Terrorism Studies: A Glimpse at the Current State of Research (2020/2021)

by Alex P. Schmid, James J.F. Forest, and Timothy Lowe

Abstract

This Research Note summarizes the responses to a survey. Researchers were asked how they assess the current state of research in the field of Terrorism Studies. While there was only very limited consensus to be found in the answers to most of the questions, the individual insights and suggestions provided by the respondents nevertheless made the exercise worthwhile. This Research Note is the first of two, providing a snapshot of the responses to questions about Terrorism Studies, while the second will address the same respondents' views on the current state of research in the field of Counter-Terrorism Studies.

Keywords: terrorism studies, research, literature

Introduction

Keeping up with the literature on terrorism and counter-terrorism is a challenge, as the number of publications – monographs, chapters in edited volumes, articles, academic theses, government publications, think tank reports, conference papers, mass and social media stories, manifestos and propaganda, grey literature, etc. – by far exceeds what any individual scholar can absorb. The online marketplace *Amazon.com*, for instance, lists over 40,000 books on terrorism; most of these were published after 2001. The research community's website *Academia.edu* provides access to more than 270,000 papers on terrorism. While many of these writings are just desktop products – authors reading a few dozen papers written by others and, based on these, writing one more that incorporates their own opinion – there are thousands of studies based on genuine research, primary sources, fieldwork or empirical data analysis. In the twenty years since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, hundreds of serious researchers and professionals in academia and government have added to our knowledge of the phenomenon of terrorism. The field of Terrorism Studies is anything but stagnating – a claim made in 2014 by Marc Sageman [1] but contested by others.[2]

The present Research Note is based on a questionnaire sent in late 2020/early 2021 to more than 200 scholars in the field of Terrorism and Counter-terrorism Studies. It is the first of two Research Notes, with this one addressing the current state of Terrorism Studies and the next one, in a subsequent issue of *Perspectives on Terrorism,* addressing the current state of Counter-terrorism Studies. The response rate to our questionnaire was about 20 percent. Several respondents did not answer all questions of the survey instrument. Nevertheless, the 47 sets of answers (6 anonymous, 41 with names) we received can offer at least a glimpse of the current state of research in the field of Terrorism Studies.

Demographics of Respondents

Of the 47 respondents to this survey, 36 are men and 11 are women. 21 are from the Anglosphere (United States, Canada, the United Kingdom or Australia). 16 respondents are from continental Europe (4 of them from [South] Eastern Europe), 5 from Asia, 3 from the Near East and 2 from (North) Africa. Most of them are either current or former academics, and some have close ties to governments (e.g., via think tanks or national defence universities).

In terms of academic disciplines, a majority of the respondents indicated a background in either Political Science, International Relations or Security Studies. A few have a background in Sociology or History, while two revealed a background in Psychology. Roughly a third (15) of respondents began researching terrorism before 9/11. Not unexpectedly, these disciplinary affiliations were to some extent reflected in their responses

about which academic disciplines contribute most to Terrorism Studies: 78.7% thought that Political Science and International Relations were the biggest contributors, followed by (Social) Psychology (40.4%), Sociology (27.7%), History (25.5%), Criminology (10.6%) and Conflict Studies (8.5%), with the remaining fields, according to our respondents, contributing less than these (based on question A.4, n=47) **"What academic discipline(s) contribute(s) most to Terrorism Studies?"**).

The second question asked in the survey was (A.2, n=47) **"What is your (own or preferred) approach to the study of terrorism?"** In their answers, the following approaches/methods were mentioned more than twice:

Qualitative analysis (21.3%), Empirical (14.9%), Historicization (10.6%), Multi-disciplinary (10.6%), Quantitative analysis (8.5%), Primary interviews (6.4%), Contextualization (6.4%) and Comparative analysis (6.4%).

Several other approaches were mentioned less frequently, including "Literature review", "Mixed-method approaches", "Hermeneutical", "Comparing terrorism with counter-terrorism approaches", "Studying online behavior" and "Field research".

One researcher offered, as an aside to this question, this advice:

> "Studying terrorism involves analyzing the history of terrorism; the root causes of terrorism; the psychology of terrorism; how terrorist groups organize and their modus operandi; radicalization; recruitment; funding, weaponry; targeting selection; ideologies and motivations; logistics; leaders, managers, and members; and attack patterns."

We also asked researchers: "**Do you maintain a database of your own on terrorist incidents, groups, or some other aspect of terrorism?**" (A.5, n=47). Over half (53.2%) of those who answered this question did so in the affirmative – a positive sign in terms of the development of the field of Terrorism Studies.

Definition of Terrorism

To determine whether researchers have the same object in mind when talking about "terrorism", the first question we asked was **"What is your (own or preferred) definition of terrorism?"** (A.1, n=46). Lamentably, but not unexpectedly, there was only very limited agreement. Almost all agreed that the definition had to include "violence" or "force" and a large majority agreed that the definition had to include "political". Beyond that, less than half of the respondents could agree on further elements of a definition, as the following list makes clear[3]:

1.	Violence or force as element of definition:	91.1%
2.	Political as element:	82.2%
3.	Civilians, non-combatants as victims:	48.9%
4.	Targeted, target, emphasized:	46.7%
5.	Threat, fear, or intimidation emphasized:	46.7%
6.	Non-state *group*, movement or organization as perpetrator:	37.8%
7.	Emphasis on non-state *individuals* as perpetrators:	35.6%
8.	Ideology, ideological:	33.3%
9.	Indirect action or targeting emphasized:	28.9%
10.	State or sub-state actor as perpetrator included:	22.2%
11.	Deliberate, planned, calculated or organized action:	20.0%
12.	Extra-normal, in breach of accepted (moral or legal) rules:	20.0%
13.	Coercion:	20.0%
14.	Propaganda:	20.0%
15.	Random, indiscriminate character:	15.6%
16.	Symbolic character:	15.6%

17.	Government or state as victim:	15.6%
18.	Criminal, illegal nature:	15.6%
19.	Psychological character emphasized:	15.6%
20.	Method of combat, strategy, tactic:	11.1%
21.	Clandestine, covert nature:	11.1%
22.	Anxiety-inspiring:	11.1%
23.	Economic harm emphasized:	11.1%

Surprisingly, other elements, including the "innocence of victims" or "unexpectedness of an attack" received only single mentions.

One of the definitions highlighted specifically was that of Bruce Hoffman (Georgetown University), the editor-in-chief of *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*:

> *Terrorism is ineluctably political in aims and motives, violent – or, equally important, threatens violence, designed to have far-reaching psychological repercussions beyond the immediate victim or target, conducted by an organization with an identifiable chain of command or conspiratorial cell structure (whose members wear no uniform or identifying insignia), and perpetrated by a subnational group or non-state entity.*[4]

Several respondents explicitly referred to the Academic Consensus Definitions developed by Schmid in 1983 [5], 1988 and 2011 (quoted by 6 of the 46 respondents to this question), two versions of which are reproduced here:

> 1988: *Terrorism is an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi-) clandestine individual, group, or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal, or political reasons, whereby – in contrast to assassination – the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. The immediate human victims of violence are generally chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative or symbolic targets) from a target population, and serve as message generators.*[6]

> 2011: *Terrorism refers, on the one hand, to a doctrine about the presumed effectiveness of a special form or tactic of fear-generating, coercive political violence and, on the other hand, to a conspiratorial practice of calculated, demonstrative, direct violent action without legal or moral restraints, targeting mainly civilians and non-combatants, performed for its propagandistic and psychological effects on various audiences and conflict parties…* (*continues*).[7]

Also mentioned was the unequivocal and concise definition proposed by Boaz Ganor:

> *The deliberate use of violence against civilians in order to attain political, ideological and religious aims.*[8]

Given the popular usage of START's Global Terrorism Database (GTD), the most comprehensive publicly available database on acts of terrorism, covering the period 1970 to the present, reference was also made to this GTD definition of terrorism from the University of Maryland:

> *The threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation.*[9]

Beyond referring to these definitions, many respondents offered their own definition or listed a number of elements that should form part of a definition. Some respondents stressed that certain types of violence used by governments against civilians should also be covered by a definition of terrorism.

The lack of greater consensus about the definition of terrorism and its demarcation from other forms of violence – political, criminal or other, by state or non-state actors – remains problematic. The proposed "solution" to substitute "(violent) extremism" for "terrorism" in political and also academic discourse has not improved the situation. Many governments (e.g., China, Egypt, Russia, Turkey) have used the vague concept of "extremism"

to broaden their 'catch net', eager to brand and criminalize even constitutionally guaranteed and non-violent forms of oppositional behavior as "extremist". The politicization of the terms 'extremism' and 'terrorism' and their careless use in social and mass media discourse also remains an ongoing problem troubling its academic utilization.

Influential Studies in the Field of Terrorism Studies

One of the questions we asked was **"If someone new to the field of Terrorism Studies asked you to recommend just one book that would provide the strongest introduction to the field, what would you suggest?"** (A.3, n=47)

The work most often mentioned was Bruce Hoffman's *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1st ed. 1996, 2nd ed. 2006, 3rd ed. 2017). 14 respondents to this question mentioned one or another edition of Hoffman's seminal volume. The second most stated volume (cited by 7 respondents) was Alex Schmid's (Ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research* (New York and London: Routledge, 2011/2013). Two respondents mentioned Andrew Silke (Ed.), *Handbook of Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism* and another two Alex P. Schmid and Albert J. Jongman, *Political Terrorism. A Guide to Concepts, Theories, Data Bases and Literature* (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publ. 1984) and Louise Richardson's *What Terrorists Want: Understanding the Enemy, Containing the Threat (New York: Random House, 2006).*

All other works received only single mentions (e.g., E. Chenoweth, R. English, A. Gofas, and S.N. Kalyvas (Eds.). *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019) or James Forest, *The Terrorism Lectures* (Orange County, Cal.: Nortia Press, 2012, 2nd ed. 2015), Martha Crenshaw (Ed.), *Terrorism in Context* (University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), Walter Laqueur, *A History of Terrorism.* (New York: Little, Brown,1977), Randall Law's *Terrorism: A History.* (Cambridge: Polity, 2009); Gerard Chailand and Arnaud Blin (Eds.) *Historie du Terrorism: De l'Antiquité à Al Qaida.* (Paris: Bayard, 2004)/ *The History of Terrorism: From Antiquity to ISIS* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007); Gus Martin, *Understanding Terrorism: Challenges, Perspectives, and Issues.* 6th edition (Los Angeles: Sage, 2018).

When we asked, **"Whose recent work in the field of Terrorism Studies is, in your view, breaking new ground?"** (A.6, n= 47) there was no consensus at all. Only eight names were mentioned more than once – and three times the answer was: 'none'. One old hand among the respondents cautioned: "From a perspective of 40 years, nothing is entirely new."

Those mentioned more than once for "breaking new ground" included Paul Gill (4 mentions), Thomas Hegghammer (3), Bart Schuurman (3), Alex Schmid (3), Emily Corner (2), Michael Kenney (2), and Brian J. Phillips (2). Other researchers were mentioned only by a single respondent: Max Abrahms, Kathleen Belew, Laurence Bindner, Colin Clark, Maura Conway, Martha Crensaw, Bruce Hoffman, John Horgan, Brian Jackson, James Piazza, and Andrew Silke.

In some cases, respondents added the title of a book or article to the name of a researcher they mentioned. Yet most of the titles were mentioned only once (not counting those who were referring to their own work):

-Arie Perliger, *American Zealots: Inside Right-Wing Domestic Terrorism.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2020.

-Michael Kenney, *The Islamic State in Britain: Radicalisation and Resilience in an Activist Network.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Julie Chernov Hwang. *Why Terrorists Quit: The Disengagement of Indonesian Jihadists.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018.

-Audrey Kurth Cronin, *Power to the People: How Open Technological Innovation is Arming Tomorrow's Terrorists.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.

- Jacob N. Shapiro. *The Terrorist's Dilemma: Managing Violent Covert Organizations.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013.

- Mona Kanwal Sheikh and Mark Juergensmeyer (Eds.), *Entering Religious Minds: The Social Study of Worldviews.* London: Routledge, 2019.

-John G. Horgan. *Walking Away from Terrorism: Accounts of Disengagement from Radical and Extremist Movements.* London: Routledge, 2009.

-Elizabeth Carter, *The Extreme Right in Western Europe: Success or Failure.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005.

- Bart Schuurman, Lasse Lindekilde, Stefan Malthaner, Francis O'Connor, Paul Gill & Noémie Bouhana (2019), 'End of the Lone Wolf: The Typology that Should Not Have Been', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 42:8, 771-778.

- Bart Schuurman (2020): 'Research on Terrorism, 2007–2016: A Review of Data, Methods, and Authorship.' *Terrorism and Political Violence,* 32(5), 1011-1026.

- Brian J. Phillips (2017, September): 'Do 90 Percent of Terrorist Groups Last Less than a Year? Updating the Conventional Wisdom'. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 31(6), 1255-1265.

- Thomas Hegghammer (Ed.) *Jihadi Culture: The Art and Social Practices of Militant Islamists.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

- Thomas Hegghammer, *The Caravan: Abdallah Azzam and the Rise of Global Jihad.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

- Daniel Milton, 'Pulling back the curtain. An inside look at the Islamic State's Media Organization', *Sentinel*, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, August 2018.

-Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, "Boko Haram: un cas d'école de l'échec de l'islam politique au Nigéria", *Canadian Journal of African Studies/Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines*, online publication, 28 April 2020.

-Adam Dolnik (Ed.) *Conducting Terrorism Field Research: A Guide* (Contemporary Terrorism Studies). London: Routledge, 2013.

- on the journalism side: investigative work done by Wassim Nasr (France 24).

In another question (A.7, n=45) we asked: **"*Where do you see real progress/achievements in the field of Terrorism Studies?*"** Again, there was a minimal consensus. The highest score (14.9%) went to 'Primary data usage', followed by 'Cyber, digital or related online research' (12.8%). 5 mentions went to 'Understanding radicalization', 4 respondents opted for 'Growth of 'interdisciplinary work' and 3 referred to 'Understanding right-wing extremism'. There were also references to 'Greater methodological rigor', to 'much more empirical and data-driven studies', 'increased recognition of hybrid ideologies', 'Critical perspectives to the study of terrorism', and 'Studies of organizational structure and leadership'. 'Better international cooperation between researchers', the 'growth of peer-reviewed journals', and 'The rising level of academic education in several universities throughout the globe', were also mentioned.

One respondent noted:

> "The increasing number of researchers speaking the language(s) of the people/groups that they study, contributing to a better understanding of the narratives, discourses and ideas fomented by the groups, without having to rely on secondary sources or translations."

Another respondent pointed out that:

> "The revolutionary use of the Internet and Information Technology, in the past two decades, has provided much more inter-connectivity, collaboration, quantitative data and scholarly communities in Terrorism Studies. For example, the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) has provided a rich source of

data sets on Terrorism Studies. In addition, access to Government, academic, and journalistic data and information (where suitably credible) has enriched the corpus of Terrorism Studies source material. Powerful Internet search engines have introduced useful elements of serendipity."

The reverse question **"*What are the greatest weaknesses/shortcomings in the field of Terrorism Studies?*"** (A.9, n=46) again produced very diverse answers. These answers most frequently were referring to:

Underdeveloped or inappropriate research methodologies (14.9%)

Understanding violent behavior (12.8%)

No consensus on the definition of terrorism (10.6%)

Western-oriented research focus (8.5%)

Lack of holistic understanding of the field (8.5%)

Understanding the links between ideas and actions (ideology and tactics) (6.4%)

Lack of interaction/exposure with 'terrorists' or 'militants' (6.4%)

Biased and unsupported research or dogma (6.4%)

Understanding differences between terrorism and violent extremism (4.3%)

Lack of historical awareness/historical amnesia (4.3%)

Failure to scrutinize primary material effectively (4.3%)

Lack of research into the impact of terrorism (victim studies) (4.3%)

Prioritizing government policy questions over academic-led research questions (4.3%).

Other answers provided by even fewer of the respondents included: "Bias towards associating violence with religion", "Events-driven research", "Lack of research into the impacts of terrorism, especially when it comes to victim studies", "Lack of theory on terrorism", and "The use of the term 'terrorist organization'."

Here is a selection of some more open-ended responses to this question:

"There are still lots of different definitions being (sometimes loosely) applied, not only of terrorism but the many specific issues or sub-topics that fall within this. This can lead to comparing apples with oranges, and potentially misleading/ superficial conclusions. Political correctness can also be a problem. Another issue that we've seen quite a lot in relation to the pandemic has been a tendency toward tunnel vision. There has been a lot of one-sided, imbalanced analysis (including in peer-reviewed journals) that really doesn't do this topic justice."

"Hyperfocus often on the terrorist of the day rather than the wider phenomena (so the obsession with Jihadism for example)."

"Topics with relevance to politics are privileged over others (when it comes to funding, employment)."

"Terrorism research is often events-driven (in contrast, long-term / historical aspects are neglected)."

"There is not sufficient cooperation between researchers from different disciplines (though this is slowly increasing)."

"Issues of Counter-Terrorism (re-active approaches) are gaining more attention than Terrorism Prevention (pro-active approaches)."

One respondent to this question criticized members of the so-called Critical Terrorism Studies school,

"…who denigrate the work in the field as done by 'terrorologists'". This respondent also pointed to "…

the failure of critical terrorism folks to take any of the work outside of their small niche area seriously or accept that it is done sincerely."

Yet another respondent noted:

> "Too little attention is paid to analyzing the root causes of terrorism. There is no consensual definition of terrorism, especially on the role of terrorists' targeting the armed military. Since terrorists do target the military (and law enforcement), ignoring this component degrades the current definitions and limits the accuracy of terrorist incident databases that exclude such attacks."

Gaps in our Knowledge

We also asked (A.8, n=46) **"*What are, in your view, the least understood factors contributing to the emergence/ persistence of individual terrorists or terrorist groups?*"** Again, there were many single answer suggestions like "The role of religion" and "The role of grievances." Among the slightly more frequently mentioned issues, these stood out:

Terrorist motivations (10.6%)

The role of ideology (10.6%)

The role of state sponsorship (10.6%)

Ideological ecosystems and links between violent and non-violent activism (10.6%)

Radicalization (10.6%)

The role of the internet (6.4%)

Terrorist beliefs, rationale and motivations (6.4%)

Non-Western worldviews and attitudes towards terrorism (6.4%)

Personal attributes, interest and connections (4.3%)

Root causes of terrorism (4.3%)

Generational divides (4.3%).

Another question asked was **"*What type of Terrorism Studies are, in your view, neglected/shunned for political, religious or other reasons?*"** (A.10, n= 47).

Here the single mentions dominated again. Responses included: "The effectiveness of counter-terrorism strategies", "Socio-economic factors behind terrorism", "Links between non-violent activism and terrorism", "Terrorist groups as governing parties (Afghan Taliban, Hezbollah, Hamas)" and "The infiltration of political Islam into political parties/organizations in the West".

The most frequent responses to this question were:

State sponsorship of terrorism and state terrorism (27.7%)

Right-wing terrorism (14.9%)

Left-wing terrorism (12.8%)

Role of religious beliefs (10.6%)

Study of relationship between terrorism and non-Islamic religions (4.3%).

Other answers in response to this question included:

"One example that has not received much attention is the connection between terrorism and migration. There appears to be some reluctance to openly discuss this given the political sensitivities involved."

"The role of Islam within Islamist terrorism is also something that is generally tip-toed around."

Another respondent suggested:

"The political leanings of many in the field will create a blind spot for left-wing or environmental terrorism. There is also a tendency to lump anti-government or complex and even anarchic movements with REMVE [Right-Wing Movements and Violent Extremists], which is a categorical error but often done for political motives. There is a surge of researchers doing good work already in REMVE, which is what people feel like was neglected due to the rise in jihadi studies, but is probably ok in terms of attention."

Yet another respondent wrote:

"1) The link between non-violent activism and terrorism – researchers often impose an artificial firewall between them; 2) The role played by ideology, especially the content, structure and usage of ideology in terrorism; 3) State terrorism, especially historical state and state-sponsored terrorism involving countries in the West (e.g., Italy, Spain, U.S.)."

Other suggestions included these:

"The study of State Terrorism requires much further attention. The power of the State, vested interests, and the difficulty of [obtaining] reliable source material, primary data as well as the potential safety risks to researchers, makes the subject difficult to research."

"The ethics of terrorism (why the cause can find a certain legitimacy into certain ears and how there is a framework of legitimacy which exists within these groups)."

"Comparison, differences and influences between Far-Right Terrorism & Islamist Terrorism."

We also encouraged researchers to: *"Please give your opinion about the most pressing challenge in the field of Terrorism Studies"* (A.11, n= 46), There were few identical answers, and single mentions were frequent. These referred to issues like: "Research freedom", "Inaccessibility of primary source data", "Accepting legitimate grievances of 'terrorists'", "Dehumanization of 'extremists' and 'terrorists'", and "Models of radicalization".

Even the more frequently mentioned issues showed very limited common ground:

Finding a common definition of terrorism (10.6%)

Lack of follow-up research and detailed' long-term' research" (8.5%)

Right-wing terrorism (6.4%)

Lack of scrutiny of counter-terrorism policy outcomes" (6.4%)

Links between terrorism and organized crime" (4.3%)

Influence of technology/internet (4.3%)

Recidivism, disengagement and demobilization issues (4.3%).

One respondent referred to

"…the role ideology plays in radicalization. All too often, radicalization is approached through a psychological lens and turns the issue of political action into a health issue."

Meanwhile, another researcher responded that:

"The major counter argument on terrorism, its definition, and conceptualization is the excluding of states as terrorist actors. Unless the phenomenon is not analytical scrutinized through the lens of human security, its definitions, conceptualization, and given rules/laws will remain contested and contentious."

One researcher noted:

"Analyzing the root causes of terrorism is neglected. The last full-scale book about this subject was published in 2005, based on a 2003 workshop."

And another respondent warned:

"In the digital age, with its many advantages, information overload and the pursuit of many false narratives around terrorism can act as a conduit to unscrupulous theories, and, more worryingly, acts of terrorism."

Research Desiderata

The dream of every researcher is to do research without strings attached, whether these are financial, political or based on time limits. We, therefore, asked, **_If you were given sufficient time, money and opportunity: which aspect/topic of terrorism would you wish to explore in depth?_** (A.12, n=44). Again, there were many research desiderata with only a single mentioning. These included topics and themes such as:

Comparing Western and non-Western scholarship

Globalisation, modernisation and their connection with terrorism

Generational divides within extremist movements

Single-issue terrorism

Strategies of terrorism and violent extremism

Terrorism's "Fifth Wave"

Evolution of terrorism (incl. emerging threats)

Theories of violence.

More than one single answer from respondents referred to the following topics/aspects:

Deradicalization, disengagement and resilience (8.5%)

Research involving direct interaction with 'terrorists' and 'extremists' (8.5%)

Precursors of terrorism/root causes/stages of violence (8.5%)

Research related to ideologies and motivations of terrorists/groups (8.5%)

Investigations into counter-terrorist measures (6.4%)

Research related to research tools and literature databases (6.4%)

Role of online propaganda in radicalization (4.3%).

Conclusion

What surprised us most – next to the low response rate (and partly connected to it) – was the low level of consensus emerging from the answers we received from researchers.

Obviously, given the modest response rate, our questions did not generate much enthusiasm. Maybe we asked the wrong questions. To prepare for this eventuality, we had also asked: **"If you had drafted this questionnaire to assess the current state of research in the field of Terrorism Studies: which question would you have included (and what would be your answer to that question?)"** (A.13, n=40). Even here the response rate was limited: not everyone who filled in the questionnaire offered their own question, and less than ten percent of those who did came up with similar suggestions. These were,

> Responses related to research methodologies (8.5%)
>
> Responses related to terrorism prevention (6.4%)
>
> Responses related to research impact (6.4%)
>
> Responses related to research engagement (4.3%)
>
> Responses related to primary exposure with 'terrorists'/terrorist groups' (4.3%).

The following topics or themes were only mentioned by a single researcher each:

> Response related to emerging threats
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> Response related to changes since 9/11
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> Response related to research funding
>
> Response related to research gaps
>
> Response related to freedom of information requests
>
> Response related to key challenges
>
> Response related to improvements in the academic field.

In addition to the questions and answers discussed above, we added the suggestion **"If there is anything additional you would like to share about the current situation in the field of Terrorism Studies, please do so below"**.

21 respondents provided further comment. Here are two of the more notable ones:

> "The Terrorism Research community should adhere to Open-Science standards (e.g., publishing research open-access, making research data accessible for other researchers, wherever possible, pre-register studies to enable replication)".

> "Terrorism Studies as an academic subject has been enduring for over half a century. Its inherent interest to academics, Government, and some security services, provides a detached analysis of the classic human condition – why do human beings want to commit acts of terror against other human beings?"

One researcher suggested that "This kind of survey should be conducted annually." We agree. However, given the modest response rate to our questionnaire [10], we were puzzled by another response:

> "It is an immensely collaborative field with helpful and pleasant researchers who study a difficult and fraught subject with a humor that makes it work."

The August 2021 issue of *Perspectives on Terrorism* will contain the responses to the second part of our questionnaire which deals with the current state of research in the field of counter-terrorism.

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Notes

[1] Cf. Marc Sageman, 'The Stagnation in Terrorism Research', *Terrorism and Political Violence,* Vol. 26 (2014)

[2] Alex P. Schmid, 'Comments on Marc Sageman's Polemic 'The Stagnation of Terrorism Research', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 26 (2014), pp. 587-595. One of the respondents to our questionnaire remarked: "The field has made great advances in recent years, and Marc Sageman's critique of a few years ago was completely unjustified."

[3]Each response included one or more 'definitional elements'. These were identified and added. The percentage tally refers to the frequency of responses relative to the overall number of respondents for the question.

[4] Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p. 43.

[5]Alex P. Schmid. Political Terrorism. *A Research Guide to Concepts, Theories, Data Bases and Literature* (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publ., 1984), p. 111.

[6] Alex P. Schmid and Albert J. Jongman. *Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories, and Literature* (Amsterdam: Transaction Books, 1988), p. 28.

[7]Alex P. Schmid (Ed.). *Handbook of Terrorism Research* (London, Routledge, 2011), pp. 86-87. Also reproduced at URL: http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/schmid-terrorism-definition/html

[8] Boaz Ganor. *Defining Terrorism: Is one Man's Terrorist another Man's Freedom Fighter*? ICT Papers, 1998; cit. Alex P. Schmid, "Terrorism - The Definitional Problem," *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law*, 36:2 (2004), p. 375. https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/214078705.pdf.

[9] National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), University of Maryland. (2019). The Global Terrorism Database (GTD). URL: https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd.

[10] The questionnaire was sent out twice which, however, only slightly increased the response rate, despite the fact that a reward for participation was offered, a free PDF. copy of Alex P. Schmid (Ed.) *Handbook of Terrorism Prevention and Preparedness* (The Hague: ICCT Press, 2021. 1,250+ pp.).