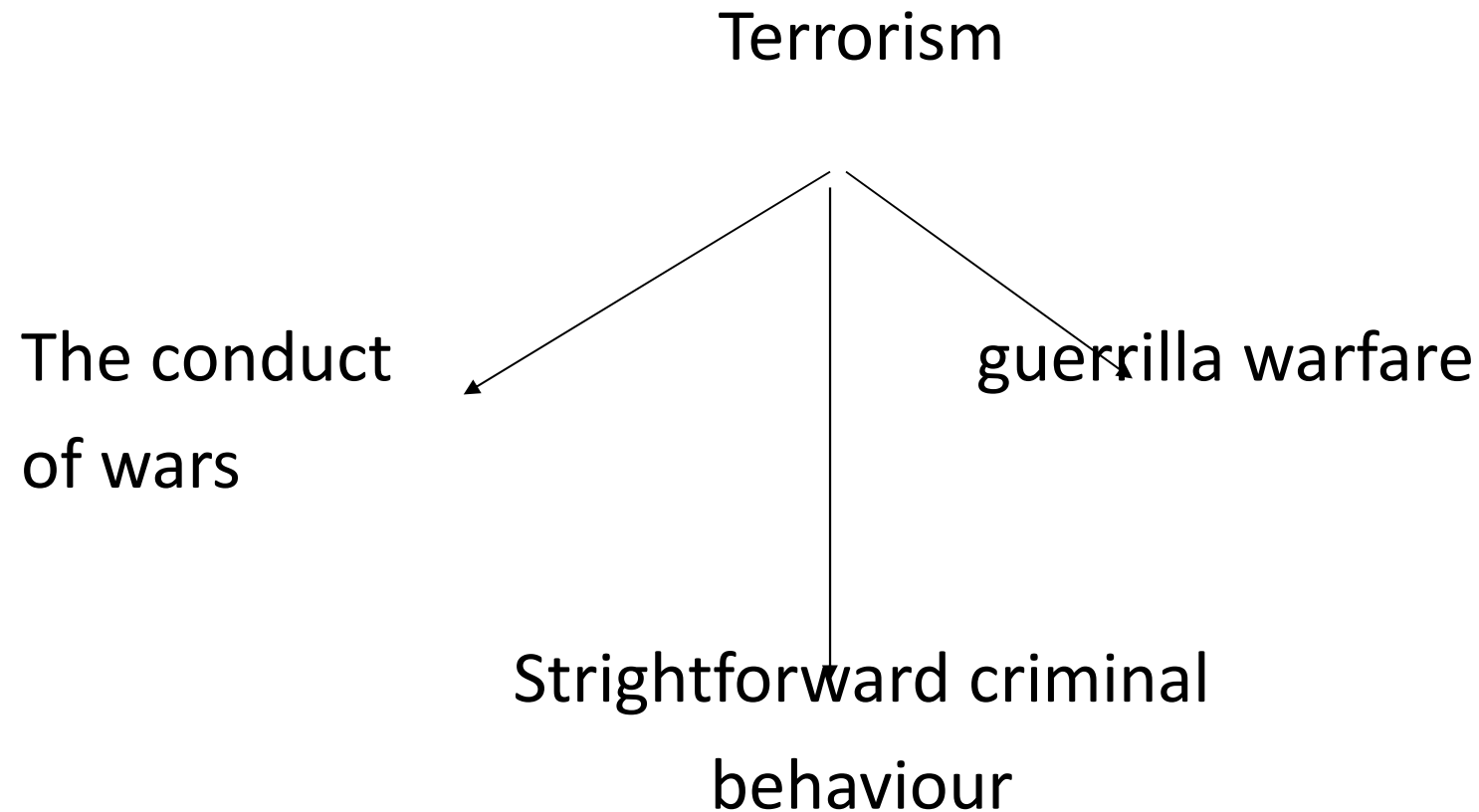# Forms of "terrorist activity" in the past

- The Assassins emerged nearly 1000 years ago to defend and propagate a particular version of Islam. Their tactics included the use of stealth, surprise and suicide killings aimed at intimidating opponents.
- The Thuggee cult which operated in India for some 600 years before being eliminated by the British in the 19th century. The Thuggee were sustained by religion as worshippers of the Indu goddess Kali, the destroyer

⊕ The use of inquisition by the Catholic Church to suppress heresy and discourage challenges to the authority of the Church

Comparable tactics were used by the State, or those who controlled the power of the State, in order to suppress or intimidate opposition, whether legitimate or illegitimate

- ⊕ The operation of the activities of the Committee of Public Safety during a few early years of the French Revolution. This was unusual in being widely described as "Terror" even at the time
- ⊕ The Twentieth Century experienced the Stalinist Regime in the Soviet Union and the Nazi Regime in Germany
- ⊕ Torture, disappearances, summary arrests and executions were widely used to terrorise groups and individuals into obedience to the dominant ideology (the so called "dirty war" waged by the Argentine military junta against left-winged dissidents in the late Seventies is an example)

Defining terrorism is complicated

Terrorism

The conduct
of wars

guerrilla warfare

Strightforward criminal
behaviour

Yasser Arafat in an address to the United Nations General Assembly (1974)

………the difference between the revolutionary and the terrorist lies in the reason for which each fights. For whoever stands by a just cause and fights for the freedom and liberation of his land from the invaders, the settlers and the colonists, cannot possibly be called terrorist…..

By this measure terrorists and terrorism can never be objectively defined as there will always be the subjective question of the "just cause"

Official definitions

The use of threat, for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause of action which involves serious violence against any person or property

The Office of the Constitution of the European Union

…… terrorism ……. is the use, or threatened use, by a cohesive group of persons, of violence to effect political aims

Generally accepted elements

- It is political in that it intends to alter the political order or to influence political decisions or actions (this does not mean that the intention must be to replace the present order with something specific: it may just be to overthrow the status quo).

- It is about power: sometimes the acquisition of power, but almost always the use of power or violence, or its threatened use, to attain political change

- Terrorism is planned and calculated to achieve the ends set out