The Relevance of Defining Terrorism

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Abstract – The sheer volume and variety of definitions of the phenomenon of terrorism signifies the importance it has gained in the lives of society and state. However, universally accepted definitions are yet to be arrived at. This writing is an attempt to seek the causes and problems of this scarcity.

Keywords : Terrorism, Definition, Problems of Defining.

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The terrorist phenomenon has been a significant problem for the international community. Currently, over the last half-century, it has been one of the most pressing political topics. Now the country is facing a 'Current World of Terrorism'.'[1] With such risks so high, a concept that would see no disagreement must develop. But a consistent and unanimous concept of terrorism has so far not been established by scholars, policy leaders and law enforcement authorities alike.

The explanations for this will be considered in this article. It is disputed that, despite the diverse and varied conditions imposed on definitions by a broad range of relevant stakeholders, a widely agreed concept is likely to remain elusive, despite the fact that it is essential.

WHY THE NEED TO DEFINE THE CONCEPT

For academic understanding, which has a clear impact on the recognition, by the state and culture, of terrorist acts.

For academic investigation, concepts are essential. A description tells the topic, depth and course of research as a building block of theory and scientific investigation. The' description of the phenomenon in this general group' is an essential first phase in science."[2] This is essential, since theory and academic analysis explicitly impact the broader debate and perception of terrorism, as well as the effort to prevent its threat. Definitions of terrorism define the conceptualization, application and usage of analysis in public policy, not necessarily inside the academic community.[3]

FOR DATA COLLECTION

The concept is often of special significance to the compilation of statistics, since occurrence and death rates differ greatly based on the details of the definition used. It has been suggested that there can be no uniform data collection and no responsible theory based on terrorism" without specification.[4] There are various definitional factors that create considerable controversy in this discussion, and the incorporation or omission of these from data collection has an enormous impact on the findings collected while analyzing terrorist events.

FOR STATE POLICY FORMULATION

Indeed the requirement for a valid description is not restricted to the academic domain. The absence of a consistent concept often has real and severe repercussions for international attempts to address the terrorist danger, since "states cannot adequately counteract a phenomenon that they absolutely agree must be eliminated as long as they fundamentally disagree with its very definition".[5] States are conscious that 'terrorism' is a disruptive force that needs to be stopped and restricted, but it is unknown what terrorism actually is or is not. As a consequence, when such actions are inconsistently classified as terrorist or otherwise the procedures and interventions intended to neutralize the danger can be haphazard, contradictory, and inaccurate.

FOR INTERNATIONAL COUNTER TERRORISM POLICY

It is shown by research that "wrong definitions lead to wrong counter strategies." One opinion is that this "absence of an internationally accepted definition of terrorism has resulted in international lawlessness and authoritarian vigilantism."[6] It can also be shown that meanings have far-reaching implications and play a crucial role in wider international policies, legislation and counter-terrorism initiatives.

SHEER VOLUME AND VARIETY OF DEFINITIONS

The sheer volume and diversity of all who have been offered is one big challenge in trying to shape a single concept. Based on the facets or elements they take into account, different authors interpreted the definition differently. The methods of terrorism are more essential for others and the result for others. The question of the content of the concept then emerges. If it is defined as aggression against innocent persons or non-combatants in order to accomplish different purposes, then the application of the word becomes too large. Also identifying 'non-combatants' is quite complicated. Similarly, when responding to the spread of fear in the audience, it is difficult to differentiate between terrorism committed by some person, community or entity and the state itself. In identifying terrorism, there is still a big issue, with both concepts depicting non-state perpetrators as terrorists, thus totally avoiding state terrorism. Instead it is pointed to as a gross human rights abuse.

Through reviewing the vast variety of existing meanings and finding the commonalities between them, several scholars have tried to solve this problem. For example, Dershowitz says that meanings typically consist of elements falling into five categories: the nature of the group; the existence of the aims and victims; the means; the objectives; and the strategies for achieving goals.[7]

Similarly, an important and illuminating analysis was carried out by Schmid and Jongman, gathering data from over 100 meanings and providing a collection of common elements from this. They noticed that there were 22 prevalent elements, of which 'violence',' power',' political' and 'fear, terror stressed' and 'danger' were the most frequently presented.[8] They claimed that on average "authors used eight categories to define terrorism"[9]

CHANGING NATURE OF TERRORISM

Terrorism is a social problem, because it is complex by nature, as culture. Terrorism is not only "as old as warfare itself," but its existence has evolved regularly and significantly over its lifespan.[10] The dynamism and transformational quality of terrorism renders it incredibly difficult to describe the method. While an act of terrorism from the 18th century could be satisfactorily protected by a certain term, it may be completely unacceptable as a mark for an act carried out in the modern past. Therefore, it has been claimed that the only major problem with the definition of terrorism... is its capacity to evolve," and it is definitely a crucial problem.[11] The lack of agreement among nations on the concept of terrorism has contributed to a continual shift in its meaning and importance.

NEGATIVITY ASSOCIATED WITH THE TERM

Terrorism's negative mental and moral overtones often pose a significant challenge in the direction a generally agreed concept is accomplished. Naturally, a terrorist attack instils a certain distrust and terror in the populace. The most universally accepted feature of the word "terrorism" today is that it is pejorative."[12] In reality, terrorism has historically had hopeful overtones, and definitely has not been subject to such unified abhorrence.[13] The negativity correlated with terrorism describes multiple facets of a definition's inability to shape. Second, it was suggested that there is an implicit definition of terrorism as 'violence that we do not agree with"[14] This characterization of all unacceptable acts of aggression as terrorism complicates the dilemma and contributes to the uncertainty over the limits and functions of the words and is another illustration of the semantic stretching of Sartori. The labelling of general aggression as terrorism weakens the sense of the word and allows it much more difficult to recognize terrorist activities. Common cynicism often dilutes concept debates, forcing writers to render "convoluted semantic obfuscations to sidestep the pejorative overtones of terrorism"[15] This refers to the earlier issue about whether the conflict about meaning is merely due to definitions and implies that writers are compelled to join into simplistic arguments in attempt to avoid certain detrimental connotations, whereas the search has real and important value.

THE ROLE OF LEGITIMACY

Legitimacy is a central element in this discussion, with existing understandings that grant the state legitimacy to perform aggressive actions against other states and non-state groups or persons. It has been proposed that "terrorism is a fight between the terrorist group and the state over legitimacy." Therefore while states can have the freedom to participate in acts of violence and to deny arguments that their activities are equal to terrorism, while carrying out similar violence, they simultaneously recognise and accuse sub-state actors of terrorism. In internationally theorising, conceptualising, identifying and combating extremism, this disparity poses a significant obstacle.

In two points, it is criticized, the first of which is a stated falsification of the interpretation of validity. Hoffman claims that the Weberian idea that the state has a legal monopoly on aggression is a misnomer, and that it is never valid "even if violence is inevitable."[16] This implies that although states do often have reason for violence to be carried out to defend their authority and people, this violence is never legal. "A second interpretation indicates that the terrorist classification may be used as a semantic device by which the state and its agents divert attention

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from their own crimes."[17] This implies, then that when states mark and criminalize organizations and people as terrorists, and exempt themselves from terrorist categories, they are trying to cover their acts to any degree or giving them unjustified legitimacy. Although true and useful in other ways, both views serve to confuse the problem of meaning in this regard.

The position of credibility in definitional terms is not limited to discussions between state and non-state actors; with regard to terrorists themselves, it is also critical. The aphorism "one man's terrorist is another's freedom fighter" is all too much used inside terrorism debates. Another important definitional challenge, though is illustrated, which builds on both the discussions concerning the negative connotations of the word and the position of validity. The line between terrorists and independence activists is always blurred across democratic systems, "it is argued."[18] This suggests that criminals and independence activists are fundamentally separate and should be handled in every way. Freedom fighters are given a kind of validity for their acts, or even legitimacy, whereas terrorists are not. In this respect, independence fighters are primarily differentiated from militants who use aggression in an effort to bring about constitutional change toward an organized and lawful state government by attempting to liberate themselves from authoritarian control by undemocratic regimes.[19]

THE STATE AS TERRORIST

The role of state and non-state entities in the analysis of terrorism is indeed of considerable significance, and the interpretation, labelling and definition of the term poses another significant challenge. As mentioned earlier, the perpetrators of terrorist attacks and their status as either state or non-state actors were regarded by few of the concepts studied. For a variety of factors, this is a critical problem. "A state is a human community that (successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force" has historically been known."[20] Not just political theory, but also broader academia, governmental policy, and indeed, legislation have been influenced by this interpretation.

Some will then insinuate the usage of armed action as a lawful use of control, whereas any kind of non-military use of force or aggression would be deemed a form of terrorism."[21] It is not, however, widely agreed to discount the acts of states from the concepts of terrorism. Although only groups that are not part of the official state apparatus can commit terrorism, according to many definitions of terrorism," many advocate for the incorporation of state violence within the definitions of terrorism.[22] States have carried out aggression on a much greater disruptive

and deadly scale than sub-state actors across the years, and various scholars are also dissatisfied with the propensity to discount states from terrorism classifications. Nonetheless, one perception of terrorism demands that sub-state actors be the perpetrators of the act, implying that although states can terrorism, they cannot be terrorists by definition."[23] This is mirrored, along with many others in the meanings given by both the CIA and the Global Terrorism Database as considered earlier. Considering that it is the state that is the strongest tool of political and social influence in the international community, if the state disregards its own acts from the concepts of terrorism, and yet continues to persecute sub-state actors for similar behavior, this will contribute to discomfort in the general population. The position of state and non-state actors is a critical and contested feature of the meaning debate and one that is especially contentious and troublesome.

CONCLUSION

Today's terrorism is different from previous criminal acts and strategies, as mentioned above. Along with the development of military, networking and transportation technology, the rise of transnational religious terrorism has strengthened the terrorists' influence and increased their violence.

The international community is also far from finding agreement on the concept of terrorism, in view of all those documented risks and dangers. There is also the discord between one man's terrorism, another man's freedom fighting." In order to resolve this relativist interdependence, a collective and coordinated international community is required. Only if it is deemed above the propaganda goals will a true understanding of the problem be accomplished and terrorism affects the security and prosperity of the entire world similarly.

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