

An Overview of the Political Theories of Terrorism

Ishrat Abbasi^{1, 2}, Mukesh Kumar Khatwani^{3, 4}

¹PhD Student, Faculty of Humanities, University of Erfurt, Germany

²Assistant Professor International Relations, University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan

³PhD Student, School of Politics, Law and Sociology, University of Sussex, Brighton, UK

⁴Assistant Professor Area Study Centre, Far East and South East Asia University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan

Abstract: *The history of terrorism, most likely originated from the history of political violence yet the term terrorism is comparatively recent. This action is used for coercion, however, there is no unanimously agreed and internationally recognized definition to this action. Common definitions refer this phenomenon to the terrifying acts for any political and religious interest through targeting non-combatants (civilian). By this means, this action is politically and emotionally stimulated and hard to be defined through a single definition. [5]. This research paper attempts to review the most important political approaches to the study of terrorism within the sphere of Political discipline in order to understand the nature and intensity of this action .*

I. Introduction

For the lack of unanimous approach as to the general characteristics of the terrorist action, there is a variety of definitions to explain this term. In this regard, some scholars and international personalities have different opinions. According to Angus Martyn the international community has not developed yet any all-inclusive definition of terrorism yet there are adopted conventions that define the categories of terrorist acts [12].

In the words of Bruce Hoffman, scholars and governments are unable to give a unanimously agreed definition to terrorism there are some such elements which create a line of demarcation between terrorism and other types of crimes. In his words Terrorism is an act of violence for the achievement of political interests, it has sweeping psychological implications, and it is committed mostly by non-state entities as well as revolutionary groups [3].

According to Carsten Bockstette terrorism is a combination of psychological and tactical features. It occurs when conflict erupts between two asymmetrical parties, then the weaker one uses terror and violence as a weapon. In terrorism media is used as a medium for achieving the destined targets to influence the audience [7]

Terrorist acts are mostly with political purposes, which they use to change the circumstances in their own favor when they assume other means redundant. Terrorist techniques aim at to range maximum psychological, physical and materialist causalities targeting a large number of audiences .They not only attack civilians, but national symbols like organizations, offices and state property is also main target of terrorist attack so that to shake the foundations of the country and undermine the moral of state and individuals [15]. When the inter-relationship between terrorism and religion come up, it brings more catastrophes because the fighters use all their potential as they consider their failure as the failure of religious ideology [19].

Terrorism and have power over society through terror are very ancient and notorious practices in the history. Despite existence of volumes of studies and literature about history of terrorism, terrorist movements, psychological mindset of terrorists; the theoretical literature on terrorism has not been developed extensively. This theoretical literature could help to understand the roots and motives of this practice and the remedies to protect the society from this evil practice. On account of shortage of theoretical approaches the knowledge and understanding of terrorism is influenced by a variety of social disciplines such as social psychology, cultural anthropology, political and international studies, religion, communications, and weapons and information technology [1]. As the terrorist acts are mostly under the political and religious influences, therefore, it is essential to understand some significant political approaches as a theoretical framework to understand this phenomenon.

II. Anarchism As A Theory Of Terrorism

Anarchism is often referred to as the nineteenth century roots of terrorism. The term Anarchism, derived from a Greek word *Anarkos*, which means 'without a chief'. This term was introduced in 1840 by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. This idea was owned by Europeans, Russians and Americans in the 19th century. The essence of this idea is abolishment of Government system and its replacement with voluntary cooperation as a

society's organized principle. This ideology was adopted by the industrial working classes as a political voice for their rights [22].

At the end of nineteenth century and earlier decade of the twentieth century, the major political assassinations and casualties were instigated by anarchist ideas and labelled as anarchist terrorism. These killings created an assurance and sense of fear among governments about the existence of anarchist conspiracies on national and international level. The political assassinations included assassination of Russian Tsar Alexander II at the hands of Ignatei Grinevitski, a member of People's Will Party in 1881 and the assassination of the French President Marie-François Sadi Carnot who was killed by an anarchist Sante Geronimo Caserio in 1894 as well as In 1901 American president William McKinley was assassinated by Leon Czolgosz. Besides, in 1890 Greenwich observatory in London was bombed by a French anarchist Martial Bourdin. This information depicts that anarchism was the motivational ideology of terrorism in nineteenth century for its intimidating thoughts and tactics. It justifies criminal actions of terrorism for its systematic ideas about agitation. Anarchism was the first political ideology which gave systematic idea for the political agitations and regarded violence as a tactic for the achievement of political motives [2]. This statement is further elaborated by reviewing some anarchist philosophers' ideas in the following paragraphs.

Six steps to destroy the social structure for political and revolutionary changes were at first given by Mikhail Bakunin. He says wipe out the intelligent and the vigorous persons of the society first, then abduct the wealthy community for ransom for your financial strength, join the group of politicians and take out their secrets, help the criminals of that society to make your own militants, suppress the opposition. Carlo Pisacane suggests the philosophy of bombing and propaganda for the achievement of political interests while Karl Heinzen and Johann has supported the use of weapons of mass destruction for the same causes. Furthermore, Charles Gallo, Auguste Vaillant, Emile Henry, and Claudius Konigstein backed the idea of targeting innocent people, crowded places and economic hubs for the purpose of revolutionary struggle and change [15].

The main difference between anarchism and terrorism is this that anarchism is a political ideology and form of governance while terrorism is not any political ideology. Mostly anarchist turn down terrorism as a way of achieving nationalist and religious purposes but theoretically they give good reason for terrorism as a criminal action to break down the very structure of the society. Simply, there are weak theoretical linkages between anarchism and terrorism as anarchists do not support blind suicide bombing and target infrastructure, institutions; while terrorists affect people. Rarely anarchists and terrorists work interchangeably [21].

III. The Political Ideology Of Fascism As A Theory Of Terrorism

The word Fascism is a Latin word which means to use power to impress or scare people. In 1922, Benito Mussolini introduced this term and in the same year Fascists attacked socialist officers, killed many leading figures, set their homes at fire and occupied cities by using violent means. [8]. In the same year, Mussolini ordered to confiscate public buildings and trains, post offices in Northern Italy. Italian coalition government was too weak to respond the fascist advance. In this scenario Victor Emmanuel III appointed Mussolini as Prime Minister of Italy; this event was exaggerated by fascist as fascists' heroic exploits [8].

In order to control over the Italian parliament Mussolini's coalition government introduced economic liberal policies, and introduced Acerb Law, which guaranteed a plurality of the seats in parliament to any party or coalition list in an election that received 25% or more of the vote. But, as a result through violence and intimidation fascist won the majority of seats and won the elections. After fascists' success a reign of terror began against Socialist Party and many socialist leaders were kidnapped and murdered.

From 1925-1929 Fascist completely ceased the power of Italy through denying access to opposition to parliament and imposing censorship [9]. Repelling the ideology of materialism, liberal democracy, rationality and positivism the ideology of fascism advocates the concept of emotionalism, irrationalism, and vitalism [23].

According to Italian Encyclopedia for Fascism the growth of empire, that is to say the expansion of the nation, is an essential manifestation of vitality, and opposes a sign of decadence"[16]. Fascism supports the concentration of total power (economic, social and political) into sole supreme authority that is super patriot and annihilates all kinds of opposition [24].

Fascism is ideology of war, violence, domination and conflict. This political ideology supports violence for human progress and advocates militarism for domination and oppressing adversaries. This also views war as a mean of change in society and considers conflict as a fundamental law of life to gain strength [8].

Italian Fascist philosopher Giovanni Gentile writes in 'The Origins and Doctrines of Fascism':

The healthiest and most vital of them assert themselves against the weakest and less well adapted through conflict; the natural evolution of nations and races takes place through conflict. He further says that mankind only progress through division, and progress is achieved through the clash of one side over another [11]

Fascism sanctions social interventionism and pursues policies of social indoctrination by means of propaganda and controlling education and media. Fascism supports domestic and international terrorism for the achievement

of interests. State terrorism was practically applied by Fascism; accordingly the state leader could crack down and extinct the opposite groups and individuals for not abiding by or opposing his governance. It was not the practice of successful authoritarian fascist but the failed fascists who failed to gain control in their own countries and turned to domestic terrorism [13].

VI. Anti-Colonialism As A Theory Of Terrorism

The early years of the 20th Century are known as the time of pragmatic application of the ideology of nationalism when after World War II the Treaty of Versailles redrew the map of Europe and as a result many new nations appeared on the map of the world. This new transformation invented new political trends like right of self determination of nations and ethnic groups. As a result of this fresh trend the groups and nations which were not receiving recognition they started campaign for their right of independence and autonomy especially the colonies possessed by major European powers started a new wave of anti colonial movement. This movement was also based upon terrorist tactics [14]. In this case the main leading groups were Arab nationals who felt betrayed and oppressed under French and British colonial powers. Their disappointment was double on account of few tragic issues; i.e. despite promises for post-war independence and announcement of trusteeship system French and British powers were given colonial rights over their lands; and Britain permitted immigration of Zionist in Palestine under Belfour declaration. By the end of World War II violence was committed as subordinate element of these anti-colonial insurgencies. Resultantly, after the de-colonization of Arab territory this tactic is still applied by the Arab countries against the economic, cultural and political imperialism of great powers in Arab countries particularly in Middle East [28].

IV. Orthodox Terrorism Theory

Orthodox terrorism theory explains, understands and deals with the logic of terrorism as a doctrine and strategy for political action and change. While discussing political objectives of terrorism, this theory focuses established authority and state as the main target of terrorist act. Major themes of orthodox terrorism theory are mainly three and in the light of these three themes we elaborate more about terrorism.

1.1. Functional

Orthodox theory is functional as it is a reactionary theory, which believes that the aim of the act of terrorism is to force a reaction by the government or state authority against the liberal approaches. Rubenstein says that this kind of terrorist action provokes state for haphazard repression and thereby as government cannot meet their demands so it deprives the government of its authenticity and tends the masses to make extreme changes in existing conditions and political groups as well as institutions. In the words of Lanqueur this theory of provocation compels state for subjugation and oppression through draconian trials against liberal impression. At the side of it, this theory attempts to expound that the existing establishment is unsuitable to govern.

1.2. Symbolic

The concept of symbolism is used by Orthodox terrorism theory to explain the representative acts of terrorism which are to intimidate and frighten. According to Sun Zu the intention of terrorism is to kill one and threaten tens of thousands. It's a psychological war which aims at to publicize and internationalize the political aim.

1.3. Tactical

The third component of orthodox terrorism theory explains the strategic tactics of terrorism. It comprises two types of tactical methods one is short term tactic with limited means for short term gains for instance hijacking hosts for the release of detainees and commit bank robbery for purchasing arms. The other one tactical method is for long term objective with vast resources for instance revolutionary movements for freedom or right of self determination or insurgencies against repressive government. The theory of Orthodox terrorism explains comprehensively that what, why and how terrorism aims at to achieve. The purpose of this theory is not to engage in the discussion of roots of terrorism because it provides the basis for governments' anti-terror and counter terror approaches [14].

V. Religion As A Political Philosophy Of Terrorism

Criminology illustrates the linkage between discipline of theology/religion and ideology of terrorism [26]. According to some criminologists about half of the dangerous terrorist groups on the earth are for the most part instigated by religious doctrines and concerns [6].

Most of these religious systems of belief convince their believers to exterminate evils through militant means for the test of their faith or part of God's plan. They believe that it is demand of God that's why their actions are legitimized and for the protection of their religion in present and future. Under this sense the

aspiration for vengeance works as driving force for terrorism in the form of suicide bombing, war against other faiths and imperialism. They consider these acts as test of their sincerity with the religion and accomplishment of assigned duty by God and the way to achieve the will of God and a way towards heaven [18].

Criminology further explains these religious creeds mingled with political interests. In this regard, for the achievement of their political will, the religious figures first blame their own country's politicians for neglecting the important historical part and lessons of their religious issues then they blame foreign influence/prevaling international system for influencing their religious culture. These blames are inclusive of three reasons. First, the foreign influence/system doesn't serve the religion's survival interests. Second, the system competes and has animosity with world's different religion and the third the system is depicted as evil-like force or influence. Simply the militant religion considers secularization, modernization and westernization as the most specific enemies [20].

Therefore, the religious movements start violent campaign against it as the legitimate defender of faith and they justify their actions posing themselves only accountable to God who has chosen them for the sacred mission. Religious movements can be quite violent, ferocious, extreme and carrying pre-emptive attacks in its nature. Simply, in its extremist form religious groups adopt terrorism as a last resort to its campaign. In its tactics religious terrorism is quite extremist and full of injustices and maltreatment. Strategically it supports preemptive attacks for the fear of an existing threat from the opposite faith and ideology. Because of applying this tactic religious groups and leaders can not plan their actions rationally and select inappropriate time and places of target that causes human sufferings. Most of the religious attacks and avenges are related to the historical events; religious terrorism is based on the idea of never forget the past wounds and previous grievances, they are more rigid in their actions and more dangerous in consequence of failure of actions; in this term here is the example of Irish terrorism [10].

In fact, terrorism in the name of religion aims at political motives. Believers of the religious group consider it righteous to adopt violent means in defense of their faith against other religions. They consider their religion universal and assume it their great responsibility to propagate their faith by all violent means. Current Terrorism is mostly religion based; suicide bombing, martyrdom and the use of weapons are symbolic features of it. The significant means of these terrorist networks are Internet, international media and satellites. [9].

VI. Conclusion

There is a reason for the terminological contradiction of the term terrorism for use of terrorist actions as a weapon by criminals, freedom fighters (who are fighting for the right of self-determination) and even states in order to legitimize their order and suppress the opponents. Thereby, it is assumed that terrorism is being practiced by all political, revolutionary, nationalists, religious and ruling class for the achievement of their objectives or promoting their plans. Their struggle or strategy turns terrorism into a weapon of violence, which is used indiscriminately against non-combatants and the targets are common people. Many types of terrorism exist, but each of these has the same objective of effecting change within, or in respect of, a political system through violent means. Among the various species of terrorism frequently identified are ethno-national, political-religious, extreme left-right, single-issue and state-sponsored terrorism.

Terrorist acts aim at having power. Most of the political ideologies were practiced through terrorist means. Anarchism, Fascism, anti colonial movements and religious movements are the main examples in that context.

Anarchist, who were basically working class people they used it for their rights against industrialists and as a result assassination of political personalities occurred. While fascist state of Italy used this power to oppress all opponents. On the other hand the same act or tool was used by the freedom fighters in the name of nationalism against colonial powers. And, since the recent past, religious ideologies have turned into the form of religious movements with organized militant groups against opponent groups. In terms of religious campaigns there is also a difference as to their motives for terrorist actions. Some consider it a theological difference between Islam, Judaism and Christianity. While others consider these differences a political cause, such as; Al-Qaeda's grievance with Western world are political, but Al-Qaeda and its offshoots claim it is a religious fight rather political.

In the final analysis, this research reveals that terrorism is obsessed by political objectives even when the reason given by groups or states, for targeting innocents, are transmitted in religious, ethnic, linguistic, territorial or moral terms.

References

- [1] A.T. Romoano, *Terrorism: an analysis of the literature* (ETD Collection for Fordham University. Paper AAI8515895, January 1984). Available at <http://fordham.bepress.com/dissertations/AAI8515895> Accessed: 02-08-2014.
- [2] A. Zalman, *History of Terrorism: Anarchism and Anarchist Terrorism, About News* Available at <http://terrorism.about.com/od/originshistory/a/Anarchism.htm> Accessed 25-7-2014.
- [3] B. Hoffman, *Inside terrorism*. 2nd Ed. (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2006).
- [4] B. Hoffman, *The logic of suicide terrorism*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, 291(5), 2003, 1-10.
- [5] B. Hoffman, *Inside terrorism* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1998).
- [6] B. Hoffman, *Holy terror* (Santa Monica: RAND, 1993).
- [7] C. Bockstette, *Jihadist terrorist use of strategic communication management techniques* (Garmisch-Partenkirchen: George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, 2008). Available at: http://www.marshallcenter.org/mcpublicweb/MCDOcs/files/College/F_Publications/occPapers/occ-paper_20-en.pdf , Accessed: 10-7-2-14.
- [8] C.P. Blamires, and P. Jackson (eds.) *World Fascism: A Historical Encyclopedia, Volume 1:A-K* (California: Santa Barbara, 2006).
- [9] D. Rapoport, *Fear and trembling: Terrorism in three religious traditions*, *American Political Science Review* 78(3), 1984, 668-672.
- [10] D. Rapoport, and A. Yonah (eds.) *The morality of terrorism: Religious and secular justifications* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1982).
- [11] G. Caforio, *Handbook of the Sociology of the military*, *Handbooks of Sociology and Social Research*. New York: Springer, 2006, p. 12).
- [12] General Assembly United Nations, *Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism A/RES/ 49/60*(December 9, 1994), Available at <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/49/a49r060.htm> Accessed: 10-7-2014.
- [13] *International Terrorism and Security Research, The evolution of terrorism*, Available at <http://www.terrorism-research.com/evolution/> Accessed: 10-7-2104.
- [14] J. Franks, *Rethinking roots of terrorism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).
- [15] K. Borgeson and R Valery (eds), *Terrorism in America* (Canada: Jones and Bartlett, 2009).
- [16] K. Ian, *Hitler 1889–1936* (Hubris: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000).
- [18] M. Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the mind of God: The global rise of religious violence*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).
- [19] M. Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God* (California: University of California Press, 2000).
- [20] M. Ranstorp, *Terrorism in the name of religion*, In: R. Howard and R. Sayer (eds.) *Terrorism and counterterrorism* (Guliford: McGraw-Hill, (1996, pp. 121-136).
- [21] P. Stott, *Anarchism, terrorism studies and Islamism*, *Global Discourse*[Online] 1(II), 2010, available from at: <http://global-discourse.com/contents> Accessed: 25-07-2014.
- [22] R.B. Fowler, *The anarchist tradition of political thought*, *The Western Political Weekly* 25(4), 1972, 743-744.
- [23] R. Griffin, *Fascism*.(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
- [24] R. Griffin, and M. Feldmai (eds) *Fascism: Fascism and Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004).
- [25] R.O. Paxton, *The anatomy of fascism* (New York: Random House Inc., 2005).
- [26] S. B. Grant, *The understanding of evil: A joint quest for criminology and theology*, In: R. Chairs and B. Chilton (eds.) *Star Trek visions of law & justice* (Dallas: Adios Press, 2003).
- [27] S.G. Payne, *A history of fascism 1914–1945* (Oxon: Routledge, 2005).
- [28] T. O'Connor, *The Criminology of Terrorism: History, Law, Definitions, Typologies, Cults and Terror* available at: <http://www.cultsandterror.org/sub-file/TOConnor%20Lecture.htm> Accessed: 30-07-2014.