

## A Difference Between Nationalist Terrorism and Religious Violence

Although the efforts of **nationalist terrorism** and **religious violence** may be directed towards the ~~acquisition~~ **[attainment]** of similar and even overlapping **political goals**, actors in either camp can be uniquely identified by the feasibility of their demands. Nationalist terrorists are decidedly more realistic, whereas ~~extreme proponents of~~ **religious practitioners violence** tend to pursue uncompromisingly idealistic dreams. Groups that fall between the two extremes, like Hezbollah, can exhibit traits of both types simultaneously or alternately depending on the circumstances, thus fulfilling the political goal criterion of terrorism. (Townshend, 104-105)

~~As purely nationalist groups, the IRA and ETA are exemplars of the traits that typify members of this category.~~ While the terror campaigns of both have been long-lived affairs, the leaders of these groups recognize human conditions and operate on a human timescale. ~~Although~~ The IRA might articulate the desire for a singular state for all Irish, **but** it has been content at least temporarily with concessions that **[add: gradually?]** bring them closer to that vision.

(Townshend, 80-82) The ETA represents the flip side, where the utter futility of a Basque home state has become apparent to leaders at different points in the organization's history, thus leading to dips in or even (the promise of) the cessation of terrorist activities. (Townshend, 86) What both cases suggest is that many nationalist terrorists are ~~generally amicable to concept of~~ **reconfiguration and amenable to** negotiation, even if it means alienating radical hardliners.

Moreover, nationalist demands can be moderate enough and presented in a way that governments may even find acceptable, as was the case with the FLN. (Townshend, 94) These are traits that nationalist terrorists do not share with their religiously motivated counterparts.

Groups like Aum Shinrikyo and Al-Qaeda are comparatively less pliable. Compromise is inconceivable, for falling short of their objectives, even with generous partial concessions,

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**Comment:** Title is perhaps not terribly exciting, but it effectively describes the contents.

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**Comment:** Note how thesis includes all three elements in a single analytical statement. But it could probably be even more clear: "...the two camps can be distinguished by the degree to which those goals are realistic and pertain to this world as opposed to the next." Or some such.

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**Comment:** Notice how the first paragraph lays out a basic argument. It *could* be sharpened still, but it's still quite good.

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**Comment:** This sentence is awkward. Better: "The IRA and ETA clearly exemplify the main attributes of nationalist terrorism." (A nice, clear statement that serves as a fine topic sentence.)

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**Comment:** Probably better word than "flip side" is needed. Maybe: "a rather different case"?

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**Comment:** If you have "many" you don't need "generally."

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**Comment:** Note how shortening here and getting the right word makes this much more clear.

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**Comment:** Ideally, a point like this needs more elaboration.

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**Comment:** Note this last sentence nicely summarizes the paragraph and also provides an excellent transition to the next paragraph.

represents a total failure. This is not to say that such groups are indefinitely perpetual, for they too can be vulnerable to dissipating enthusiasms. However, the quality nature of the political goal, starkly different from nationalist aspirations because of the apolitical agenda, necessitates this zero-sum game for several reasons. Unlike nationalist terrorists, radical religious groups strive for intangible goals and are impelled by an intangible authority. Some ends may seem corporeal (e.g. the expulsion of a heretical population), but even then, the ultimate purpose is something ethereal like spiritual purity. (Townshend, 98) Thus, the aspirations of the religiously violent are often interpreted as fantastically expansive by secular societies that are simply incapable of initiating a dialogue on these terms, as they cannot comprehend the vocabulary. (Townshend, 100-101) In some cases, the religiously violent will not even entertain the notion of compromise because the outright goal is death. (Townshend 100)

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**Comment:** "indefinitely perpetual"?!  
AWK.

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**Comment:** Here, of course, is a problem: Their political goal is characterized by an apolitical agenda. That seems a basic contradiction. This needs to be fixed.

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**Comment:** "Transcendental" might be a good word here.

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**Comment:** Essay ends a bit abruptly. But it's also on the verge of being too long. This needs to be resolved.

**Assessment:** Admittedly, this essay is on the verge of being too long, and at points the word choice could be better. It could easily be slimmed somewhat in such a way to make it actually sharper and more clear. I could probably cut this essay by one-quarter without losing *anything* in terms of real content. A few sentences also need to be revised for greater clarity, and close inspection reveals several places where commas are required (I have inserted them). Finally, the title, while appropriate and descriptive, is not terribly exciting. Thus there is room here for improvement.

At the same time, the essay has several major strengths. Note how it offers an argument, including a relatively clear thesis statement that links the three concepts of the triad in a single sentence. The first, short paragraph nicely lays out the main thrust of the essay. The essay also deploys evidence, making reference to specific groups and their goals. This has to be done very economically in such a short essay, and the author has handled this pretty well. Notice how the topic sentences (even if they need a tad bit of revision) structure the essay nicely. The transition from the second to third paragraph is especially good, as it makes clear to the reader where we are going. In general, one may agree or disagree with the author's propositions, but he has made reasonably clear what his argument is and the basis on which he is making it.

This essay earned a 93.