



# laetus in praesens

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## 30 Questions for the Counter-terrorism Experts of the World raising the question as to why they are not effectively addressed

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Written on the occasion of the [G20 Summit \(Hamburg, July 2017\)](#) at which both terrorism and migration are prominent agenda items  
Commentary on migration is made separately ([Anticipating Future Migration into Europe \(2018-2050\): beyond the irresponsibility of current political and humanitarian short-termism](#), 2017)

### Questions

The following questions can be explored in the context of the [G20 Leaders' Statement on Countering Terrorism](#) (European Commission Press Release, 7 July 2017). The statement itself contains no questions.

#### 1. Fundamental questions?

1. How much worse can the "terrorism" situation get -- despite the resources allocated to your preferred solutions, in the light of your unquestionable expertise?
2. Are you totally confident that your approach is correct -- and that the challenge has been fruitfully understood?
3. How much worse does the situation have to get before you are prepared to ask new kinds of questions? Is there any recognition that a pattern of group think and confirmation bias may be inhibiting that possibility?
4. With the current rate of deployment of security and surveillance measures, can it be said that the efficacy of "terrorism", and the obvious inability to curtail it, are increasing in equal measure?
5. After the expenditure of trillions of dollars over the past decades, what increased proportion of GDP is it appropriate to expend on counter-terrorism before questioning the appropriateness of the manner in which it is framed?
6. Why are the motivations for "terrorism" so frequently claimed to be inexplicable -- especially when so little effort is made to understand them in more fruitful ways?

#### 2. Counterproductivity?

1. Is your conviction that you know what you are doing -- as an acknowledged expert on "terrorism" -- to be considered as potentially part of the problem?
2. Is any failure to understand how your initiatives are part of the problem a factor in inhibiting your ability to understand the nature of the solution required?
3. If the current approach is considered to be the most appropriate, does this inhibit any ability to seek insights from those who consider that approach to be inadequate -- other than the interrogation of the incarcerated, whether "enhanced" or otherwise?
4. Are those who question your approach in any way to be understood as potentially complicit in exacerbating the challenge of "terrorism"?

#### 3. Appropriate framing?

1. Is the situation usefully framed by endeavouring to eradicate "extremism" and "radicalism" from global society -- when, paradoxically, both "extremism" and "radicalism" are acclaimed in many domains: sports, arts, creativity, innovation, and strategic thinking of every kind? Politicians, for example, are noteworthy for framing their own proposals as necessarily "radical" and for deprecating those of others as inadequate in that respect
2. Are the metaphors by which the solutions are framed engendering the most fruitful approaches: "eradication", "stopping", "out", "us/them"? As with smoking and alcohol consumption, is the situation best framed by a focus on "stopping" those forms of "terrorism" which are deprecated?
3. Since "terrorism" is now readily compared to a "cancer" on society, how do you expect to respond to its predicted "metastasis" -- if the "cancer" cannot be stopped?
4. Does the success of the "war" against terrorism depend primarily on the ability to frame those of opposing ideology as fundamentally barbaric and inhuman -- irrespective of the remarkably similar acts and attitudes of one's own institutions, now or in the recent past?

#### 4. Definitional game-playing?

1. In the effort to understand and constrain "terrorism", how fruitful is it to avoid all discussion of the historical record of complicity in "terrorism" by those who now deprecate it so vigorously? When did the most righteous of deprecators last engage institutionally -- through the bodies that represent them -- in any act now deemed to be outrageously inhuman? Beheading?
2. Should the all too recent dependence on slavery -- notably by colonial powers -- now be recognized as having constituted "terrorism"? If not, why not?
3. Is it sufficient to regret the excesses of the past or -- if not carefully forgotten -- even to reframe them as justifiable when they enabled the independence of a country and the emergence of its iconic leaders? Use of the guillotine?
4. Why do you take such great care to distinguish "terrorism" from the acts of those engendering "terror" to a far greater degree through organized crime, intimidation, and bullying in its various forms? What efforts are made to investigate and eradicate such "terrorism" and the complicity in its perpetration -- especially given the priority accorded to "terrorism" as so particularly framed?
5. Is it incredibly naive to claim that many incarcerated under government provisions do not experience "terror" -- whether or not they are deliberately subjected to the more extreme forms of enhanced interrogation? Is it appropriate to ignore completely this form of "terrorism"?
6. Given the equivalent challenge they constitute, now and in the past, is it appropriate to review the threat of dangerous animals in the light of the "terror" they engender -- perhaps to justify their eradication? If not, why not?
7. Should they become apparent, will extraterrestrials be readily framed as barbaric "terrorists" -- or will humans be so framed by them according to extraterrestrial values (and possibly their sympathy for the terror perpetrated on other species by humans)?
8. Have you, or your relatives, personally experienced terror -- of a form which as a professional you would consider irrelevant to any understanding of "terrorism"?

#### 5. Credibility?

1. To what extent does your framing of the security situation now exploit modalities which are reducing the credibility of the initiatives you take in the eyes of public opinion?
2. Is it credible to claim adequate understanding of "terrorism" when other unacknowledged experiences of terror may also be associated with violence and fatalities -- possibly even leading to suicide?
3. Given that you now have the power to distort the nature of the threat of "terrorism"-- if you so choose -- how can you prove that you have not done so (for "security reasons") in relation to any incident framed as "terrorism"?
4. How can counter-terrorism agencies render credible the threats which justify their mandate, when engendering such threats (through false claims or otherwise) offers the simplest means of justifying that mandate, the resources required, and the extreme measures advocated?
5. How long do you expect the population to continue to believe your assertions that counter-terrorism measures have "stopped" a significant number of acts of "terrorism" -- when it is clearly in your interest to make that claim, whether it is true or not?
6. How can the validity of your claims be established unequivocally -- given the unquestionable need for secrecy, the prevalence of fake-news, and the complicity of many authorities?
7. How can "terrorism" continue to be successfully framed as a threat given the rapid erosion of the distinction between such "regrettable" acts (as occasionally reported by the media) and the dramatisation of such "terrifying" experiences through "much-valued" entertainment (as provided nightly by the media)? Should such dramatisation be understood as incitement to terrorism? If not, why not?

#### 6. Foreseeable implications?

1. Is threat, as exemplified by the threat of "terrorism" as you frame it, now the only viable means of ensuring the degree of collective consensus required for governance of a complex society?
2. To what extent does the unprecedented investment in counter-terrorism initiatives (framed as "urgent") now serve as a highly convenient means of obscuring the failure to invest in other initiatives which might serve to reframe and alleviate "terrorism"?
3. Is the investment in counter-terrorism, as narrowly defined by yourselves, paradoxically now associated to some degree with the exacerbation of "terrorism" more generally ?
4. At what point will the general population be "terrified" by the extent of the security measures deployed in practice (on your recommendation) -- to a greater degree than by exposure to the threat of "terrorism"? Is this a solution to the problem of "terrorism"? Should this be recognized as an intentional outcome which ironically serves the interests of your profession?
5. As with the legislative provisions in various countries requiring use of protective helmets by cyclists and/or motorcyclists, at what stage do you expect that the population will be advised (or required) to wear body armour in public spaces as a safety precaution?
6. Under what circumstances would you consider it appropriate to adopt the strategies of what is deprecated as "terrorism"?
7. At what point will the counter-terrorism strategy you advocate justify the sacrifice of a few lives (under the guise of "terrorism" to be blamed on others) in order, purportedly, to ensure the safeguarding of many lives?
8. With security measures now focusing primarily on the arms and explosives (as used by terrorists in the past), why is it so readily assumed that "terrorists" of the future will not resort to biochemical and genetic modification strategies -- "bioterrorism"?

## Resources with related references

- [2016] [Global Incomprehension of Increasing Violence: matching incapacity to question the reason why](#)
- [2016] [Radical Disaffection Engendered by Elitist Groupthink?](#)
- [2016] [Radical Innovators Beware -- in the arts, sciences and philosophy: terrifying implications of radical new deradicalisation initiative in France](#)
- [2015] [Radicalisation versus Demonisation? Enabling radical initiatives under conditions of strategic stalemate](#)
- [2015] [Varieties of radical action](#)
- [2014] [Beheading versus Befooting: in quest of the lesser evil for the greater good](#)
- [2014] [Eradication as the Strategic Final Solution of the 21st Century?](#)
- [2014] [Systemic Equivalences between Ebola, Alien Invasion and Dissidence: strategic implications of seemingly disparate forms of terrorism](#)
- [2010] [Writing Guidelines for Future Occupation of Earth by Extraterrestrials: be done by as you did ?](#)
- [2009] [Transforming the Unsustainable Cost of General Education: strategic insights from Afghanistan](#)
- [2009] [Extreme Financial Risk-taking as Extremism -- subject to anti-terrorism legislation?](#)
- [2005] [Thinking in Terror](#)
- [2005] [Norms in the Global Struggle against Extremism: rooting for normalization vs. rooting out extremism?](#)
- [2004] [Varieties of Terrorism: extended to the experience of the terrorized](#)
- [2004] [Alternative Approaches to Security: towards well-being and psychological dimensions of sustainability](#)
- [2004] [Errorism vs Terrorism? Encroachment, Complicity, Denial and Terraism](#)
- [2004] [Dancing on Terra -- with Terror: Disciplines reframing terrifying relationships](#)
- [2004] [Is God a Terrorist: Definitional game-playing by the Coalition of the Willing?](#)
- [2002] [Transforming the Encounter with Terrorism](#)
- [2002] [Mapping the Network of Terror](#)
- [2002] [Promoting a Singular Global Threat -- Terrorism: strategy of choice for world governance](#)
- [2001] [Nature of Terror and Terrorism](#)
- [2001] [Needing Evil Elsewhere](#)
- [1998] [Social Consequences of Biochemical Terrorism](#)

The questions above merit comparison with the checklist of Alex P. Schmid (*50 Un- and Under-researched Topics in the Field of (Counter-) Terrorism Studies, Perspectives on Terrorism*, 5, 2011, 11). He is the formulator of a widely accepted definition of terrorism (*The Revised Academic Consensus Definition of Terrorism, Perspectives on Terrorism*, 6, 2012, 2). Controversy over any definition has acquired new significance with the *crisis in the Gulf region in 2017* in relation to claims regarding the support of terrorism by Qatar -- subsequent to arguments from Qatar on the matter, articulated by Mohamed Kirat (*The Vexed Definition of Terrorism, The Peninsula: Qatar's Daily Newspaper*, 13 Oct 2014).

### Addendum

[Christchurch mosque shootings: New Zealand asks: how was the threat from the far right missed?](#)

(Eleanor Ainge Roy and Michael McGowan, *BBC*, 20 Mar 2019)

[Christchurch attack raises uncomfortable questions about intelligence failure](#)

(Rodger Shanahan, *Channel NewsAsia*, 20 March 2019)

[Christchurch terror attack: Intelligence agencies turned blind eye to far-right extremism in NZ - experts](#)

(Dan Satherley, *News Hub*, March 2019)

[Five Eyes Intelligence Sharing Has Failed to Combat White Nationalist Terrorism](#)

(Van Jackson, *Council on Foreign Relations*, 18 March 2019)

[NZ massacre a 'failure of human intelligence'](#)

(Dan Siracusa, *The Daily Telegraph*, March 2019),

[Christchurch shootings 'catastrophic failure of intelligence'](#)

(*Channel 9News*, 15 March 2019)



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