

Populism: normative justifications and limitations

WZB-conference Berlin Panel
discussion

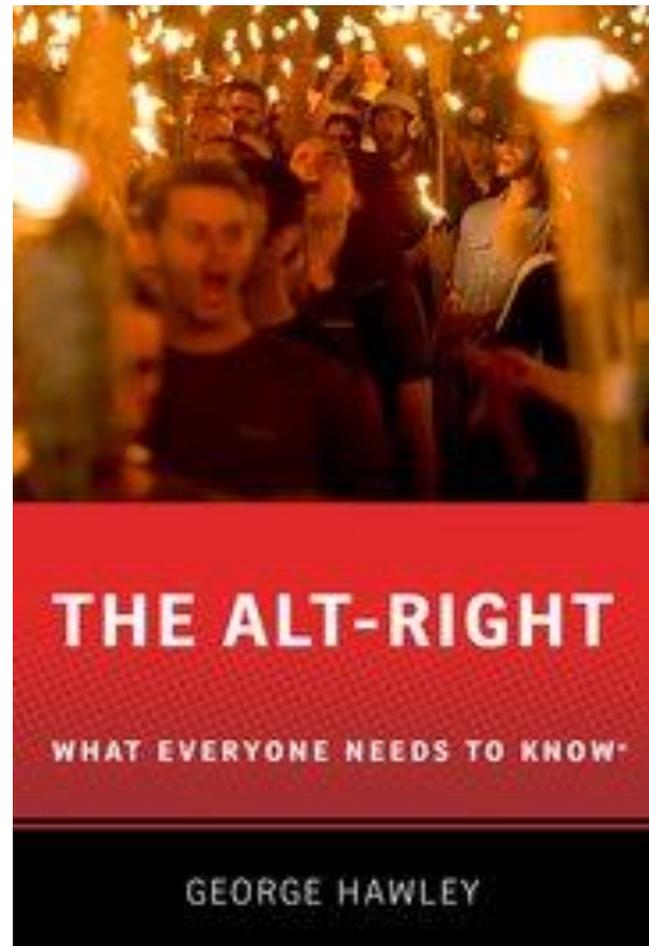
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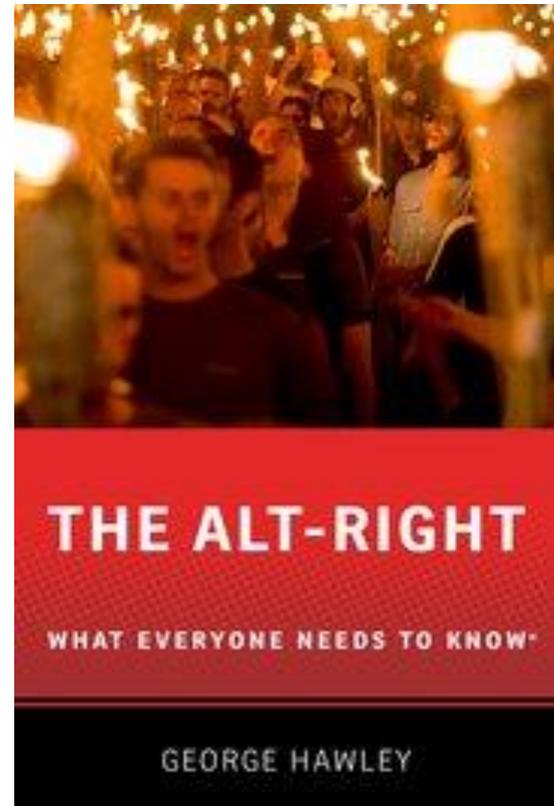
What is populism?

“An ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous groups and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, which argues that politics should be an expression of the general will of the people”. Cas Mudde



Populism (continued)

- “It is fundamentally a Manichean view of the political world, in which the virtuous ‘people’ seek to overthrow scheming and avaricious ‘elites’.”
- Hawley, p. 86.



Question

Are these definitions of populism really “definitions” or refutations?

A more neutral definition

- “A political approach that strives to appeal to ordinary people who feel that their concerns are disregarded by established elite groups.”
- <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/populism>

What concerns?

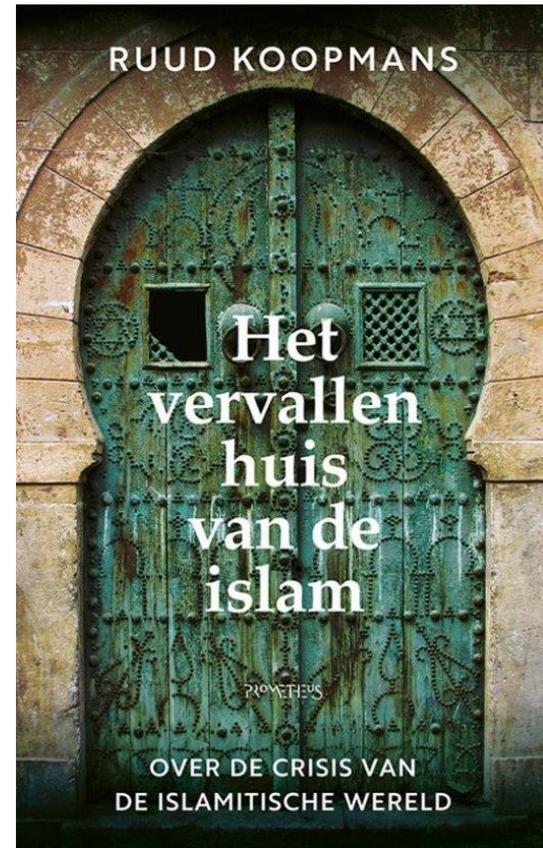
- What concerns do ordinary people have and which are not – or insufficiently – respected by established elite groups?

Answer:

- a. Concerns about religious fundamentalism
- b. Concerns about national sovereignty

Religious fundamentalism within Islam, compared to Christianity, Judaism etc.

- An empirical approach to the discussion on the nature of Islam
- What is a religion?
 - a. Scripture
 - b. What believers believe
 - c. What authorities prescribe
 - d. Imagination

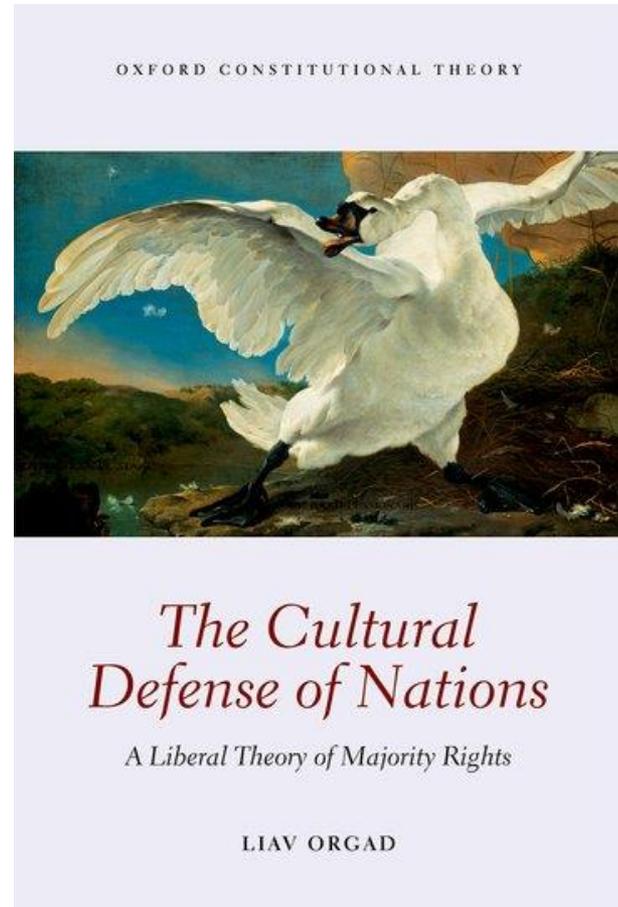


Koopmans' concept of fundamentalism

1. Believers have to go back to the roots of their belief
2. There is one and only interpretation of holy scripture
3. The rules of holy scripture are more important than the laws of my country
(Koopmans, p. 34)

The third element of Koopmans' concept of fundamentalism

- i.e. The rules of holy scripture are more important than the laws of my country
- Does a nation-state have the right to protect its own culture?



Theoterrorism: the assault on freedom of expression

- Theoterrorism: terrorism based on an idea of God's will
- Theoterrorism aims to destroy freedom of speech
- Analysis of incidents that proved to be precedents



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Theoterrorism v. Freedom of Speech

From Incident to Precedent

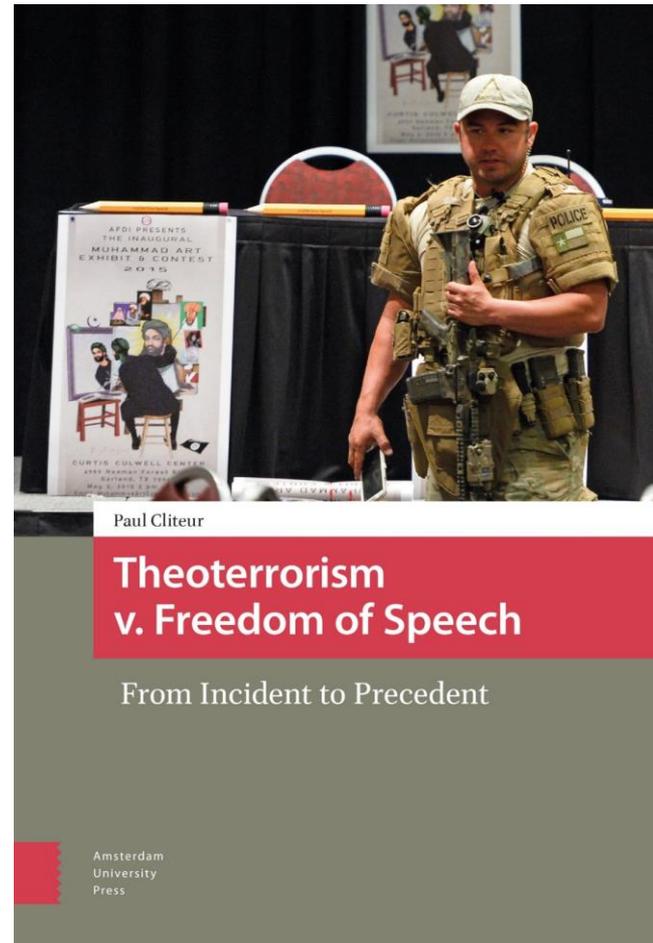
Amsterdam
University
Press

Terrorism in general

Terrorist aim

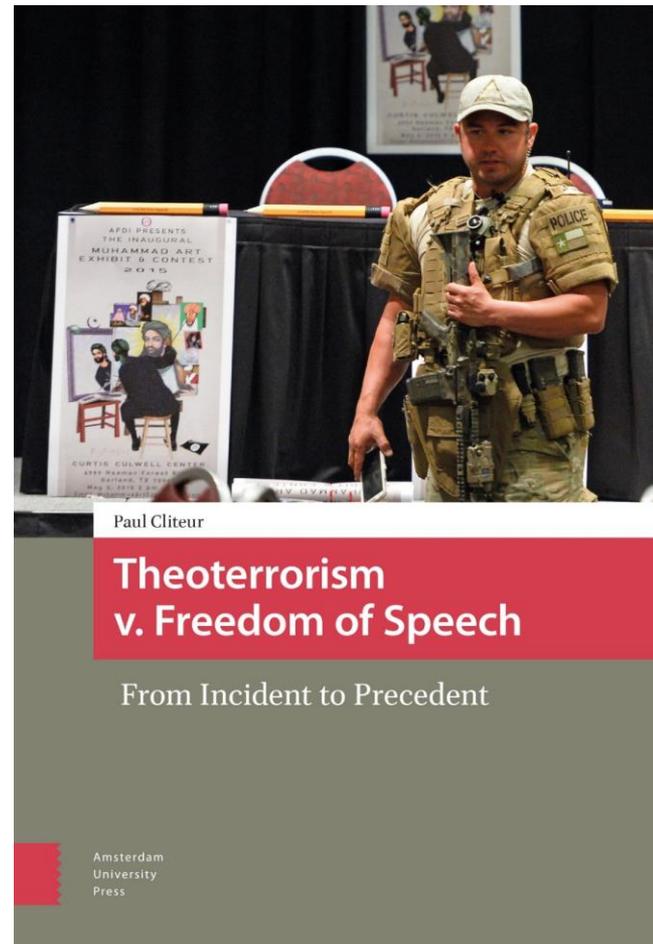
(83a Sr.)

- People, government
- Inflict fear
- Force them to do something
- Annihilate the structures of a country



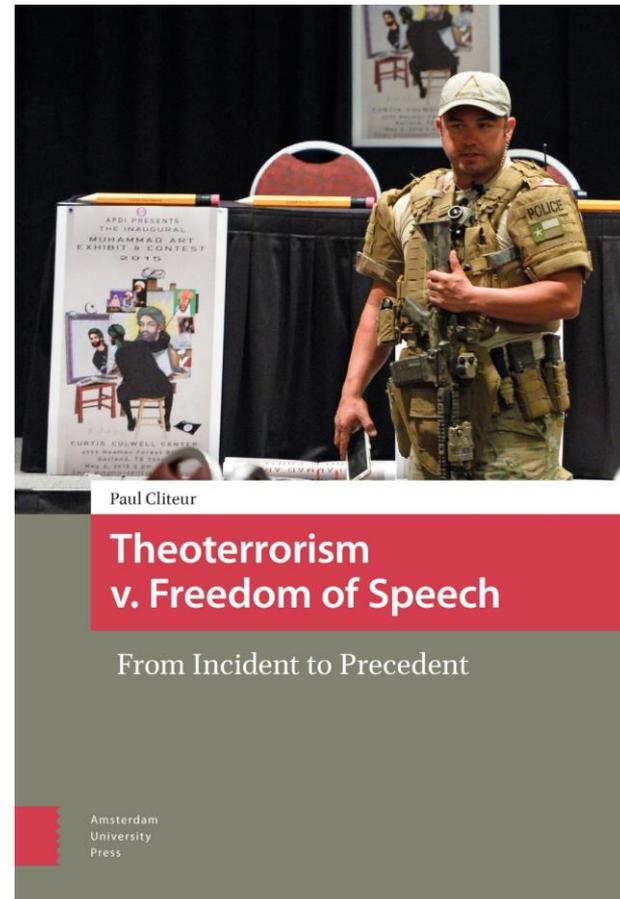
The nature of a “terrorist”

- A terrorist *wants* something (“oogmerk”)
- What?
- “to destroy the fundamental political, constitutional or social structures of a country or international organization” (83a Sr.)



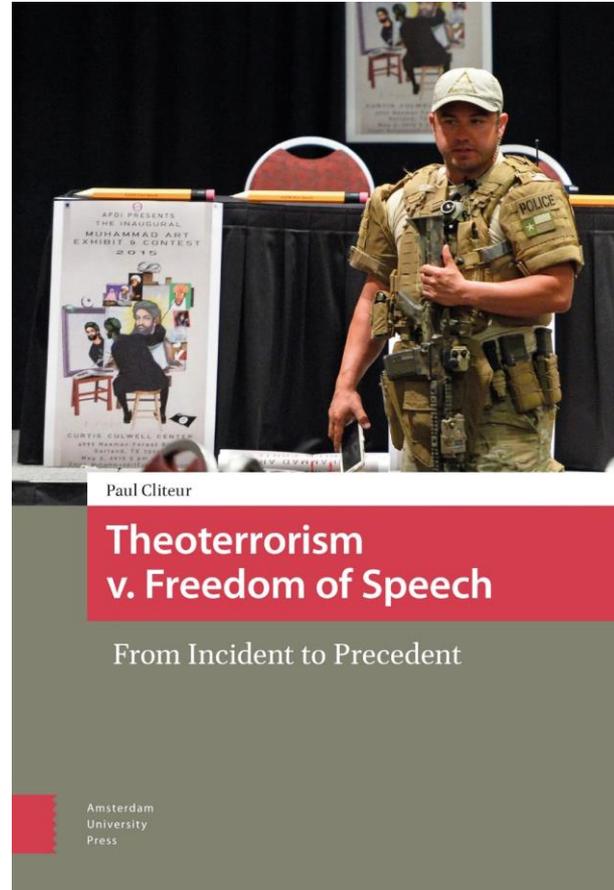
Why does he want to destroy that structure?

- Because God does not like liberalism (in his view)
- God is a fundamentalist himself



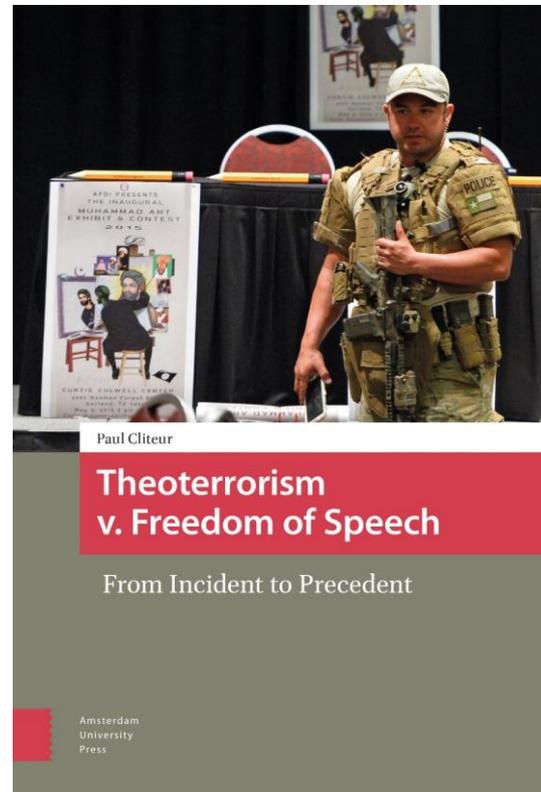
Problems with the dominant paradigm

- Terrorism is “violent extremism”
- Problem: it makes theoterrorism incomprehensible



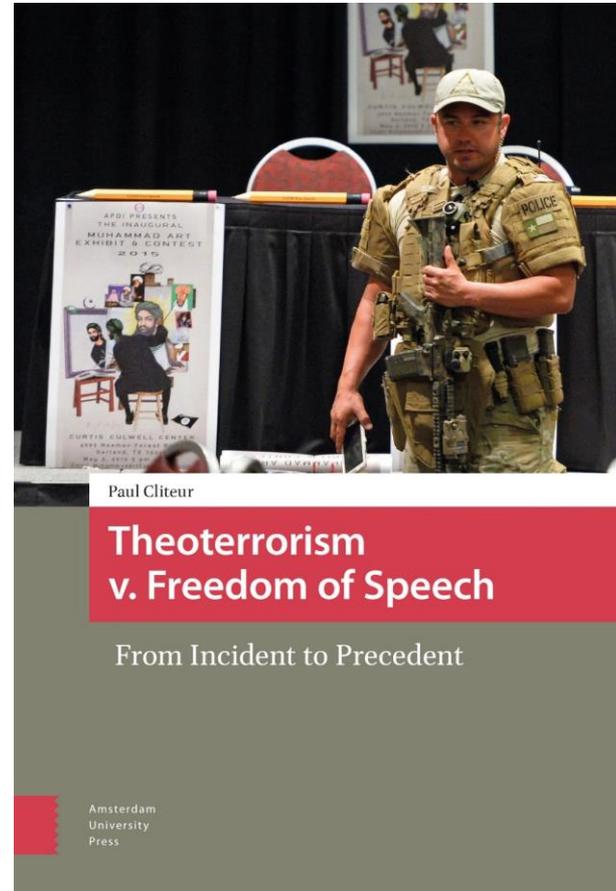
Why is it so important to understand the “theo” in “theoterrorism”?

- When you do not *understand* the terrorist, you have no chances to beat him (or her)
- Cultural counterterrorism
- The cultural elite fails dramatically

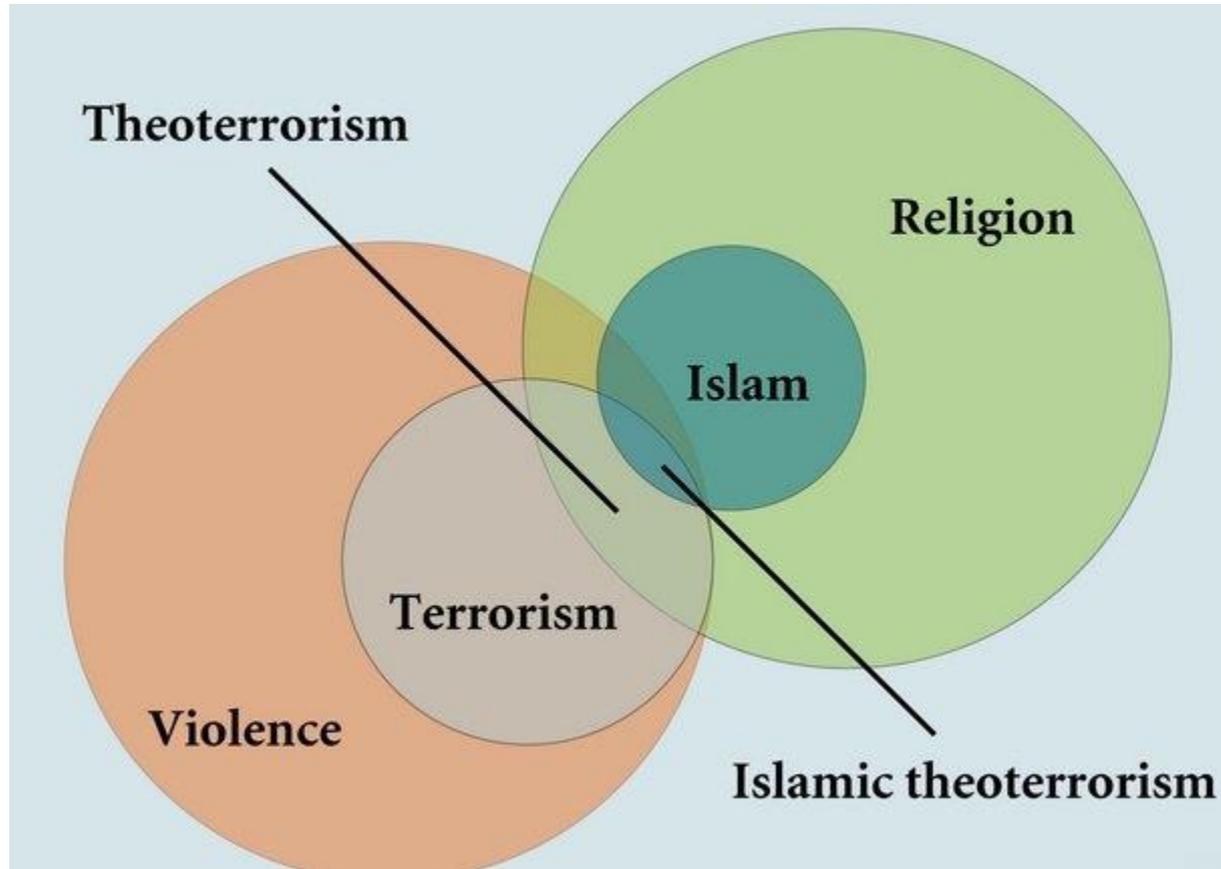


Is cultural counterterrorism a success?

- Do we make progress in the struggle against theoterrorism or not?



Why so little success?



The theoterrorist assault on free speech

[Rudi Carrell Affair](#) (1987) Chapter 1, 2

[Rushdie Affair](#) (1989) Chapter 5, 6

Danish Cartoons (2005) Chapter 4

French Cartoons (2015, januari)

American Cartoons (2015, mei)

Dutch Cartoons (2018)

Result: modern hostage taking (Tibi, Chapter 7 and Introduction)