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Abstract & Personalia

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C.A.J. (TONY) COADY (CAPPE, Melbourne)
Terrorism, Just War and Right Response

In getting a moral grip on the problems posed by terrorism we need to achieve some clarity about what is meant by terrorism and some moral perspective to judge of it. Of course, we also need a lot of empirical facts about terrorist and counter-terrorist activities, proposals and prospects, but we cannot focus properly on the facts without some reasonable grasp of the concepts in play and the place of terrorism in our moral landscape. But the initial problem is that the debates about terrorism, both scholarly and public, are replete with contested definitions of the topic. It has been estimated that there are well over 100 definitions about in the scholarly and political literature, many of them in conflict with others and even internally inconsistent. This disarray reflects the fact that the idea of terrorism operates in polemical and highly politicised contexts. This paper will offer a definition of terrorism that catches one central element in this complex conceptual web and helps link the moral evaluation of terrorism with the moral framework of the just war tradition. It will be argued that it is mistake to treat all revolutionary or insurgent violence as terrorist (even where it is unjustified) and that what is wrong in the activities of non-state terrorists is also wrong in the parallel activities of states. Defences of state terrorism that rely upon necessity or "dirty hands" are discredited by the fact that they seem equally available to non-state terrorists. The paper will also raise serious moral doubts about the style of response to terrorist attacks that currently goes under the title "war against terrorism".

TONY COADY, Professor and Principal Research Fellow, CAPPE (Centre for Applied Philosophie and Public Ethics). He has written the entry on Terrorism in the comprehensive international reference work *The Encyclopedia of Ethics* (2nd edition, Routledge, 2001), edited by Lawrence and Charlotte Becker. He wrote the entry on Violence for the definitive Routledge *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (1998) and earlier the entry on "Structural Violence", in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, ed. Ted Honderich, (1995). His article, "War for Humanity: A Critique", will be published in Deen K. Chatterjee and Don Scheid (eds.), *Ethics and Foreign Intervention*, Cambridge University Press (forthcoming 2002). In 1999/2000, Professor Coady was also a Senior Fellow at the United States Institute of Peace in Washington D.C.