Terrorism in the 21st Century

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The events of 9/11, in the United States, brought to light the painful reality that the world is in a state where all countries, even the superpowers are vulnerable to terrorist attack. The attack can be launched from within a country and may be supported by different ideologies and parties or can be external launched. Today, many nations are vulnerable to terror attacks. For instance, there have been recent terror attacks in various European nations such England, Germany, Belgium, and France. Developing economies such as Kenya and Burkina Faso are also struggling with the problem. Although it is now more than a decade since the events of 9/11, there is still confusion on various issues concerning terrorism. There are still questions on who "terrorists" are, what "terror" is, and what motivates "terrorism." There are also questions on the best way to combat terror attack. Besides, scholars from political science, sociology, economics, and psychology field have developed different theories to explain terrorism phenomenon. The study explores the topic of terrorism and various theories explaining the phenomenon. The aim of the paper is therefore to discuss various debates on terrorism, history of terrorism, and causes of terrorism.

DEFINING TERRORISM

Defining terrorism is considered to be complicated but necessary. Ideally, terrorism arises from the term "terror" which defines various activities associated with parties or individuals who use violence to instill fear (Wardlaw 17). There have been different reasons given to justify the use of violence to instill terror, and there have also been various parties involved in defining terrorism, each giving different perceptive, which has led to many definitions of terrorism. However, various historical events can be used to provide insight on terrorism and hence define the phenomenon.

Many sources seeking to explain terrorism show that terrorism is not a recent phenomenon. In the history of human, individuals have been using violence to instill fear in a wider audience with the aim of preventing certain people from doing something or on the other hand to persuade them into particular behavior (Wardlaw 26). Such violence activities continue to occur in many states and regimes for decades. The term "terrorism" was first used to refer to activities of

the nation and not subgroup as it is currently used (Abrahms 43). For instance, the government that took charge after the French Revolution conducted a mass execution on the nobles who were believed to be against the newly formed state (Ankersen and O'Leary 23). Terrorism was seen to be perpetrated by state different from the modern day terrorism which is carried out by non-states parties such as Al Qaeda.

The original definition of terrorism is distinct from the modern terrorism. In the late 19th and early 20th century, terrorism involved assassinations and killing of individuals who were radical and believed to be against the government (Mirza and Verdier 181). It was a way to suppress political movements that were a threat to the ruling government. From the mid-20th century, the concept of terrorism was expanded to include any political violence that scholars believed were conducted to instill fear in people (Wardlaw 43). Different scholars categorize terrorism as a form of political violence. Media also started labeling any attack from an external source as terrorism (Ankersen and O'Leary 38). Such made it difficult to have a common definition of the term "terrorism" currently.

The term "terrorism" originates from a Latin word "terrere" meaning "to frighten" (Wardlaw 15). As indicated earlier, the term was first used after French Revolution, a period known as Reign of Terror that happened from 1793 to 1794 (Mockaitis 78). Different events in history can be argued to provide an idea of terrorism. The Roman Empire forced individuals and nations into submission by using crucifixion and genocides. The French Revolution claimed lives of more than 20,000 people with few months as a way to suppress people. Nazi in Germany and Stalinist in the Soviet Union are considered to be contemporary examples of terrorism (Mockaitis 85). These events are considered to be acts of terrorism perpetrated by the state or the ruling political parties. There are also examples of various non-state violence acts that have been used to create fear or coerce people into certain behavior in the history. Jewish Zealots assassinated those they believed to conspire against them when they were countering the Roman Empire (Sageman 72). The killing of Archduke Franz Ferdinand by Serb nationalist that led to starting of First World War is also considered to be an act of terrorism (Chaliand et al. 83). The event of 9/11 is another example of non-state terrorism. These examples show that both state and non-state can perpetrate terrorism.

Different studies indicate that terrorism is very broad consisting of various actors who have different goals. However, all activities of terrorism involve the use of violence. In Russia for instance, it can be argued that anarchists used violence not only to cause terror in the czarist regime but also to introduce a larger revolution (Wardlaw 63). Such an example provides a correct idea of terrorism but also show the difficulty of having an absolute definition of terrorism. Chaliand et al. argue that it has been difficult to create a generalization of the term without making the definition meaningless to some events (36). The main confusion has been on the development of a definition that will include all actors such as states and all goals and motivations of terror attacks.

Most scholars seem to agree that terrorism is an anxiety inspired approach of repeated violent activities that are perpetrated by individuals, groups or state for political, criminal or idiosyncratic reasons (Wardlaw 29). Different from assassination, in terrorism, the direct target of violence is not the intended or the primary objectives. Chaliand et al. argue that the immediate target of violence are chosen selectively or randomly from the target population and are used to send a message to the wider population (92). For instance, terrorist considers the latest Manchester attack on children as a way to caution the larger population in England and Europe. Mirza and Verdier describe terrorism as a violence-based communication whereby a terror group or organization targets certain victims to manipulate the main target (183). The communication used by terror group is expected to create terror or create attention depending on the goal sought by the attacker. Terrorism is described as the used of unlawful violence to coerce a government or political, religious, ideological societies (Chaliand et al. 19). Although the definition covers all forms of terrorism, it does not differentiate terror attack from other attacks. The European Union describes terrorism as an act that is aimed to intimidate a population, persuade government or international body to perform or stop performing a certain act and to destabilize the political, economic, constitutional or social structure of a nation or international body (Ankersen and O'Leary 56).

Terror groups achieve their objectives through various illegal activities. Terror activities range from targeting individuals to destroying vital infrastructures and services to society. Terrorists are also involved in activities such as kidnappings, hijackings and other criminal activities that cause fear in the wider audience. According to European Union definition, terrorism is not just a movement or ideology but also a tactic of achieving various objectives (Chaliand et al. 21). As a tactic, terrorism does not have a political charge or ideology.

Terrorism can, therefore, be argued to be a process that uses different methods to instill fear in target audience with the aim of achieving certain goals (Ankersen and O'Leary 25). For instance, a terror group may tamper with traffic lights to cause confusion with the intention of turning people against authority and thus destabilizing political system. Terrorists and terrorist organizations are therefore individuals and organizations who believe in using methods of instilling fears to achieve their objectives (Chaliand et al. 27). Describing "terrorism" tactic indicate that freedom fighters can be referred to as terrorist since they use terror to achieve their goals. However, the difficulty experienced in differentiating the form of terror used by individuals or organization, especially when considering freedom fighters underlines the lack of precise definition of terrorism. Defining terrorism as a method of using terror, therefore, leave many with the question of what exactly is terrorism. However, the possible definitions in the literature that associated terrorism with spread terror to coerce certain behavior can be argued to be enough to explain the phenomenon.

HISTORY OF TERRORISM

History shows that method of using fear as a weapon is common for both states and non-state bodies. Different authors provide different accounts of terrorism, both in the past and in the present. Rapport provides four waves of international terrorism (47). The first wave known as an anarchist of terrorism which marked the start of modern terrorism began in Russia in the 19th century and lasted until the beginning of 20th century. The second wave known as anticolonial happened between the 1920s and 1960. The third wave known as new left occurred between the 1960s and 1980s. The "anarchist" wave emerged from Russia signifying anarchist dissatisfactions with slow reforms of society. Anarchists believed that various traditions bounded the society and therefore used terror to destroy these traditions. Their idea was that terror was going to persuade those who were pro-government to stop supporting the government. They attacked many top officials with the aim of polarizing society and promoting uprising. The anti-colonial wave started after signing of the Treaty of Versaille that ended the First World War (Chaliand et al. 78). The principle of self-determination inspired new kind of terrorist groups. For instance, Jewish and Irish Republican Army organizations waged terror attacks against Britain (Rapoport 49). The Vietnam War inspired the start of the "new left" terrorism. The new left terrorists were the first indication that modern states were vulnerable to tactics and weapons that were

relatively unsophisticated. Many young people started terror groups such as Italian Red Brigades, West German and French Action Directe (Rapoport 51). These organizations engaged in activities such as hijacking, kidnapping, and assassination. The "religious" marked by the rise of a suicide attack is an attempt to cause mass casualties and the use of chemical weapons. For instance, in 1983, the Shai organization promoted suicide terrorists against US marines. According to Sedgwick, the fourth wave of terrorism inspired by the need to destroy United States target and defend Islam (98).

Many authors have criticized Rapoport's description of the history of terrorism. Sedgewick agrees with the four waves of terrorism but argues that the first wave started in Italy in 1820 and not in Russia (99). He also argues that there has been more terrorist organization between the 1920s and 1960s and that terrorism was inspired more by the strategies that were adopted more than the causes. Mockaitis argues that more terrorist activities in the fourth wave were committed by a follower of Islam giving another perspective of terrorism (54). He further argues that instability remains among the primary motivation of terrorism.

CAUSE OF TERRORISM

Different studies provide different conclusions on the causes of terrorism. Terrorism can either be due to political and social injustices or the belief that causing violence to instill fear will bring social or political change. Although this explanation may seem simple, it highlights two main features witnessed in most of the terrorist activities. Individuals who chose terrorism as a tactic believe that violence is an effective way of achieving their political, social or religious goal. However, scholars argue that that the cause of terrorism is difficult to determine (Hoffman 34). The best way to determine the answers to the causes of terrorism is to consider different definitions of terrorism (Abrahms 47). Also, the cause can be found by considering the motivations of terrorists.

Ethnonationalism is deemed to be among the leading causes of terrorism. Ethnonationalism refers to a situation whereby a population desires to break from the bondage of government and make their government. Many authors have cited discrimination as a cause of terrorism especially in Europe. Leiken argues that the Muslims who are sometimes viewed as outsiders in European nations and treated differently, forcing them to become radicalized (1). Religion is another factor that is believed to cause terrorism. Although it is not the main reason as believed today, it plays a factor in most of the terrorist activities previously conducted in most countries. Some scholars associate modern terrorism with radical Islamic fundamentalism.

Sageman describes global Salafi jihad as a global religious revivalist movement which the main agenda is to reestablish Muslim lost glory in Islamic states (15). Studies have shown that terrorism may be motivated by social-economic factors such as poverty (Chaliand et al. 72). Ward- law argues that issues such as victimization, frustration, and humiliations among young people in developing nation may increase tension and hostilities (83). Socioeconomic problems allow terrorist organizations to easily convince young people to wage their anger on western countries (Chaliand et al. 78). Lastly, political grievances due to oppressive governments inspire some individuals to form terror groups as a way of expressing their dissatisfaction. Most of the explanation provided about the causes of terrorism cites dissatisfactions with political, religious or social systems as the main reason for formation terror groups. In most cases, these terror groups are formed to achieve certain goals through the spread of fear.

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS)

The ISIS is considered to the biggest threat in western nations currently. The group rose to prominence in 2014 when it used violence to overthrow Iraq government (Carter et al. 1). Based on the definitions of terrorists, ISIS is a terrorist organization because it uses terror to achieve its goals. The organizations are widely known for its terror activities that involve spreading videos of the beheading of journalists, civilians, and soldiers. ISIS has its origin from a group that associated al-Qaeda and is believed to claim authority over all Muslims in the world (McCabe 145). Similar to other terror organizations such as al-Qaeda, ISIS continues to conduct multiple attacks, some of which have exposed western world. In Europe, the organization has claimed ownership of different terror attacks in Belgium, Britain, France, Germany, and Sweden. Young Muslims have perpetrated most terror attacks believed to engage in fundamental values (McCabe 148). These attacks have changed the perspective of terrorism in European nations. Before, although there were some terror attacks, European nations felt relatively secure. Due to these attacks, individual countries and the European Union have taken measure to combat terrorism. For instance, in 2015 the European Union took measure to prevent smuggling of arms and illegal immigrants into Europe (McCabe 151). In 2016, another measure was taken by the European Union by launching of counter-terrorism Center, the ECTC (Europol 1). These measures show how terrorism has been a huge threat even to first world countries that were considered to be secured.

EFFECTIVENESS OF TERRORISM

Apart from the psychological impact of terrorism, it is important to consider terrorism has any impact on politics. Various studies on whether terrorism has any influence on state policies and have provided different conclusions. The primary goals of terrorists include territorial change, regime change social control, and policy change. They pursue their goals through intimidation, at- trition, provocation, suicide, outbidding and spoiling.

Most authors argue that the most important element of terror attacks is the information de- livered to targeted political, religious and social organizations. Terrorists use their terror to change perceptions and communicate. In similar ways, counter-terrorism uses information. Studies have also shown that terrorists are more likely to attack democracy than other regime types. Democracies are the main target for terrorists because they are more restrained in their response to counterattack (Abrahms 48). Regarding coercing states, Pape claims that about 50 percent of terror attack between 1980 and 2001 succeeded in policy changes (251). Abrams conducted an analysis of 28 terrorist organizations to determine the effectiveness of their strategies and found that only 7 percent of their goals were achieved (43). The conclusion was that terrorism is not an effective method of coercion. The effectiveness of terror campaigns is dependent on information, type of objective, regime type targeted and type of attack used (Ankersen and O'Leary 74). All in all, terrorists have managed to create fear in many countries. Although they may not achieve their goals, they succeed in spreading fear among the innocent population.

CONCLUSION

Although there is not agreement on the actual definition of terrorism, the term can be argued to refer to activities that are aimed to cause terror with the goal of achieving political, religious, economic and social goals. In most case, terrorism has political aspects, but it is different from other forms of political violence. It has happened in many regions and has affected people in different generations. Distinct from another form of violence, terror is used a weapon by individuals who believe that it is only by spreading fear among people that the can achieve their goals. Although of- ten people tend to associate terrorism with Islam, it has been perpetrated by different groups of the various beliefs over the time. Causes of terrorism are in most cases associated with dissatisfaction. All in all, terrorism represents movements that use terror as a tactic to achieve its goals.

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