

Alienation or Terrorism Paradoxical Words and Two-Faced currency

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INTRODUCTION

“Terrorism” is a word which is becoming increasingly common in the world’s media to represent the escalating extreme, reactionary violence which is tainting today’s globalized world. Terrorism, ‘an organized system of intimidation’^[1], has been applied throughout human history, often by an inferior force against a powerful enemy. It has also been used as a control measure by authoritarian governments against their own people, as in the French Revolution, where the ‘Reign of Terror’ led to the modern usage of the term. Terrorism however, because of its ambiguity, has historically been a complex and difficult concept to define. Terrorism, like beauty, is strictly in the eye of the beholder and one culture’s terrorist can often be seen as another’s partisan ‘freedom fighter’.

Terrorism has been used by partisan groups against occupation forces, newly emerging nationalist groups battling the remnants of despotic colonial powers or autonomous

movements rejecting borders, arbitrarily drawn by the victors of past wars. Since the late 20th century however, it has moved outside national boundaries to take on more of an international perspective, (e.g. the Irish Republican Army moved its bombing campaign to the British mainland, the escalation of the Arab/Israeli conflict led to the PLO attacks on Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics). With new international terrorist threats since the September 11, 2001 attacks on the US, the world has been forced to reevaluate global terror and has found a necessity for instituting new international responses. It has become a recognized fact that modern day terrorists are capable of paralyzing the economy of a state, causing utter chaos in order to effect a radical transformation of the current social economic and political reality of the world.

The publicity and propaganda generated by terrorist incidents or 'outrages', particularly when directed against 'western' cultures, often stands in the way of realistic consideration of the reasons for the degree of hatred that leads to such an extreme course of action.

In this paper, I will attempt to outline some of the common issues surrounding the circumstances in which terrorism is used as a political tool, to examine the impassioned sentiments and situations which prompt people to resort to such drastic measures and will reflect upon the effects of the alienation on individuals and societies. For the purpose of illustration, I will use the case of the Kurds, with which I am personally familiar, to

demonstrate how alienation can give rise to situations where the plight of minorities may impel them to resort to terrorist activities to further their legitimate claims to autonomy from a despotic regime.

Definitions of Terrorism

"Terrorist acts are committed by individuals and groups for reasons that often

involve a complex mix of cultural, religious, nationalist, economic and

psychological motives,"^[21]

We have to be very general with any definition of terrorism; otherwise we will be forced to go deeper inside the meaning of the metaphor and the paradoxical aura which surrounds it. It will become very hard to define terrorism, if we do not have a very good system of measurement or a model of law to rely on in employing such a widely used 'two-faceted' word. Therefore I will rely on the definition of terrorism as it is commonly recognized in constitutional law in most civilized countries of the world and in International Law as interpreted by the International Law Commission of the United Nations.

(A terrorist act) "Is a political act, ordinarily committed by an organized group, which involves the intentional killing or other severe harming of non-combatants, or the threat of the same"^[3].

Terrorism can take many forms. Experts have identified at least six different sorts of terrorism, nationalist, religious, state-sponsored, left wing, right wing, and anarchist. It can be state, factional, international or domestic in its focus. It has no Identity and it could come from anywhere, at any time. It is important to bear in mind however, that there are two sides

to any confrontational situation, each convinced that they have legitimate grievances, and that what may be regarded as terrorism by some, may be seen in a completely different light by another.

'If "terrorist" is redefined (as American media tend to show) as "someone who attacks my country", I would have to say that maybe Osama Bin Laden is a terrorist for you Americans, but not for me as a European; and not, in general, for thousands of millions of people all over the world, who have not been "directly" harmed by Al-Qaeda.'^[4]

Terrorism is an act of violence which can be separated from the ideology of those who employ

it. It constitutes an act of violence or intimidation perpetrated against the civilian population and the infrastructure of a state, in order to manipulate the behavior of a

certain group, to exact punishment on a perceived class enemy or to extract revenge for real or imagined past transgressions. For the perpetrators of these fearful actions, the objective is to make the 'target group' 'afraid of today, afraid of tomorrow, and afraid of each other'^[5]. Terrorists, who can comprise states as well as 'special interest' political, racist, Para-military or fundamentalist religious groups, use assassination, mass murder, hijacking, bombing, kidnapping and intimidation to achieve those objectives.

'Either as systematic mass suggestion (propaganda) or as the one-on-one manipulation of individuals (indoctrination), intimidation shuts out critical thought as well as emotional maturity'.^[6]

Modern terrorism differs from that of the past, because in many cases its victims are innocent civilians, picked at random. Or who merely happen find themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time. Thanks to the greed of international arms dealers, (many based in the US), international terrorists are able to access the most up to date technology. They have the means to construct weapons that are easy to produce, using information, which is readily available on the Internet. For a determined terrorist groups, biological agents such as anthrax, botulism and even the Ebola virus are relatively easy to obtain, for use in bio-weapons which can be distributed through the postal system, (as happened with the Anthrax scare in the US post-Sept. 11), or to contaminate water supplies.

"The worlds of force and law collide in ways that are comparable to terror

and dialogue. There is, however, one significant difference. Whereas terrorist

Acts are always unlawful; there are some circumstances where force is justified.

Force may be used to disarm or defeat terrorists".^[7]

Terrorism Viewed Historically

Terrorism has been widely practiced throughout history and in various localities throughout the world. The effectiveness of psychological warfare was recognized

by the ancient Greek historian Xenophon (c. 431–c. 350 BC), while Roman emperors such as Tiberius and Caligula used exile, confiscation of property, and execution to exert their authority.^[8]

The Spanish Inquisition was notorious throughout the world for its arbitrary use of torture, and burning at the stake to punish religious heresy. Terrorism and the ‘terrorist’ however, was not introduced into common use until the period of the French Revolution in the 1790s when Edmond Burke used the term to criticize those revolutionaries who under the ‘Reign of Terror’ (1793–94) systematically employed extreme violence as a means of stamping out aristocratic decadence. In the aftermath of the American Civil War (1861–65), still rebellious Southerners formed the Ku Klux Klan, ostensibly a vigilante organization, to terrorize freed slaves and ‘carpetbagger’ opportunists from the North. In the latter half of the 19th century, anarchists, who believed in revolutionary political and social change, adopted terrorism as a weapon. From 1865 to 1905 anarchists’ guns or bombs killed a number of kings, presidents, prime ministers, and other government officials throughout Europe and the US. State-sponsored nationalist terrorism led to the assassination of the Austrian Crown Prince, Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo in 1914, precipitating World War I.^[9]

Contemporary perpetrators of terrorism:

Terrorism is an element of modern society that will never be eliminated because human nature appears to thrive on conflict. The threat of terrorism has risen progressively in the world, particularly over the last decade as the current critical social, economic and political reality of the world means that people are increasingly influenced by mounting religious fundamentalism, disenchanted by frustrated nationalistic objectives or displaced socially, if not geographically, by economic and territorial expansionism. To these people, any thing that belongs to a system that they do not believe in, don’t have an affiliation with, or feel alienated from can be regarded as a legitimate target. Any group or individual who is

disappointed with or alienated from a particular system, and have no other means of expression can find legitimate reasons in religious texts or in expressions of nationalism, to justify the act of the

terrorist. Terrorists target government officials, representatives of the state, police officers, or members of rival communities' industrialists, bankers—in short, anyone whom they blame for what they believe to be injustices of a system.

Acts of terrorism occur during times of war and times of peace. In the 'Information Age', public impact has been greatly amplified by the modern communications media which brings the events, often as 'live' coverage, directly into millions of homes and exposes viewers to the terrorists' demands, grievances, or political goals. Publicity and propaganda generated by terrorist 'outrages' are often the sole objective of terrorist groups who are prepared to kill on a massive scale, merely to make a political statement. Isolated from the

political mainstream and lacking a base of popular support, many extremist terrorist groups substitute kidnappings, assassinations, hijackings, 'skyjackings' and bombings for legitimate political activities.

There should be differences in the definition between Political and Ideological or Religious terrorism, despite the similarity of the act of terrorizing civilians. If your next door neighbor invaded your house and forced you out, ignoring all of the laws, you could call it a terrorist act, and you would be within your rights to defend yourself and get your house back, however your reaction should not be called a terrorist act, because you are trying to get your house back. But if you intimidate your next door neighbor to believe in your religion, forcing him to think like you, and by the name of God kick him out of the house, then it would be pure religious terrorism.

State-sponsored and state-supported terrorists.

State sponsored terrorism can also take different forms, both domestic and international. Dictatorial regimes which impose severe restrictions on their own people are often the same ones who sanction unprovoked attacks on other countries. Terrorism perpetrated by a government against its own people had its more famous adherents in the Geheim Statz Politzei, (Gestapo), of Nazi Germany, Stalin's Russian Secret Police, the infamous NKVD, Idi Amin's Death Squads in Uganda and Pol Pot's murderous regime in Cambodia, (Kampuchea). Today Iran, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Cuba, North Korea, and Sudan are the seven governments that the US Secretary of State has designated as state sponsors of both domestic

and international terrorism. Iran provides support to the Lebanese Hizballah, HAMAS, and the Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ), Iraq provides safe haven and support to Palestinian reactionist groups, as well as the Mujahedin-e-Khalq (MEK), an Iranian terrorist group that opposes the current Iranian regime. Syria provides safe haven and support to several more terrorist groups. Libya although attempting to mend its international reputation, still remains suspect. Cuba continued to provide safe haven to several terrorists and US fugitives while Sudan continued to serve as a safe haven for members of al-Qaida, Hizballah, al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya, Egyptian Islamic Jihad, the PIJ, and HAMAS.

While the US condemns these countries as supporters of international terrorism, it can not itself be absolved from accusations of terrorism. Its sanctions, embargoes and military operations, which it justifies as in defense of world peace, cause much suffering and deprivation among civilian populations of target nations. Its record of 'collateral damage' in Vietnam, due to saturation bombing, napalm and defoliation is hard to defend. The US can not avoid the fact that much of the arms, biological and chemical weapons technology used by terrorist organizations originates in their own country. It should also be noted that many terrorist organizations have been past allies, who have had strong support or training from the US at some stage. It is even rumored that the CIA's most wanted terrorist, Osama Bin Laden received security training from the CIA itself^[10]. Also, revolutionary governments who

employ terrorist tactics in their bid to gain power, can be exonerated once they are established in office this disregard of past terrorist activities however can backfire

“The United States is firmly committed to removing countries from the list once they have taken necessary steps to end their link to terrorism. In fact, the Department of State is engaged in ongoing discussions with North Korea and Sudan with the object of getting those governments completely out of the terrorism business and off the terrorism list”..^[11]

The US was prepared to ignore the Iraqi regime as it destroyed 4,000 villages in Kurdistan and killed more than 300,000 people by the 1980s, now after they have defeated the brutal dictator of Iraq, it's the time to call the Iraqi regime a terrorist regime, only because they don't need it any more.

‘the United States consider themselves an exceptional country, who are able to operate outside of international law’,^[12]

The US, as the world's self appointed ‘police force’ in the maintenance of global peace and security has been seen as trying to coerce other countries into accepting its ‘democratic’ political control over the international arena. It now appears that when the US, Great Britain, or any of the lesser ‘western’ powers deploy troops to recognized ‘trouble spots’, it can be regarded as a ‘police action’ or a ‘just war’, and anyone who stands against them are labeled as terrorists. Even with normal police forces it can be really difficult for an individual to accept the justness’ of a police law. So too in the international context. There should be some constitutional laws, that the police enforce in order guarantee equality for all, otherwise people will feel alienated from the system, then withdraw and try to destroy anything related to that system. The individual will not be happy to give his liberty and freedom to another person, and become a follower. Society can only function under agreed law that protects the individual's rights and imposes on him some responsibilities.

US President Bush's statement that "you are either with us or against us"^[13] bears a significant warning as the US has demonstrated that it is prepared to use trade embargoes, economic sanctions, threats and even military strikes to punish those who are reluctant to comply with its world view.

'Many governments, particularly in the developing world, are supporting the 'war on terror' not so much because of their high priority in stamping out terrorism but to save themselves from the wrath of the United States and its allies.'^[14]

This US arrogance, used in some cases to fight for the capitalist advantages of the US, flouts the human rights conventions of most countries and can lead to anti-American feelings worldwide.

"According to this "new" sense of the word "terrorist", Bin Laden would not be a terrorist for me at all, as long as I am not American and, then, he has not "attacked my country".

In the Arab world America is seen as the great enemy intent on the exploitation of Arab oil. Arabs believe that following the tragic events of September 11, 2001 American patriotic fervour and the public cry for revenge prompted an invasion, beginning in Afghanistan, but aimed at the whole of the Middle East. Ostensibly a 'war on terrorism', skilful propaganda was used to shift the focus of hostility from Osama bin Laden to Saddam Hussein's regime in oil rich Iraq. The lead up to the war on Iraq was viewed as a transparent farce, with the United States prepared to defy world opinion and the United Nations Security Council, and 'go it alone' if necessary. As a result of the propaganda leveled against the so called 'Axis of evil', Arabs and other Muslims throughout the world have become the subject of hostility in the west, while hatred of Americans in the Middle East intensifies.

'The double standards that have existed in the Middle East particularly by the US have been a thorn on the side of many Arabs and Muslims throughout the world. The selective approach to enforcing UN Security Resolutions on some member states and not on others has infuriated and deepened the hostility towards the US over the years. As has the support of puppet regimes that practice vile and horrific violations of human rights on their populace, remain corrupt and unaccountable and yet are unconditionally supported by past and present US administrations. These very policies have contributed to and assisted in breeding extremism in the region.'^[15]

It's enough for any organization or individual to be included in the US list of terrorists, to become real heroes in the sight of the Arab world. That hatred will eventually become an Alienation and it will spread all over the world against the US and its allies' interests and will draw a lot of attention and win the acclaim from every one who hates the US.

Today's terrorists have a similar interest in inflating their transnational impact by hinting at connections with Osama bin Laden and the international "anti-imperialist" struggle with America. We should not be too quick to oblige them.'^[16]

The question is not whether there will be another attack on the US, but when.

Nationalist terrorists.

It is in the case of Nationalist struggles that the ambiguity of the word 'terrorist' becomes problematic. Nationalist terrorism can be difficult to define, since many groups accused of the practice insist that they are not terrorists but freedom fighters. Nationalist groups, who seek to disassociate themselves from a society for a variety of reasons, which may be based on racial, religious, ethnic or political issues, fight for self determination in their own separate state or for "national liberation" of an alien oppressor. This sort of terrorism has been among the most successful at winning international sympathy and concessions ^[17]. No doubt the World War Two, German occupation forces regarded the Free French as terrorists; however, to the rest of the world, they were partisan heroes. Similarly the long struggle of the Irish, for complete independence from the UK, has won much

sympathy around the world despite the efforts of the British media to portray them as simply terrorist murderers. Nationalist terror groups have learned to temper and balance their degree of violence, manipulating the media so as not to alienate supporters in their community or abroad. The Irish Republican Army, (IRA), for example, have won recognition from the British Government which maintains an aggressive anti-terrorist regime, through its preparedness to negotiate ceasefire conditions.

Ideological terrorists.

'In the 1970's, terrorist groups with very different goals, from Breton nationalists to Andean Maoists, liked to claim affiliation to a nebulous international radical network. Association with global causes boosted their significance and their access to weapons.' [\[18\]](#)

Ideological terrorists comprise a wide variety of people who are disillusioned by various aspects of the morality of the society in which they live are prepared to take their support for certain causes to the extreme. These people feel so strongly about such issues as abortion, animal rights, racial 'purity', environmental protection and many more, that they develop a them-against-us mentality by which they: *'Divide people into "the just and the hopelessly corrupt," "the righteous and*

The unrighteous," or what Fredric Jameson (one of the foremost contemporary Marxist literary critics) calls "the familiar self, as opposed to the alien self." [\[19\]](#)

Single issues terrorists feel compelled to commit violent acts in their attempts to change one aspect of society. The 'Animal Liberation Front', British animal rights group, and the Right to Life Group, a radical anti abortion group who have been responsible for bomb attacks on abortion clinics in the United States, are examples of single-issue terrorists. That these are branded as terrorist acts however, can be disputed by large sections of a society who may subscribe to the same beliefs, even if they believe the action to be somewhat radical. This is particularly true on issues of race or ethnicity. Racially motivated violence is being gradually accepted as

inevitable by the general public and white supremacist; neo-fascist groups are making a comeback in many western countries.

Religious Fundamentalism

Religious difference has always preoccupied the human race in every country where people have settled, not only between the established religions, but between factions of the same faith, who interpret the doctrines in a different way. The sectarian violence conducted between the Catholic and Protestant factions of Christianity in Northern Ireland has set the scene for terrorists everywhere. However, examinations of the websites that deal with terrorism show that about one half of all terrorist groups in the world are Islamic in nature and inspire their followers to wage 'jihad', or holy war, against the West in general and the United States in particular as a leader of the globalization.

Jihad exists “to bring the whole world under Islamic law. It is not to convert by force, But to remove obstacles to conversion.”^[20]

Perhaps the most prevalent manifestation of religious fundamentalist terrorism in recent years however, is that perpetrated by the USA's most wanted man, Osama Bin Laden, who subscribes to the philosophy of Ibn Taymiyyah, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, and Sayyid Qutb, of the fanatical Wahhabi sect whose doctrine includes the belief that those killed 'in the path of God' are martyrs who will be granted the joys of Paradise. *'Among many Muslim fundamentalists.....Israel, the United States, and the West in general are perceived to be a single source of evil..... Safar al Hawaii (Dean of Islamic studies at Umm Al Qura University in Mecca) adds that the United States intends to destroy Islam. .^[21]* Bin Laden and his followers are allegedly responsible for the 1998 bombing of American embassies in Africa, the attack on the US Cole in Yemen, the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City in 1993 and the terrorist attacks of September 2001.

The Psychology of Terrorism

'Terrorism promoted in the name of Islam, Irish Catholicism, or other religious and a nonreligious political doctrine doesn't confine itself to suicidal explosions or the infliction of intolerable collateral homicides. At its nucleus terrorism is psychological as well as physical. It paralyzes minds and emotions as much as it explodes buildings, buses, or planes.' [\[22\]](#)

Human Society contains many informal rules necessary for peaceful coexistence. These sometimes require the sacrificing of self-advantage and the easing the life of others by some forgoing of egocentric matters, which is, consciously working for unity in order to benefit from it. Therefore, an individual will be happy to sacrifice his own personal interests and advantages for the sake of unity and receive protection, social justice and security and personal security. On the other hand, he has to insure that the others are doing the same and obey the same rules, so that he gains in return, the benefit of others sacrificing as he does. He would pay tax, serve in the army when needed, obey the law and become loyal to his community, by setting aside his own personal things. He accepts the fairness of the law to draw his fate. However, he can't stand against those powers, because they are the legitimate powers, they can punish him if he chooses neglect any of his duties He cannot however, punish the system that neglects him. If he tries to do so he will react with hatred and violence, working hard to destroy this unfair system. He will start to withdraw, not considering himself as one of them, and lose the feeling of belonging. [\[23\]](#)

'cult members and terrorists who are deprived of external communication and information, or not permitted inner reflection that we all need, are unable to test the realities of their environment. This leads to blind obedience and extremism.' [\[24\]](#)

There are times when an individual will fight against their own old beliefs because they connect them to a bitter past, to the memories and the economic reasons why they have withdrawn from an unfair system. This has the effect of weakening their relationship with any values related to that system and they withdraw unconsciously from the unsigned protocols that are related to that system.

Economic reasons then will become the only reasons, even if they are false, for the individual to continue in a relationship with that society. Furthermore he will try to release his pent-up hatred by doing any weird thing that might hurt that unfair system, which will give him some relief of feeling the revenge.

Sharing the national or the international resources and security of the food and fair trade- off is one of the systems duties. If we were to picture this equilibrium, (society/ individual), both have to do their duty to uphold their rights and responsibilities, if not, instability will occur and will cause a person to adopt this withdrawn aspect. Picturing that aspect in bigger terms, with world systems as the bigger society, and an individual, as a country, to me is the same. If any country takes on the responsibility of leading the world, and forces other countries to follow its values and laws, it will have to accept other responsibilities as well. To uphold the system that it promotes it must protect the individual (country) from poverty, and create opportunities to prosperity using the resources available. For example, sending bombs to Afghanistan for example, will cost more than building factories, and opening US business there. Providing new opportunities for people to enrich their communities, will stop individuals there making an alienated public opinion against the US and every one who deals with it.

Non-terrorist resistance

The Kurdish People have the right to ask why the Turks, Arabs or Iranians question their national pride. Kurdish People have lived for centuries on their land and they spoke a language which they called Kurdish, until the First World War fragmented Kurdistan and dispersed its people between the newly created states of Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran. As a minority group in their own lands the Kurds and their culture were swallowed up, unable to realize their social, economic, and political objectives. The Turkish government continues to manufacture all sorts of excuses in order to continue its plan of 'ethnic cleansing' in the Kurdish region, destroying over 3, 000 Kurdish villages and rendering over 2 million villagers homeless. In Iraq, Kurdish villages were subjected to government sponsored genocide, (a fact

which was used by USA President George Bush to justify the war on Iraq). Thousands of Kurds disappeared without a trace and many more were massacred and buried in mass graves. Iran considers its Kurdish population as a part of the Iranian people and refuses to acknowledge their separate identity. Their secret service has pursued Kurdish leaders from Southern Kurdistan- Iran and has assassinated several of them in Europe. ^[25] After all of that humiliation there is no single hijacking plan or suicide bombing or harming of civilians by Kurds.

Conclusion

The United Nations must engage its full potential to identify and eventually eradicate the roots of terrorism. The powerful nations of the world, particularly those whom the United States regards as their allies, must unite to prevent complete US hegemony in the international arena.

The US world view is not necessarily the right way for everyone. The ability of people to peacefully coexist depends on whatever values and beliefs they hold to prevent the human greed and the ambition of dominance that comes in human nature, but that does not mean that people should not preserve their own cultures. The state must find laws and orders to regulate the system of life together, giving a meaning for togetherness, and create a civilization which is an outcome of acceptance of a diversity of cultures. Just as the individual needs a system of fear-punishment to prevent him from doing bad things, or a system of understanding to do the right thing, the same logic applies to a nation or country. If people have to live with each other under the pressure of needs and the limitation of our senses in this world, the word “human” as a social being would become a paradox if we subscribe to the notion that blind devotion to your own God is the only necessity of life.. Whether we want to or not, we do need that coexistence, at least to prove that we are human. Every person has the right to freedom of speech and religion, and the guarantee that due process of law will be observed. The state has an obligation to protect all of its citizens, to guarantee them equal protection under the law and equal opportunity to exercise the

Privileges of citizenship, the freedom of the individual, and the right not to have one's freedom infringed by others abusing that freedom. Alienation of a person or a group from a system that guarantees these basic human rights provides the motivation for anti-social terrorist assault on society.

With regard to the Kurds, there must be some intervention in the direction of self determination before Kurds are forced to take matters into their own hands, even if only in self defense. In the aftermath of the War on Iraq the restoration of the Kurdish geopolitical identity must fall squarely on the Kurds themselves, the Western Allies however, should demonstrate sufficient courage to take their share of responsibility for what has happened to the Kurds. Since they were responsible for the partition of Kurdistan after WW1, they are parties to the predicament of the Kurds. It is time for the Allies to rectify damages done to the Kurdish people during and after the First World War as they have done in Europe.

Although the world has seen many changes in the approach to global terror since September 11, and has waged an all out war on those who resort to terrorism as a political tool, there have been other unfortunate repercussions from that incident. The fact that the first major terrorist strike on the American mainland was perpetrated by fundamentalist Muslims, theories about a necessary clash between Islam and western civilization are responsible for the portrayal of all Muslims as 'congenital terrorists'. The Muslim terrorist image, which has been made the basis of American and western foreign policy, will only serve to further alienate people who subscribe to Islam, thereby ensuring the never ending cycle of alienation/terrorism.

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