

# Theories of political violence and terrorism politics essay



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The September 11-tragedy at the World Trade Center, which was considered as the most destructive terrorist attack recorded in world history, only proves that terrorism is continuously becoming a serious threat in international peace and security. Terrorism in the form of murder, kidnapping, bombing and hijacking has been on the rise for the past several years amidst the different policies and measures that have been implementing by the international cooperation between the governments, the law enforcement agencies and military forces.

There is an estimate of 400 terrorist groups which are engaged in insurgency and terrorism in the world[1]. Among these most powerful revolutionary organizations which marked crucial terrorism threats across the globe included the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in Ireland and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka. Both these terrorist groups have significantly terrorized the people and the government in their respective area of operations for several years despite the concerted efforts on various peace talks and ceasefire policies. The governments and authorities of these two terrorist organizations had employed some of the same counter-terrorism strategies but had varying results.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was founded by Velupillai Prabhakaran in May 1976. It is the most advanced and most fearful terrorist group in South Asia and had been considered by the US Department of State as the most powerful Tamil group in Sri Lanka[2]. The Sri Lankan intelligence believed that the LTTE was responsible for the deaths of former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa, 700 members of rival Tamil groups, four cabinet ministers, 27 parliamentarians, <https://assignbuster.com/theories-of-political-violence-and-terrorism-politics-essay/>

26 government officials and thousands of civilians. At present, the terrorist group is considered as an organization with semi-conventional fighting capability which has gained the control of most regions in the north and the sections of territory along the eastern seaboard[3]. The efforts of the authorities in Sri Lanka remain useless since the terrorist group is still active, despite its defeat as a conventional organization in 2009. The group continues to become the strongest militant nationalist group in Sri Lanka because of their aggressive use of suicide terrorism[4]. The use of suicide bombers and the legacy of mass bombing have raised the LTTE's profile as an international terrorist group. The group, furthermore, is involved in money laundering, human trafficking and light weapons trade which serve as source of revenue for its operation[5]. In fact, being an active separatist organization, the LTTE caused the creation of a separate Tamil state in the north and east parts of Sri Lanka.

Another well known terrorist group, the Irish Republican Army (IRA), began to emerge in 1916 to advocate Irish sovereignty and freedom against the British rule which marked the brutal treatment and harsh discrimination of the native Irish Catholics[6]. The terrorist acts of the IRA arouse because of the desire of its members to take over Northern Ireland, which is constitutionally part of the United Kingdom but geographically located on the island of Ireland[7]. Unlike the LTTE which only terrorizes for a political and economic agenda, the IRA has been organized to fight the long history of oppression and discrimination against the Catholics during the British rule. Notwithstanding its violent and controversial tactics in achieving its goal, the militant group has been able to encourage loyal allegiance from the urban

businessmen, rural farmers, men, women, old and young citizens of the area. IRA members who were armed with weapons were willing to die to attain their political aspirations and defend their community from the abusive ruler[8]. At first, the government of the country, with the help of other international law enforcement agencies, had unsuccessfully put the conflict on IRA terrorism to an end. There were seven attempts to restore peace in Northern Ireland, but these attempts were considered as failures as shown in many events such as the 1974 workers' strike, the feeling of threat of minority parties, and the lack of sustained initiative and power-sharing[9]. But in the end, the government solved the conflict brought about by the IRA because of the strategic and effective peace talks and ceasefire policies.

The cases of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Irish Republican Army (IRA) have been resolved by strategic interventions from the governments of the said countries. However, the two cases had different results in the end of the long peace talks and ceasefire policies initiated by the authorities. The interventions done by the government with regards to the problems of the LTTE's terrorism acts were considered as a failure since the terrorist group was not eradicated. The failure was due to the conflicting international interests between the country and corrupt officials as well as "the use of terror to force terror out of Sri Lanka"[10]. The efforts of the Sri Lankan government to counter the movement of the LTTE before 1994 were considered to be essentially domestic initiatives[11]. Military measures were merely based on the provisions of the 1979 Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). During the administration of the three successive presidents of the United National Party (UNP), which include JR Jayewardene (1977-1988),

Ranasinghe Premasada (1989-1993) and DB Wijetunga (1993-1994), the government was considered to be a failure in acknowledging and responding to minority grievances and human rights violations. This was due to the effort of the government to manage and solve the conflicts of the LTTE terrorism in a minimal and economical way. During the administration of Chandrika Bandaranaike of the People's Alliance (PA) in 1994, the government initiated unconditional talks with the LTTE to minimize the problem of corruption. It is believed that the conflict with the LTTE was prolonged because of the corruption done by the politicians and service commanders. Since then, the Sri Lankan government pursued a four pronged strategy to solve the problem on the terrorism acts of the LTTE. These strategies included regaining control of the LTTE dominated areas, offering a devolution package which could form the basis for a negotiated settlement, restoring normalcy, providing humanitarian assistance to the areas affected, and pursuing a politico-diplomatic propaganda to deny the LTTE international sympathy[12]. At the multilateral level, the Sri Lankan government adopted the UN Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism in 1994. In addition, the UN Ad Hoc Committee on Terrorism was set up two years later. Moreover, as a country based measure, the terrorist group was declared as an 'unlawful association' in 1992 after the death of Rajiv Gandhi. This act forced India, the country who initially armed, trained and gave refuge to the LTTE, to ban the terrorist group and withdraw its support to the group in terms of training, weaponry and other military needs[13]. In addition to these measures were the peace talks and ceasefire policies initiated by the Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi[14]. Nevertheless, despite these measures following the 1987 ethnic riots, the case on the LTTE

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terrorism acts was not totally resolved because of the use of terrorism to eradicate terrorism itself. Sri Lankan police had shown violence to the suspected members of the terrorist group which caused the increase of LTTE recruitment. Since innocent people were experiencing great violence from the authorities, they were left with the option to join the force of terror in order to avoid the terror done by the authorities themselves. This particular related to the fact that individuals of any social status may engage in violent activities[15].

In contrast to the LTTE, the concerted peace talks and ceasefire policies in the case of the IRA became successful because of the cooperation and mutual interest of the parties involved in the problem. The 1994 and 1997 ceasefires and peace talks were considered to be the result of many factors. The effort to re-energize governmental initiatives to solve the Northern Ireland settlement was initiated by John Major (British Prime Minister 1991-1997) and Albert Reynolds (Irish Taoiseach 1992-1994)[16]. Unlike the case of the LTTE, the British rulers did not use terror to eradicate the threat of terrorism in Northern Ireland. In fact, the British and Irish governments launched the Downing Street Declaration in December 1993, wherein the British government recognized that Ireland should be for the Irish people alone. This decision made by the British ruler showed that anti-terrorist interventions, such as peace talks and ceasefire policies, would only become effective if both parties are willing and dedicated to solve the issue for the mutual benefit of the involved parties. This is thus the reason why the problems of this terrorist group were solved peacefully and effectively.

In total, the Sri Lankan government had been considered to waste several opportunities to take control over the LTTE terrorism acts “ due to party interests taking precedence over the national interest”[17]. Through the case of the LTTE, it was proven that international action, which is considered as a necessary condition in grappling the problems of terrorism, is not enough to solve the conflicts of the LTTE, if the engaged parties are not willing to engage in negotiations. The creation of effective and efficient policies to eliminate and solve the problem of the LTTE terrorism acts has not been compensated by the ceasefire policy and peace talks since 2002[18]. In this sense, Sri Lanka’s government had no effective measures implemented with regards to the problem on LTTE terrorism. In contrast, the peace talks and ceasefires in the case of the IRA became successful because of the willingness of both parties to resolve the issue between the government and the terrorist group. The IRA’s case has been resolved at its earliest stage since there was no conflict on the interests of the government and the terrorist group. Unlike the LTTE case which was prolonged because of the intervention done by the corrupt government officials who gained from weapons trade, the case of IRA was not tainted by the political propaganda of some abusive authorities. The British government’s declaration which acknowledged the rights and privileges of the Irish people to their own land was indeed very helpful for the resolution of the issue.

Through the cases of the LTTE and the IRA, it can be concluded that peace talks and ceasefire policies are to be considered positive and effective ways to eliminate and eradicate terrorism acts in the world if both are willing to resolve the main root of the problem. The use of terrorism to force out

terrorism acts is not the effective and best way to cease the problems of terrorism. Terrorism only becomes more serious and destructive in the presence of greedy interventions done by corrupt officials and businessmen who are gaining from manufacturing and trading weapons used for terrorizing the world. The best way to eradicate terrorism in the world still lies in peaceful interventions, such as peace talks and ceasefires. After all, war against something does not always signify using of destructive means such as guns, weaponry and violence.