TERRORISM, DEMOCRACY AND GLOBAL SECURITY

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Abstract

The need for peaceful coexistence among the nations of the world has been the pursuit of world leaders. This desire is constantly being threatened by terrorism. There are differing opinions on whether democracy can minimise terrorism. The school of thought that believes that democracy can influence terrorism hinges its argument on the opportunities and freedoms that democracy offers: democracy provides opportunities for conflict prevention, conflict management and conflict resolution as well as opportunities of political participation. The other school of thought argues that there is no empirical evidence for a strong link between democracy, or any other regime type, and terrorism, in either a positive or a negative direction. Terrorism, it insists, springs from sources other than form of government. The paper, however, presented the two arguments and concluded that while democracy may not be able to eliminate terrorism, it is, however, capable of minimising it through exclusive adherence to the tenets of democracy. Using content analysis, the paper determined the extent of impact of democracy on terrorism and the implication of terrorism on global security.

Keywords: Coexistence, Conflict, Democracy, Global Security, Globalisation, Terrorism

Introduction

The word "terrorism" was first used in reference to the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution. A 1988 study by the United States Army found that more than one hundred definitions of the word exist and have been used (Jeffrey, 2003). Terrorism has been described variously as both a tactic and strategy; a crime and a holy duty; a justified reaction to oppression and an inexcusable abomination. In many countries, acts of terrorism are legally distinguished from criminal acts done for other purposes.

Terrorism is not a recent phenomenon. What is probably recent is the nomenclature. Terrorism is coterminous and synonymous with human interests. Individuals or groups interests vary from persons to persons and groups to groups. As interests vary, so also do approaches to achieve them. Interests are often conflicting and egocentric. Granted the incompatibility of interests, individuals and groups seek ways of achieving their interests not minding the injury or damage it may cause on another groups.

There are two ways of achieving interests. 1) Peaceful means and 2) violent means. The peaceful means of achieving an end may be through conciliation, negotiation, consultations and dialogue. The violent means include: organised attack, hostage taking, arson, maiming and general destruction of lives and property. The combination of these is what is known as terrorism.

Terrorism is controversial. This is because it has definitional pluralism and perceptual ambiguity. In fact, it is a nebulous concept. What is terrorism to an individual or group may connote freedom fight; struggle for survival; liberation from socio-political slavery; and, economic emancipation. The word "terrorism" is politically and emotionally charged, and this greatly compounds the difficulty of providing a precise definition (Hoffman, 1998).

In November 2004, a United Nations Security Council report described terrorism as any act "intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants with the purpose of intimidating a population or compelling a government or an international organisation to do or abstain from doing any act" (Juergensmeyer, 2000). Terrorism, in the modern sense, is violence against civilians to achieve political or ideological objectives by creating fear (Humphreys, 2006). Generally, terrorism includes those acts which are intended to create fear (terror) and perpetrated for an ideological goal, with deliberate target on or disregard for the safety of non-combatants. It can also be defined as the use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological (Arowolo and Lawal, 2008).

Whichever way terrorism is viewed, it must be colossal and have far-reaching destructive consequences before it can be called an act of terrorism. Inferred from this is that, before an act could qualify as terrorism, it must affect and be condemned by the majority against the minority. Also, it must constitute a threat to lives and property, it must be scientifically planned, deliberate and predetermined, and finally, it must have its targets on civilians to evoke emotions and draw large-scale attention.

Terrorism is normally carried out by groups known as terrorists. Terrorism has goals which terrorists want to achieve. These goals vary and they are a function of the purpose for which an act of terrorism is being planned. Goals of terrorism include but not limited to: to sustain ideological conviction and belief system; to acquire wealth; to propel forceful change in policy or seek reorder of societal structure; to seek revenge or retaliation; to express displeasure against attitude or action; to suppress or repress opposition; and, to maintain the status quo (Nwolise, 2000, 5).

Terrorist acts target the supreme values of society, and their victims, in most cases, are innocent people. This, in the first place, makes terrorism a national issue. The waves of globalisation, whereby so much emphasis is placed on intensity and extensity of transborders activities make terrorism a global issue, as the whole world becomes transparent and interconnected. What affects state A, will also have a carry-over effect on state B. In this connection, an act of terrorism in one part or region of the world is felt and affected by all parts of the world. Viewed in this perspective, terrorism becomes a threat to global security. The wave of globalisation inevitably spreads the magnitude and extensity of terrorism.

Features of Terrorism

Violence: The only characteristic of terrorism generally agreed upon is that terrorism involves violence and the threat of violence. However, the criterion of violence alone does not produce a useful definition, as it includes many acts not usually considered terrorism: war, riot, organized crime, or even a simple assault. Property destruction that does not endanger life is not usually considered a violent crime.

Psychological impact and fear – Psychological impact and fear is created if the attack iscarried out in such a way as to maximize the severity and length of the psychological impact. Each act of terrorism is an action devised to have an impact on large audience. Terrorists also attack national symbols to show their power and to shake the foundation of the country or society they are opposed to. This may negatively affect a government's legitimacy, while increasing the legitimacy of the given terrorist organization and/or ideology behind a terrorist act (Juergensmeyer, 2000).

Political Goal – The commonest feature of terrorism is the political underpinnings of theact. Terrorism is a political tactic, not unlike letter writing or protesting, that is used by activists when they believe no other means will affect the kind of change they desire. The change is desired so badly that failure is seen as a worse outcome than the deaths of civilians. This is often more pronounced where the terrorist act is perpetrated for religiouspurposes or when a political struggle is integrated into the framework of a religious struggle, such as over

the control of an ancestral homeland or holy site such as Israel and Jerusalem, failing in the political goal (nationalism) becomes equated with spiritual failure, which, for the highly committed, is worse than their own death or the deaths of innocent civilians.

Deliberate targeting of non-combatants – It is commonly held that the distinctivenature of terrorism lies in its intentional and specific selection of civilians as direct targets. Specifically, the criminal intent is shown when babies, children, mothers, and the elderly are murdered, or injured. Their suffering accomplishes the terrorists' goals of instilling fear, getting a message out to an audience, or otherwise accomplishing their often radical religious and political ends.

Disguise – Terrorists almost invariably pretend to be non-combatants, hide among non combatants, fight from in the midst of non-combatants, and when they can, strive to mislead and provoke the government soldiers into attacking the wrong people, that the government may be blamed for it.

Unlawfulness or Illegitimacy – Acts of terrorism always connote illegality, especially inthe corridor of legitimate government. Definitions of terrorism add a criterion of illegitimacy or unlawfulness to distinguish between actions authorized by a "legitimate" government (and thus "lawful") and those of other actors, including individuals and small groups. Using this criterion, actions that would otherwise qualify as terrorism would not be considered terrorism if they emanate from government. For example, an act of America that firebombed Iraq was not seen as an act of terrorism despite the massive destructive effects it had on the civilians. Millions of civilians were killed, maimed or displaced, yet the action was not perceived by the international community as terrorist, just because it involved America and her selfish goal.

This criterion is inherently problematic and is not universally accepted, because: it denies the existence of state terrorism; the act of classical state terrorism could be traced to the military government in Nigeria under General Sani Abacha. The government clamped down on all perceived opposition groups and turned around to arrest them for the same offence the regime perpetrated. The same act of violence may or may not be classed as terrorism depending on whether its sponsorship is traced to a "legitimate" government; "legitimacy" and "lawfulness" are subjective, depending on the perspective of one government or another.

Controversial Nature of Terrorism

The terms "terrorism" and "terrorist" (someone who engages in terrorism) carry a strong negative connotation and is difficult to determine. These terms are often used as

political labels to condemn violence or threat of violence by certain actors as immoral, indiscriminate, or unjustified. However, those labelled "terrorists" rarely identify themselves as such, and typically use other euphemistic term or terms specific to their situation, such as: separatist, freedom fighter, liberator, revolutionary, vigilante, militant, paramilitary, guerrilla, rebel, jihadi or mujaheddin, or fedayeen, or any similar word in other languages (Hudson, 2002).

This is further complicated by the moral ambiguity that surrounds terrorism. Justification of large-scale terrorist acts has attracted mixed reactions by philosophers and scholars of utilitarianism. While some believed that acts of terrorism targeted at prevention of extinction of a certain group, ideology, religion or community of people are justified, others condemned acts of terrorism in its entirety regardless of the purpose it wants to achieve. Michael (1988) and Rodin (2006) argued that terrorism is always morally wrong but insisted that those who engaged in terrorism can be morally justified in one specific case: when "a nation or community faces the extreme threat of complete destruction and the only way it can preserve itself is by intentionally targeting non-combatants, then it is morally entitled to do so".

On one point, at least, everyone agrees: terrorism is a very controversial term. It is a word with intrinsically negative connotations that is generally applied to one's enemies and opponents, or to those with whom one disagrees and would otherwise prefer to ignore. According to Bruce Hoffman (1998):

Terrorism seems to depend on one's point of view. Use of the term implies a moral judgment; and if one party can successfully attach the label terrorist to its opponent, then it has indirectly persuaded others to adopt its moral viewpoint. Hence the decision to call someone or label some organization 'terrorist' becomes almost unavoidably subjective, depending largely on whether one sympathizes with or opposes the person/ cause/group concerned. If one identifies with the victim of the violence, for example, then the act is terrorism. If, however, one identifies with the perpetrator, the violent act is regarded in a more sympathetic, it is not terrorism.

The pejorative connotations of the word can be summed up in the aphorism, "One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter". This is exemplified when a group that uses irregular military methods is an ally of a State against a mutual enemy, but later falls out with the State and starts to use the same methods against its former ally. During World War II the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army was allied with the British, but during the Malayan

Emergency, members of its successor, the Malayan Races Liberation Army, were branded terrorists by the British. (Hudson, 2002:13). More recently, Ronald Reagan and others in the American administration frequently called the Afghan Mujahideen freedom fighters during their war against the Soviet Union, yet twenty years later when a new generation of Afghan men were fighting against what they perceived to be a regime installed by foreign powers, their attacks are labelled terrorism by President Bush (Hoffman, 1988, 6; Nwolise, 2000:11).

Causes of Terrorism

Many opinions exist concerning the causes of terrorism. They range from demographic, socioeconomic to political factors. Demographic factors may include congestion and high growth rates. Socioeconomic factors may include poverty, unemployment, and land tenure problems. Political factors may include disenfranchisement, political intolerance, sit-tightism, ethnic conflict, religious conflict, territorial conflict, uneven distribution of, or lack of access to, resources, or even revenge.

In some cases, the rationale for a terrorist attack may be uncertain (as in the many attacks for which no group or individual claims responsibility) or unrelated to any large-scale social conflict.

Researchers, however, have attempted at arriving at the scientifically valid approaches to terrorism. According to them, terrorism functions like an economic market, propelled by demand and supply (Nwolise, 2000; Hoffman, 1988; Jeffrey, 2003). Demand side of terrorism involves those groups or individuals who are aggrieved or are dissatisfied with a societal or global structure, or those who want to establish their relevance, ideology or belief. While the supply side involves those who share the same or similar ideology, belief or conviction and who are trained in the arts of organised attack and are determined to pay the supreme price for the cause they believe in. There must be a link between the demand side and the supply side.

According to some scholars, "there is demand for terrorists placed by greed or grievances. Supply is driven by relative deprivation resulting in four deficits: developmental deficit, democratic deficit, dignity deficit, even existence deficit (in case of suicide bombing) (Nwolise, 2000; Jeffrey, 2003). Acts of terrorism take place at the point of intersection between supply and demand. Those placing the demand use religion and other denominators as vehicles to establish links with those on the supply side.

Terrorism and Democracy

Globalisation impacts on the mode of governance that a country operates either as a symbol of universality or of uniformity. This unstoppable trend has homogenised governance

on a global scale while depicting authoritarianism as unproductive political modernity. This symbol of similarity in governance that globalisation provides through democracy has had impact on the way countries of the world reason and this also has influenced their tendencies and desires to harmoniously coexist and subsist as a united global entity.

There has been institutionalisation of fragile system of multilayered global and regional governance, reinforced by Intergovernmental Organisations (IGOs). This multilateral system institutionalises a process of political coordination amongst governments, intergovernmental and transnational agencies (public and private) designed to realise common purpose or collective goods through making or implementing global or transnational rules, and managing trans-border problems. This legal arrangement is set for the purpose of guaranteeing world peace (Held and McGrew, 2004).

Also worth mentioning is the global democratisation of charter, international law and other legal frameworks to condition nations' and groups' behaviour in the international system. The world is experiencing change in the scope and content of international law through the instrument of democracy. From the law governing war to that concerning crimes against humanity; terrorism; environmental issues; human rights and financial crimes. We now have what is called International Police (Interpol). This is a collaboration of international securities in a way to prevent crimes or tracking offenders. There is transnational cooperation in the areas of crimes detection, crimes prevention and crimes investigation.

Authoritarian regimes stiffen and suffocate opportunities to participate in decision making arrangement and provide little or no opportunity for freedoms. This builds up frustration that leads to aggression and later violence. This form of violence, in its embryonic stage, takes the form of small scale and domestic in nature but graduates and accumulates through steady metamorphosis into large scale tagged terrorism. This is not to say that terrorism is caused wholly by authoritarianism or totalitarianism, but the seeming lack of opportunities and political freedoms for citizens to enthrone and dethrone their leaders at will, can propel terrorism.

The United States has embarked upon what President Bush and Secretary of State Rice has called a "generational challenge" to encourage political reform and democracy in the Arab world (Bush, 2005). The Bush Administration and other defenders of the democracy campaign contend that the push for Arab democracy will guarantee world peace. They hypothesize that as democracy grows in the Arab world, anti- American terrorism from the Arab world will decline. Therefore, the promotion of democracy in the Arab world is not

only consistent with human development within the region but also capable of promoting global security (Gause, 2005:1)

While globalisation contributes to the ferocious growth and spread of terrorism, democracy, an antidote to violence, was also propelled by the unstoppable intensity of globalisation. Therefore, democratic regimes are naturally divested of terrorism and violence. It is gradually becoming clearer that democracy has asymmetric relationship with terrorism. Democracy is equipped with political freedoms and liberalism, where citizens are allowed to participate in the decision making arrangement in their country. The opportunity of participation and the power to change irresponsible leadership at will naturally neutralises frustration, aggression and violence that could eventually lead to terrorism.

This standpoint is commonly expressed in America and other Western nations. Their argument stems from the belief that democracy provides a veritable platform through which conflicts could be managed, solved and resolved. Opportunity to air grievances through courts or tribunals and other means so provided have been discovered to have capacity to ventilate crisis that could have degenerated into frustration and aggression (Ajayi, 2000, 58).

Former American President, George Bush (2005), also corroborated this assertion when he insists that:

> *Our strategy to keep the peace in the longer term is to help change the conditions that give rise to extremism and terror, especially in the broader Middle East. Parts of that region have been caught for generations in the cycle of tyranny and despair and radicalism. When a dictatorship controls the political life of a country, responsible opposition cannot develop and dissent is driven underground and toward the extreme. And to draw attention away from their social and economic failures, dictators place blame on other countries and other races and stir the hatred that leads to violence. This status quo of despotism and anger cannot be ignored or appeased, kept in a box or bought off.*

Other school of thought that is opposed to the imposition of American values on Arab and her peoples and her selfish desire to police the world through ostensible political reforms and democratization in these areas argues that while there is logic to the syllogism linking a lack of democracy to terrorism, that logic can be challenged on both theoretical and empirical grounds. Empirically, it argues, the numbers just do not appear to bear out a close link between terrorism and the lack of democracy. Between 2000 and 2003, based on the State Department's annual *Global Patterns of Terrorism*, 269 major terrorist incidents occurred in

countries classified as "free" in the Freedom House *Freedom in theWorld* annual report; 119 such incidents occurred in countries classified as "partly free;" and 138 occurred in countries classified as "not free" (U.S. Department of State, 2003).

The free country subject to the greatest number of terrorist incidents (and, by far, the greatest number of terrorist incidents of any country in the world) is India (Gause, 2005:2). It is fair to assume that a number of those terrorist incidents, in Kashmir, are perpetrated by groups based in Pakistan, though clearly not all of them. It is simply to point out that there appears, at least on a first glance at the numbers, to be no clear relationship between type of government and likelihood of terrorist activity.

In the study conducted by Gause (2005:3), he discovered that the case of India stands out in bold relief in these numbers. "Terrorist incidents in India account for fully 75% of all terrorist incidents in free countries in the four years surveyed. A vibrant democracy with the full range of political rights available to its citizens, India has rightly been held up as an example of the possibility of democracy outside the context of wealthy Western countries". Indian Prime Minister was assassinated (Indira Gandhi by a Sikh extremist) and a former Prime Minister campaigning to regain the office was assassinated (her son, Rajiv Gandhi, by Tamil extremists) by political opponents. If democracy reduces the prospects for terrorism, India's numbers should not be so high. It is also interesting to note that in 2003, two countries classified as "not free" accounted for 50% of the terrorist incidents in "not free" countries – Iraq and Afghanistan. At least for that year, movement toward democracy did not lessen the incentives for terrorists to operate in those countries.

Also, in a democratic Nigeria, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab attempted an aborted suicide bombing of America's Northwest Airlines Flight, 253 Detroit bound on the Christmas day of December 25, 2009. The motive of Abdulmutallab, 23, was not because Nigeria was authoritarian or that he was not availed opportunity to ventilate grievances or that he was poor, but because he was misguided and has been inculcated with deep-rooted ideology that promotes Islamic extremism.

More anecdotal evidence also calls into question a necessary relationship between regime type, particularly democracy, and terrorism. In the 1970's and 1980's, democratic countries generated a number of brutal terrorist organizations: the Red Brigades in Italy, the Provisional IRA in Ireland and the United Kingdom, the Japanese Red Army, the Red Army Faction (Baader-Meinhof Group) in West Germany. The transition to democracy in Spain did not eliminate ETA (Basque separatist) terrorism. Turkish democracy suffered through a decade of mounting political violence from the late 1960's through the late 1970's. In fact, a

statistical study based upon data through the 1980's found a strong positive correlation between democracy and terrorism (Eubank and Weinberg, 1994). The red shirt in Bangkok, Thailand strong and admirable democratic system in Israel has been the subject of terrorist assault, but has also produced some number of its own terrorists, including the assassin.

More recently, Boko Haram (meaning English is forbidden) in the Northern Nigeria may well deserve to be classed visual terrorist group. Despite the fact that Nigeria is democratic, this group trained its members and received supports outside the shores of Nigeria attacking schools and churches including children.

Implications of Terrorism for Global Security

Implications of terrorism are enormous and have far-reaching consequences on the collective peace and security of the entire world. This is because national borders are becoming blurred and difficult to identify. In effect, the nationals of each nation-state migrate far and wide to other regions of the world. Therefore, any act of terrorism in any part of the world will definitely affect other regions of the world. Also, the influx of refugees arising from such terrorist acts will have negative impacts on the economy of the host country.

Also, organised terrorism denies a society security, peace, stability, good governance and socio-economic development. Apart from destroying lives on a large scale, the damages terrorism does to infrastructural facilities especially those directly related to developmental processes like electricity, communication, and transportation can be enormous and prosperity-retarding.

It also creates global enmity and hostility, thereby propelling insecurity, psychological depression and fear in the minds of citizens of the world. Also, investors and tourists (foreign and domestic) are also discouraged, thus denying the state or society vital developmental (foreign revenue) revenue (Nwolise, 2000, 8). In a situation where new investments are not emerging (as a result of fear of attack), and existing factories and industries are not producing at reasonable proportions of their installed capacities, retrenchment of workers may follow, and this in turn may increase crime rate, and worsen security situations. General economic depression may follow with serious consequences for people's welfare.

Conclusion

The paper looked at terrorism vis-à-vis global security. While elucidating the impact of democracy on terrorism, it found out that the existing literatures were divided on the synergy between democracy and terrorism. It however, presented the two sides of the argument. For instance, the American and Eurocentric perspective views democracy as capable of minimising terrorism. According to it, when a dictatorship controls the political

life of a country, tyranny, despair and radicalism suffocate political freedom and responsible opposition is either silenced or completely eliminated. This school of thought also argued that democracy is equipped with political freedoms and liberalism, where citizens are allowed to participate freely in the decision to enthrone and dethrone leaders at will. The opportunity of participation and the power to change irresponsible leadership at will naturally neutralises frustration, aggression and violence that could eventually lead to terrorism.

The other school of thought contends that it is illogical to link democracy to terrorism as such linkage suffers from theoretical and empirical problems. According to the school of thought, democratic regimes have been noted to promote terrorism. In 1970s and 80s, countries like West Germany, Japan and Indian could not be divested of terrorist activities. Having evaluated and elucidated two differing opinions, the paper concluded that democratising the hitherto authoritarian regimes may reduce terrorism and its attendant consequences as terrorism provides opportunities to resolve conflicts.

The study also illuminated the causes of terrorism, features of terrorism, as well as controversial nature of terrorism, while bringing out the enormity of the implications of terrorism on global security; it concluded that the issue of non-interventionist approach in international relations should be adopted. Nations should not interfere in the internal politics of another nation.

Collectively, nations should intensify their efforts in the area of conciliation, cooperation, compromise and dialogue. Different ideologies and belief system of nations should be respected. Nations of the world should also democratise their political and socio-economic ways of lives. Setting the pace and ground for political reforms that will bring about free, fair and credible election, the one that confers on the electorate power to determine who governs them.

There is need for political and economic rethinking nationally and internationally, to ensure justice in the running of human affairs. This in a way is capable of eschewing organised crimes against humanity.

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