and are crucial for, challenging and deconstructing the “new terrorism” narrative, particularly given the way the narrative is employed politically to legitimize “new” forms of counter-terrorism, including methods previously considered illegitimate such as torture, rendition, targeted assassination, and the like.

In short, there are a number of potentially productive intersections between the literary turn and the history of terrorism. At the very least, the approaches and tools of the literary turn can be usefully turned towards the critical examination of current and past historical narratives of terrorism and the way in which different emplotments can generate alternative readings of the historical record. Such a task is important for greater understanding of how terrorism came to assume such a dominant place in our current historical juncture, as well as for understanding the politics and ethics of contemporary counter-terrorism.

### Conclusion

In this brief chapter I have attempted to provide an overview of the origins and current state of the literary turn within the terrorism studies field. I have suggested that while there is by now a large and diverse body of work from many disciplines that treats terrorism as a social construction or discursive object, the literary turn has only just started to make a significant impact on the history of terrorism. In part, this is due to a number of inherent tensions generated by the literary turn due to its particular ontological, epistemological, and normative commitments. For example, treating terrorism as an unstable discursive category bound up in historically and spatially contingent truth regimes, employing discourse analytic and deconstructive techniques, and adopting an openly normative commitment to human

rather than state security and critical praxis<sup>74</sup> does not always sit easily with approaches that would seek to chronicle terrorism as an objectively observable, trans-historical, and generalizable phenomenon. Such tensions come to the fore particularly when researchers read back the contemporary discourse of terrorism to historical eras when the language and concept of terrorism did not exist, or when they treat terrorism as a self-evident, discrete category and phenomenon of political violence without paying attention to its status as an empty signifier and the politics of representation.

At this point, the question of state terrorism arises as an additional important tension generated by the emergence of the literary turn. It is a long-running criticism of the terrorism studies field and broader “terrorism industry” that it has largely followed official government practice of applying the terrorism label only to non-state actors, when an objective approach would have to include states among the primary actors who employ terror as a political tactic.<sup>75</sup> As a consequence, and notwithstanding the potential ontological contradictions involved, some within the literary turn have advocated that the systematic study of state terrorism, including the construction of major datasets, ought to be undertaken as a means of bringing greater balance and narrative contestation to the broader study of terrorism.<sup>76</sup> Such an undertaking would have obvious normative value in de-legitimizing state oppression and violence, and might also contribute to broader discursive change in the meaning of the term, ironically, back towards an earlier historical era when it was understood primarily as a form of state violence. The inclusion of several chapters which engage directly with the subject of state terrorism in this volume<sup>77</sup> is a promising step forward in this regard.

It is something of a truism that state terrorism has been far more widespread and far more serious than non-state terrorism, despite its notable absence from the broader field of study<sup>78</sup> – the aforementioned chapters on state terrorism in this volume notwithstanding. Interestingly, there are a number of important historical studies on state terror,<sup>79</sup> including some in this volume, although these studies have not necessarily framed the research in terms of the terrorism phenomenon and are not usually considered as studies on terrorism per se within the terrorism studies field. It is important that historians of terrorism more systematically chronicle and analyze state use of terrorism historically as a tool of repression, conquest, and state-building (as Chapters 24, 11, and 7 in this volume by Roger Griffin, Paul M. Hagenloh, and Martin A. Miller, respectively, do), examine the means by which states have controlled the public discourse of terrorism such that their own use of exemplary forms of violence has been excluded from the “terrorism” label (as Chapter 24 by Roger Griffin in this volume does to some degree), and dissect the dynamic ways in which state and non-state terrorism have evolved in tandem with, and fed on, each other.<sup>80</sup>

In short, there is a great deal that historians can contribute to the contemporary study of terrorism. One way is through more methodical and meticulous research on some of the more neglected non-state terrorist campaigns that do not directly involve Western states or their geopolitical interests, such as various right-wing terrorist campaigns in Latin America and anti-colonial and pro-colonial terrorism during independence struggles in sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere. Clearly, a more methodical, richer chronicling of state terrorism up to the contemporary era, including imperial and colonial terror, post-colonial regime terror in Africa and Asia, and the state terror of the ongoing “war on terrorism” would also be beneficial. More importantly in terms of this chapter’s focus, adopting the tools of the literary turn, or simply taking seriously Hayden White’s narrative paradigm, historians can play an important role in uncovering the genealogy of the current terrorism discourse and tracing its emergence as one of the constitutive ideas and *dispositifs* of our current era, as well

as deconstructing the ways in which academic research itself, including the history of terrorism, is an important part of this genealogy.

### Notes

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