

alliance: an official partnership between two or more parties based on cooperation in pursuit of a common goal, generally involving security or defense.

amnesty: a type of pardon offered by a government that forgives a person or group of people suspected or found guilty of a crime. The word “amnesty” shares a root with “amnesia,” suggesting that the person’s actions will be legally forgotten.

anarchism: a political ideology that rejects hierarchy, coercion, private property, and the state and advocates for society to organize itself through voluntary associations.

asymmetric warfare: a violent conflict in which the military capabilities of opposing sides differ dramatically in size, power, and sophistication. Conflict between a state and a terrorist or insurgent group is often considered an example of asymmetric warfare.

caliphate: an Islamic state governed by a caliph, or successor to the Prophet Mohammed, who maintains absolute political and religious power. Some Islamist extremist groups aim to establish an Islamic caliphate and unify Muslims in an undivided religious and ideological empire.

communism: a political and economic system in which private property is eliminated in favor of common, public ownership of the means of production (such as factories), natural resources, and more, leading to the creation of a stateless, classless society.

counterterrorism: the set of policies and actions—including intelligence collection and analysis, military action, and homeland security measures—designed to combat terrorism.

cyberattack: an intentional and malicious encroachment by an outside actor on computer networks, websites, or other cyber infrastructure. A cyberattack often aims to collect military and political intelligence, steal intellectual

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property, disrupt the operations of websites or other systems or equipment, or deface or otherwise alter websites. A cyberattack can have military, political, or economic goals and can be carried out by entities ranging from governments to corporations to hackers.

Detainee Treatment Act: passed by the U.S. Congress in 2005, an act prohibiting “cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment” of any detainee of the U.S. government, including those at Guantanamo Bay or in CIA facilities. In the years following the 9/11 attacks, the treatment of prisoners in U.S. custody, including “enhanced interrogation techniques” sometimes characterized as torture, sparked intense controversy over their legality, morality, and effectiveness in eliciting useful information.

dissident: an individual who opposes a well-established power structure or system, such as a ruling political party.

drone: an unmanned, remotely piloted vehicle generally used for reconnaissance and combat. Also known as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), drones have become a major instrument in the U.S. campaign against terrorist groups, as they can both monitor terrorists and launch missiles to kill them. Civilian deaths resulting from drone strikes have often drawn criticism.

foreign terrorist organization (FTO): a group, based outside the United States, deemed by the U.S. government to be engaged in terrorism. This official designation facilitates U.S. action, such as asset freezes, aimed at weakening and stopping the group.

Geneva conventions: a set of four treaties and three protocols that establish standards of humanitarian treatment in international law for people involved in or affected by war, including injured soldiers, prisoners of war, and civilians. The treaties were signed in 1949, in the aftermath of World War II, and the protocols in 1977 and 2005. The United States has ratified all four treaties and one of three protocols.

Guantanamo Bay: a U.S. naval base in Cuba that became home to a detention

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facility for people suspected of terrorism after September 11, 2001. Human rights groups, other countries, and UN bodies have expressed concern over reports of abuse within the facility, which continues to hold prisoners.

President Barack Obama pledged in 2009 to close the controversial facility, but it remains open. Congress has passed legislation that prohibits the transfer of Guantanamo detainees to the United States and has put in place tight conditions on their overseas transfer.

improvised explosive device (IED): a homemade bomb or lethal device often created from nonmilitary parts and commonly used by nonstate actors such as terrorists and insurgents.

insurgency: a rebellion, the primary goal of which is to overthrow or delegitimize a government. Insurgents are irregular forces that have varying levels of organizational sophistication and use political violence and guerrilla action to achieve their goals.

intelligence: information collected and analyzed by specialists for use by decision-makers. This includes data, photographs, and communications, among other materials, and is collected, often secretly, by individuals and technological methods.

jihad: a concept from the Quran, the holy book of Islam, that refers in part to a war fought against enemies of that religion. Today it is commonly used to denote an Islamic holy war meant to expand the influence of extremist Muslim beliefs.

nonstate actors: individuals or groups that do not belong to or act on behalf of a state. This may refer to nongovernmental organizations such as Amnesty International, media outlets such as the New York Times, or terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO): a military alliance among twenty-eight countries on both sides of the Atlantic, from the United States and Canada to Turkey. Established in 1949 by the United States, Canada, and ten western European countries, NATO—sometimes known as the

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Atlantic Alliance—has grown over the years to include many former states of the Soviet Union. Article 5 of the treaty that created NATO establishes its core principle of collective defense,” which commits member countries to defend each other if attacked.

Operation Enduring Freedom: the name given to the military operation in Afghanistan launched by the United States, in conjunction with British and allied forces, in October 2001. The invasion targeted al-Qaeda for carrying out the 9/11 attacks and the Taliban for providing the group safe haven in Afghanistan.

Osama bin Laden: the Saudi-born cofounder and longtime leader of al-Qaeda, killed in Pakistan in 2011 during a raid by U.S. Navy Sea, Air, and Land (SEAL) team. Bin Laden was the driving force behind 9/11, among other attacks.

prisoners of war: members of organized fighting forces, usually states’ military forces, who are captured and held by the opposing side pursuant to special rules defined in the third Geneva convention.

radicalization: the process by which individuals come to adopt extreme religious, political, or social beliefs.

sanction: a tool of statecraft, frequently involving economic measures such as asset freezes and trade restrictions, used to exact a certain behavior or outcome from another party or parties.

shah: a title given to the monarch of Iran. Persian for “king,” the title was adopted by the Pahlavi dynasty monarchs in the twentieth century. The last shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, was overthrown in the 1979 Iranian Revolution.

sharia: legal principles rooted in the Islamic faith and derived from the Quran and the life of the Prophet Mohammed. Sharia constitutes a comprehensive code of behavior for everyday life, regulating penal codes, politics, marriage,

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contracts, trade, personal hygiene, diet, and etiquette.

skyjacking: the hijacking of an aircraft. The tactic was employed most notably in the 9/11 attacks. It was also used frequently by terrorists between the 1960s and the 1980s.

sovereignty: supreme or absolute authority over a territory.

state-sponsored terrorism: terrorism aided by a government that provides resources including intelligence, weapons, money, or territory to a terrorist organization. The United States maintains an official list of governments it designates as state sponsors of terrorism.

stress positions: uncomfortable body positions intended to cause psychological and physical stress, often involving unusual amounts of pressure on muscle groups and joints, such as arms tied above the head. They can be used as an interrogation tactic to coerce individuals to divulge information.

surveillance: a type of intelligence collection that involves the systematic, and often concealed, observation of people, places, and things by visual, aural, electronic, photographic, or other methods. It is a technique used by civilian and military intelligence entities. Examples include drones with video capability, wire taps on communications lines, and malicious spyware.

targeted killing: the use of lethal force against a specific individual outside a designated area of war. Since September 11, 2001, the U.S. government has used targeted killings, usually carried out by drones, as a central component of its counterterrorism operations.

traditional warfare: armed conflict between the military forces of sovereign states. This differs from terrorism and insurgency, in which combatants may not belong to organized and uniformed forces and may more liberally target civilians and infrastructure.

tribunal: a special court or forum assigned to rule on a particular legal issue.

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Tribunals: Tribunals are often established by national governments or international organizations to try accused terrorists and war criminals.

United Nations: an international organization, composed of 193 independent member states, that promotes international peace and stability, human rights, and economic development. Established in 1945, the United Nations remains the only organization with practically universal membership among the world's countries.

USA Freedom Act: a major counterterrorism legislation passed by Congress in June 2015. It continued in modified form some of the government tactics originally authorized by the 2001 Patriot Act. An important modification was the requirement for the National Security Agency and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to obtain phone records for counterterrorism investigations on a case by case basis, rather than in bulk.

USA Patriot Act: a sweeping, landmark counterterrorism law passed by Congress in October 2001. The Patriot Act expanded the informationgathering powers of law enforcement agencies in their efforts to combat terrorism. Its passage, and the government's use and interpretation of the law's provisions, sparked intense debate over whether counterterrorism efforts infringed on civil liberties and privacy rights. Some provisions have expired, but most remain in effect.

war on terrorism: the international military campaign the United States launched after September 11, 2001, against al-Qaeda, its affiliates, and the countries that gave the group safe haven. One of the campaign's legal foundations is the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF). In addition to conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, the war on terrorism has included the use of armed force in Libya, Pakistan, the Philippines, Somalia, and Yemen.

waterboarding: a controversial interrogation technique whereby a person is held down and water is poured over his or her mouth and nose, which are covered by a rag. The technique has been called simulated drowning and is

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the subject of intense public debate. Critics of waterboarding call it torture.