

Terrorism: A Critical Analysis

written by Maheen Tanveer | November 7, 2022



When talking about terrorism, it is witnessed in almost every society throughout the human history. It is said that its roots lie in the French Revolution but, terrorism can be sketched in the earlier times as well. Looking into the definitions of “terrorism”, we cannot find a single idea or explanation which defines it. Taking the most reliable definitions in consideration, FBI defines terrorism as the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a Government or civilian population in furtherance of political or social objectives. In addition, US code defines it as premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by sub-national groups. This simply draws an idea that terrorism is use of violence against individuals or governments to intimidate them. By the definitions it’s clear that such sought of activities are labelled as “terrorist activities” but only some of the acts occuring around the world fall under “terrorism”.



The superpowers or the dominant powers take the authority to label certain acts as terrorism and not the others. Why there exists such a divergence when considering terrorism? From the above definition it is clearly evident that any sort of religion or group is not associated with terrorism, then why only specific groups or religion is targeted when terrorism is considered in the world system. Why when same acts of terrorism is carried out by a specific group or a state is not recognized as terrorism and they are called as freedom fighters but when these very acts are carried out by a different group or state they are labelled as terrorist activities under terrorism. From where does this distinction emerge? The very reason of religion underlines this distinction.



During the Iraq war, many of the civilian population were killed and different forms of violence were used, but still this act will not be labelled as terrorism. Here is the distinction that the term terrorism is not associated with the western world, but most importantly associated with the Arabs and the Muslims. Majority of the world if asked to define terrorism through a portrait they will through one way or the other portray it through the Islamic World. Even our very own Pakistan is seen as a terrorist country by many around the globe after the 9/11 attacks. It is seen as a hot bed of terrorism or a nursery of terrorism and it is even said that there are school based terrorist ideas in Pakistan.

In addition to this, the terrorism word is so associated with the Muslims and the Arab world that even on the airports these individuals have to go through a strict security check. Even many of the movies are giving this distorted idea against the Arab World labelling them as terrorists. So, the basic idea is that Terrorism is usually associated with a specific religion and under these other acts of terrorism are simply forsaken. Association of Terrorism with religion and particularly with Islam is not justified as none of the religion in this society give teachings to practice terrorism to safeguard rights and it would not be wrong to say that Terrorism has no religion which means that its not an act supported by any faith or moral teachings.



Terrorism is seen as an ideological and political concept to achieve political, religious and ideological objectives by state or non-state actors. Their main aims can be revolution, national liberations, revenge etc. Terrorism usually occurs due to threat to one's identities or when that particular group wants their identity to dominate over others. Number of terrorist activities were influenced by warfare between races, struggles between the rich and poor or battles between political outcasts and elites. Terrorists usually justify their bloody actions under the basis of social, economic and political unfairness. In addition, they take inspiration from religious beliefs or spiritual norms which inspires them to walk towards the road of Terrorism.

Many of the states also exploit terrorism in other states to guard their own national interest. For example, Iran is known for supporting Hezbollah in Lebanon against Israel. Also, United States sided with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt against the communist government of Gamal Abdel Nasser and also the mujahedeen in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union.

CASE STUDY

United States, War On Terror And Its Global Hegemony:

The United States after defeating Soviet Union in the cold war, continued to fight against terrorism as its rival. This rivalry is targeted towards the global terrorism. United States is utilizing Terrorism as a threat to specially develop their military might. They are of the view that they face a threat from the civilizations especially the Islamic Civilization so to overcome it, they want to develop their military might. So, in this war against terrorism, United States is actually doing threat manufacturing. In addition, United States is using this war on Terrorism as a justification to intervene in different states for example its intervention in Afghanistan, Iran and Syria. Through these activities, United States is trying to maintain its global hegemony all over the international world. Seeing through the lens of offensive realism, United States is at a constant war with terrorism around the globe, being a superpower, it easily exercises its power over

other states and Intervene in case of acts of terrorism. On international stage, all states pledge to stand against and defeat terrorism but in reality, use it against other states. Once the President of United States said that it can use its military might if United States has to pursue its interests in the Middle East region.

According to Constructivism, it is said that anarchy is what we make of it. What we perceive we label it as such. For example, for some states an act of violence of a state is considered a threat while by others, it is not considered a threat. This is what United States did in their war against terrorism. After the 9/11 attack, they stood against the terrorist group of Al-Qaeda and declared it as Terrorist. But on the other side of the story, United States also supports Israel and provide them with weapons and considers Israel as an American ally, here it is seen that Israel is not considered as terrorist who commit terrorism against Palestine. This shows that United States have constructed this concept of terrorism under which they have forsaken Israel and this is due to America's own national interests in the Middle East and they also want to contain Iran. The oft-quoted statement that 'One person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter' reminds us that the definition of terrorism is based on how it is being constructed by an individual or state. Therefore, United States see Israel as their ally, rather than a terrorist.

Conclusion:

Terrorism is considered as among the biggest threat faced by the international world. Most of the terrorist acts are associated with religion and this is done by the major powers of the world. Terrorism needs to be identified clearly and then steps should be taken by the world community collectively to contain this act of violence rather than targeting a specific group. Keeping aside the national interests, States needs to drive their efforts to counter such acts