

Exercise #2—Terrorism

Here are four definitions of terrorism:

“The term ‘terrorism’ means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience.” (*Title 22 U.S. Code, Section 2556f(d)*)

“The calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful 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 Dictionary of Military Terms*)

“Terrorism is the use of violence against people or property to try to force changes in societies or governments.” (*Danzer, G. 2005, The Americans, Boston; Houghton Mifflin/McDougal.*)

“Terrorism is the use of violence by non-governmental groups against civilians to achieve a political goal.” (*Remy, Richard C., 2006, United States Government: Democracy in Action, Columbus, OH; Glencoe/McGraw-Hill.*)

These definitions have important differences. Which ones allow for the possibility that terrorist acts can be committed by a national government? Which ones consider that only noncombatants or civilians can be victims of terrorism?

Do you agree with the idea that only non-combatants or civilians (and not members of the military in active service) can be victims of terrorism?

The following four people either engaged in or headed groups that engaged in violent acts in pursuit of political goals. Would you consider each of them to be terrorists? Why or why not?

- George Washington
- Nelson Mandela
- Fidel Castro
- Yasser Arafat

What does it mean to say that “One person’s terrorist is another person’s freedom fighter?”