

THE PROBLEM OF A TERRORIST BY ANY OTHER NAME

R. Brian Parrish

This article explores the subjective and inconsistent use of the terms “terrorist” and “terrorism.” First, it briefly looks at some of the various definitions used and proposed, pointing to other works that provide a more detailed treatment. Second, it considers the potential stakes in this definitional quest and how the word “terrorism” is actually used in society. Third, it proposes using a construction of the “Social Contract” as a useful lens to view the problem. Fourth, it examines some of the issues with using the label of “terrorism.” Finally, it proposes that the definitional problem should not be left to those who stand to gain the most from the use of the definition that they fashion.