

Terrorism: Defining A Strategic Crime

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Abstract

When nihilists challenge nations that deprive them own space, rights and safety, it is not a terrorist act. In the Niger Delta of Nigeria, poor governance of oil resource found within the maritime domain provoke instability in that region and ensuing activism did not pass as terrorism despite retaining features of a terrorist group. Observably, the crusade ceased once the group got reprieve. This brought to fore, the global menace of pillaging; conceit, and injustice that give rise to current mis-education about radicalism and extremism. It is paradoxical defining as terrorism spasm by groups agitating for their inalienable rights in place of incendiary actions by states. Why should reprisals actions carried on by those oppressed be outlined as intimidation, which is the true meaning of terrorism? These frauds made it problematic to define terrorism. Rather, than being circumspect, controlling states have continued to act rashly towards those that have been pained through their imprudent global pursuits – calling it “War against Terrorism”. Against this inference, the article utilize a binomial construct to illuminate an existing illusory order, and argues that terrorism is a war waged by states through deceit in furtherance of selfish interests and **not** limited retaliations by nihilists.

1.1 Overview of the Issue

Human rights and justice are inextricably linked to global peace. In today’s world, those that are charged as good will ambassadors are changing the course of global peace. The UN Security Council members since 1945 have become bullies, imprudent and a global liability. Blind contentions among these cohorts have provoked global insecurity and as a result reduced them to terrorists.

Globally, if Human Rights were respected and pockets of anxieties negotiated through peaceful means, radicalism or extremism by non-state actors, would give way to an all-inclusive peace. But today, state terrorism has replaced conventional war practices in international relations, and in this war, there is an enemy to fight - Nihilist.

Engaging in asymmetric arms struggle against a formidable adversary is consistent with Nihilism. Unlike terrorism, they do not seek strategic outcomes. However, these cohorts seldom seek power or resources of other nations as a primary object. To begin with, addressing cattle as brother in order to have meat on our table is duplicity. Albeit the pervasive nature of nihilism, it should not be misconstrued as terrorism. Rather, states that possess the faculty and requisite resources to intimidate the weak with a view to gaining competitive advantage over perceived rivals are the terrorist. Tagging rebellious activities as terrorism is in bad faith.

This paper contributes to what should be next for our minds. The essence is to ask a modest question – is contemporary terrorism what we assumed it is? Have the academia

and media gone too far in their bid to cover up crimes being committed by the United States, Russia and other p5+1 member states? No doubt, their ubiquitous nature is at great costs to global peace and security. Because we need to know that not stimulating thoughts about their behavior would be grave for the future of humanity - we shall re-examine the sense of terrorism through the prism of powerful state behaviors, poor standards and dangerous trends.

1.2 Terrorism vs. Nihilism

Clarifying the two concepts is a prerequisite for defining terrorism scourge. Essentially, most of the terms on parade today such as extremism, radicalism, religious fundamentalism and etc. could be construed as nihilism – these are activities of enraged non-state actors establishing displeasures the best way possible towards imprudent behaviors by their government or external powers. Terrorism is a state centric activity that has become enmeshed in conceit, frauds and duplicity.

Terrorism is not the reprisal actions by those oppressed, offended or affected by state intimidation, though it could be an aspect of it. In reality, those we currently referred to as terrorist are nihilists - militant groups or rebels reacting to recurring pattern of impunity, bullying and duplicity by *powerful* nations. It is therefore, terrorism that provokes nihilism.

That being said, isn't it common sense to view the exodus of thousands of people fleeing Africa and middle East as running away from chaos caused by terrorism? But, could this possibly be connected to ISIL, Boko Haram etc. or link it to the big picture of a battle for command of Africa and the Middle East space?

The invasion of Afghanistan by East and West power blocks at different periods, helped to create a training and Islamic indoctrination system for volunteers from all over the Arab world. Some of these non-state actors are equally stealthy *powerful-state* activities - driven by the media and academia.¹

A comparison of mis-deeds by nihilists and terrorists would reveal disparaging outcomes as well. For instance, the yearly deaths of 1000-7000 caused by non-state actor's related anarchism, is a fraction of deaths caused by imprudent behavior of *powerful* states.² Around 40,000 daily deaths are caused by hunger especially in places where there is the requirement to struggle for strategic base and natural resources among the European Union, China, Russia, and the United States. There are over 500,000 people shot dead by light weapons annually due to unbridled arms proliferations by brokers from the p5+1 nations, and the millions who were deceased from various (laboratory) diseases such as EBOLA, HIV, preventable malaria and other experimental plagues. These are not outcome of nihilism, but terrorism.³ Who will moderate these imprudent conducts?

1.3 The United Nations Articles 2(4) and Article 51

The UN Security Council as presently constituted is unwilling and unable to exercise restraints on state terrorism due to duplicity in the artifice of terrorism. Reinforcing the

conjecture on the need for a United Nations Security Council reforms. With power of veto on important international security concerns, the p5+1 remain the most destabilizing influence to the World Order post WWII; and agent of global terrorism confronts. As a result, there are well over 100 various definitions of 'terrorism' in existence,⁴ but a cursory look at some of these definitions reflects on issues bordering on anarchism and rebellion, swaying thoughts away from the real tyrants.

Against these realities, states, particularly the powerful ones have continued to feel the need to recourse to the use of force contrary to the provisions as contained in Article 2(4).⁵ At the same time, Article 51 suggests that there are certain uses of force that will not contravene the prohibitions in Article 2(4).⁶

This ambiguity has left gaps in the UN documents and the UN system. Members of the Security Council have continued to interpret these two articles in the way and manner that suits their purposes particularly in those places they labelled – the Axis of evil.⁷ This is the main reason for terrorism and global insecurity today.

Article 1 talk about the maintenance of international peace and security through collective measures. The construction of (the context free) language, however, circumvents the usage “force” or “threat of force” – instead, they preferred the use of words such as “acts of aggression or other breaches of peace”.

The application of the qualifying words, “in conformity with the principle of justice and international law” to the organizational first purpose, has led to claim that as long as law and justice are served, recourse to force may be justified.

Likewise, the principle of self-determination in Article 1(2) has been cited to support the fact that force could be used on behalf of national liberation.⁸ Added to this puzzling, is the absence of international law against rebellion. Therefore, gaps in this post WWII-UN documents have unwittingly set the stage for the Cold (and proxy) Wars, terrorism and treachery by the controlling states.

2.1. Instances of terrorism

The annexation of Crimea, and the subversion of Eastern Ukraine by Russia, is a terrorist act. Putin's action attracted Western irks or so it seems in the slaying of Khashoggi by the Saudi Government inside Saudi Consulate in Turkey. It is dreadful that a journalist is butchered in such a gruesome manner, and the p5 would pretend as if it does not matter. This has made the world a more dangerous place to live.

If Saudi government's action on Khashoggi is not a terrorist act, and the murder of Libya's Gadhafi is not a terrorist act; that of Saddam Hussein certainly is terrorism. There was no weapon of mass destruction unearthed in Iraq; Libya citizens today live in fear and trepidation and watch haplessly as their resources are plundered to the West through and across the Mediterranean Sea, the Gulf of Eden through Bab el-Mandeb to the Indian Ocean – the reason Somalia and Yemen are not only terrorized, but ruined. The human

development indices in Libya post Gadhafi is incomparable and intimidating such a progressive country and turning it into a wasteland is terrorism. Could we also parallel the democracy index or the corruption perception index in Iraq post Saddam Hussein?

It is definitely not for the benevolence of the United States, Russia or China etc. that they forage into Georgia, Ukraine, Middle East and Africa; it is because of power projection, resources and Land. These are terrorist republics and the indignation and exasperation of the immediate community of Khashoggi, Saddam Hussein and Gadhafi, signals that these few events are indeed acts of terrorism.

It is significant that the U.S and its associate's feat in Somalia, Syria, Iraq and Libya did not get much media mention like that of Boko Haram or Al Shabaab since they do not control the media and the academia. Not much has surfaced as to the real politics in Sudan or the long-sufferings and pillage against the people of 'Belgiancongo', the DRC.

Going further, we could interrogate the United States backed - Saudi led terrorist action against the Yemeni people. Is the use of force lawful, is it against persons or property, is it with a view to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, is it in furtherance of political or social objectives? If the answer to all these are in the affirmative, then, and in accordance to the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, this is terrorism.⁹

If we broaden our probe into Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and the Gulf War, it behooves that these events partly incites Non-State reprisals in limited form. And it is unreasonable to pretend these events never ensued. We could of course equally justify why the Soviets and American left their shores to invade other countries. Relatedly, Osama bin Laden found it unacceptable that since the 1991 Gulf War, there were large numbers of US troops in Saudi Arabia whom he feared were there to stay indefinitely.¹⁰ Within this framework, it is not apt to frame nationalists, rebels, self-determination, or guerrillas as terrorists.

Within the same context, whatever inspires (state) terrorist action becomes irrelevant, what count is their action and strategic outcome of events. It is not profitable to maintain ambiguity in this environment, or acclaim the oppressed and voiceless (the Non-State actors) as terrorists. There is therefore, the need for other researchers to interrogate what animates reprisals by Non-State actors in the first instance.

2.2 Delusion about Terrorism

Control of the media and politics of academic research grants on the study of terrorism is partly responsible for distortions of the scourge. Until recent years, research and policy debate primarily focused on preventing terrorism by non-state actors. Only in the last decade we began to have terms such as state sponsored terrorism.¹¹ Even this rhetoric is restricted to 'rogue' states including (Iran) in the case of Hezbollah in Lebanon and other cases in Yemen and recently traces of Shiites movement in Zaria town in Northern Nigeria. There is seldom a mention about the p5+1 states and their networks of terrorists.

The history of 2001 nihilist confrontation would not be complete without the mention of Saudi Arabia because many of the executors of this plot were Saudi nationals. Despite this realization, Saudi Arabia was not faulted as a state sponsor of terror. Rather, in the aftermath of this epic event, the public discussion was based on the assumption that only the mindset of perpetrators accounted for terrorism. This occurrence and subsequent action in Afghanistan revealed two things: That the United States action was probably premeditated, and secondly, that politics, interests and the media determine the conceptual clarification of “terrorism”.

Further to this, is to establish if September eleven “terrorist” attack was an excuse to go into Afghanistan, as was the case with Libya and Iraq (may be North Korea, Syria and Iran?) – “Axis of evil”. The United States and Allies could have probably changed the regime on the issue of Khashoggi if it is not Saudi Arabia. “Terrorism” as a tool for strategic foreign policy objectives thus becomes distinctive.

3.1 The Meaning of Terrorism

Application of violence with an objective to create fear in order to gain power and resources of other state is not new. Such use of violence has served states and various regimes over a long period of time. In recent times the term was used extensively during the Reign of Terror in France from 1793–1794.¹² In Maximilien Robespierre’s words:

‘...terror is nothing other than justice, prompt, severe, inflexible; it is therefore a virtue; it is not so much a special principle as it is a consequence of the general principle of democracy applied to our country's most urgent needs’.¹³

Maximilien herein, reinforce the claim that terrorism is not guerrilla actions; it is not activities of freedom fighter. Terrorism is not self-determination. Terrorism is what nations do; it is not acts by revolutionary, anarchists or criminal gangs. Terrorism is war waged by deceit.

3.2 Proxy Wars and Terrorism

Inter state relations are governed by competition and struggle for supremacy. This is both historical and natural. Through the renaissance, to the World War periods and post WWII (Cold War), humans have always been violent among their peers. This is because of fear, needs, and greed. There are basic human needs and there are other psychosocial issues that excite fear, lack of trust and hate. If a thing is strange, different and inexplicable, humans will naturally react violently to eliminate the fear. This is historical and has been the reasons for mis-deeds that often attracts reprisals and counter retaliations.

Over several decades, fear of what is different from us naturally triggers the need to eliminate such fears through violence means. The need to preserve our values, and future does not make us to trust other species. Also, because of egotism it is a trend for nations to seek revenge for past misdeeds meted against their kinds. The most profound question facing humanities is how are we so different? Whites, blacks, yellow, pink and how did we acquire so many different languages.

Social scientist has adduced many theories to support some of their claims, but while some are not verifiable; the challenge facing humanities are daunting in this regards.

As humans became increasingly advanced, wars was made a crime, and the global communities succeeded for a while, only to devise ways to circumvent whatever we put in place to end warfare. Despite bouts of treaties and conventions, we seem to be back to proxy wars and graduated to terrorism in a bid to circumvent the laws of war. Terrorism is therefore war by other means, but towards the same end – to gain power and competitive advantage over resources. What we called violent extremism are therefore, reprisal engagements by the weak against the strong.

4. Violent Extremities vs. Terrorism

In the past, guerrilla movements are simple tactics to defeat a stronger opposition. So when a member of a small independent group typically conducts irregular combat against larger regular forces, it is **not** terrorism. We could call it by other names and they are numerous, but not terrorism. Violent extremist is one – but I still have difficulties with such stigma especially when we began to make reference to ethnicity, religion and ideology. This is another drawback to defining terrorism.

It is erroneous to view reprisals as motivated by ideology, religion, and tribal or politically motivated. That is when analysts got everything muddled. First let us observe that, ethnic conflicts, are not necessarily always about ethnicity; rather, it's a convenient common denominator to organize a conflict group in the struggle over resources, land, or power, a convenient mechanism to organize and mobilize people into homogeneous conflict groups willing to fight each other for resources.

Palpably, ethnicity and religion are not synonyms but they frequently overlap. Thus it seems safe to conclude that religion; as any other factor can be part of the picture but cannot, alone, be a cause of conflict.

The cause of global conflict could be explained from the perspective of self-determination and nationalism, while religious factors could influence the dynamics of any conflict and increase its intensity. Religion causes violence only when it is combined with these other factors. Now let us examine the challenges of defining terrorism.

Defining a Terrorist crime

The legitimacy or otherwise of the goals being sought by a state should be irrelevant to whether that nation is outlined as a terrorist state. It is therefore, significant to observe that a terrorist is not a freedom fighter and a terrorist is not a guerrilla. A terrorist is a terrorist, no matter whether that state is policing weapons of mass destruction, or enforcing some kind of ideology. And it should not matter whether or not you like the objective such state or coalition is trying to achieve, does not matter whether or not you like the ideology of such group of nations or the regime they sort after to replace. In my view terrorism should not be defined based on goals or aim but by the act they carryout and particularly when the outcome is strategic in nature, the damage involved is grave and crucial to state survivor.

Nonetheless, terrorism could clearly be defined as the misuse of instrument of state power by a hegemon to bully, tyrannize and exploit weaker nations with a view to gaining a competitive advantage over rival states or to preserve global or regional hegemony. In this respect, a terrorist is not a guerilla, not a nationalist, nihilist or a freedom fighter. A terrorist is a bully, a tyrant and an exploiter – a terrorist is a reckless but greedy state actor belligerently pursuing power over rival states through violent intimidation.

5. Concluding remarks.

The article is a binomial construct that illuminates existing illusory order, a brief combinatorics approach to solving a horrendously mis-education about what terrorism really is. Delusion about terrorism was regressed and it became distinctive that it is a tool for strategic foreign policy objectives of controlling states.

No doubt, an act of terrorism is what state do, whether against foreign targets or against its own citizens. Today, it is customary to militarily invade other states under false pretext to murder its leader, infringe on liberties and loot resources of these states. This has become an acceptable international norm and sadly, this would continue into the future.

The United Nations as a supranational entity has lost its reason for continuous existence, as global communities can no longer suffer under current arrangement. Today's leaders and members of the Security Council have continued to interpret Article 2(4) and Article 51 in the way and manner that suits their purposes. And because the current leaders are made up of bullies, they should not be allowed too much leverage under the UN Security Council arrangement. Global community should not allow politics, interests and the media to determine the conceptual clarification of terrorism.

Thus, terrorism is state centric anomaly, terrorism is war waged by deceit for the purpose of hegemonic plundering. Unlike nihilism that is a non-state actor related. Misuse of state powers in pursuit of national interest that cause violent intimidation of others with a view to maintaining global, regional or sub regional power is terrorism.

This paradigm shift would go through predictable but vehement spasms because of several decades of false programs the international system has endured. But, a terrorist is a terrorist regardless of cited reasons for action. We should look at actions and strategic outcomes to define terrorism, not the objectives. Reasons such as political, narcissisms etc. are employed to conceal the true object, which include unfair access to land, power, and resources.

If (illegal) military action other than war yields a strategic outcome and in the process extensive damages occur to lives, property and way of life of target states, then we are experiencing terrorist feat. Therefore, terrorism is a war by other means, to gain power and competitive advantage over resources. Unlike violent extremism, which is a reprisal engagement against dominant states.

Notes:

¹ Kunle Olawunmi & Abdurahman Rooti. Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram and The Great Economies. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/al-shabaab-boko-haram-great-economies-prof-kunle-olawunmi/> (accessed on 30 April 2019).

² Jessica Wolfendale. Terrorism, Security, and the Threat of Counterterrorism. – Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, 1/2007, p.77.

³ Olawunmi & Rooti. Ibid.

⁴ Jeffery Record, Bounding the Global War on Terrorism, Carlisle Barracks: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2003, p. 6.

⁵ Article 2(4) provides that all members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations.

⁶ Article 51 states that nothing in the present UN Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures that are necessary to maintain international peace and security.

⁷ Kunle Olawunmi. Nigeria, Global Peace and International Protection of Human Rights – Unpublished working Document – Ph.D. Thesis at CEDS France.

⁸ Christopher C. Joyner. The United Nations and International Law. Ed. ASIL. Cambridge University Press. Pg. 101.

⁹ The U.S. Code of Federal Regulations defines terrorism as "the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives" (28 C.F.R. Section 0.85).

¹⁰ Richard A. Clarke. Kõigi vaenlaste vastu. Tallinn: Tänapäev, 2004, pp. 75–76, 153.

¹¹ Arun Kundnani, "Radicalization: The Journey of a Concept," Race & Class 54, no. 2 (October 1, 2012): 3–25, doi: 10.1177/0306396812454984.

¹² Erik Mannik, Terrorism: Its Past, Present And Future Prospects https://www.ksk.edu.ee/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/KVUOA_Toimetised_12-Männik.pdf. (Accessed 21 April 2019.)

¹³ Center for Defense Information. A Brief History of Terrorism. 2003. <http://www.cdi.org/friendlyversion/printversion.cfm? Document ID=1502>, (accessed on 23 April 2019).