

Philosophical debates



**ASSIGN
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Terrorism in the 21st century is very different than terrorism in the time of John Locke or Edmund Burke. In the past, acts of terrorism—which can be defined as attacks on civilian targets rather than military targets—were often committed as part of a campaign of independence or to achieve a nationalist goal. They were often geographically limited and did not cause large-scale civilian casualties. Today, terrorism is a global threat motivated by a very different ideology and is much more deadly. Burke would be appalled by this development and would probably support American and government action against terrorists; Locke would probably be appalled by Guantanamo Bay and some of the extremes committed by the Bush Administration after 9/11 such as enhanced interrogation techniques. Both philosophers, however, were very clever men who would be able to cogently argue both positions of the argument.

A good example of 18th century terrorism was the French Revolution, which had the aim of overthrowing the aristocracy and declaring the independence of the other classes. The event was historically very significant and caused huge political ripples at the time. This was one of the first times Republicanism had reared its head on the European continent. Burke strongly opposed the Revolution, believing that violent revolution was not acceptable and would in the end change nothing. It is important to note that these Revolutionaries did not attack London or Washington, and they weren't interested in Spain. Their campaign was focused and motivated by achievable goals. The terrorism of today is different. The mujahideen in Afghanistan come from all over the Islamic world. Some want to take control of the elected Afghan government, but others want to set up bases in Afghanistan to wage a global jihad against the West under the tutelage of Al

Qaeda. They tend to view all Westerners as enemies. Terrorism is now a global phenomenon motivated by a distorted global ideology. Burke would hate terrorism in all its form and support countries that wished to do something about it. Any drastic change is bad, Burke wrote, especially changes that are achieved through violence and with the intention to create a utopia or an idealistic world.

Locke would probably try to understand the terrorists and argue that colonial powers, such as the U. S., broke a social contract with the poorer people of the world, and that terrorism is a consequence. He would not be a believer in the notion of a clash of civilizations, believing at heart that most people share the same values and that most disputes and conflicts are illusory. He would urge tolerance of these different political ideas and be appalled at enhanced interrogation techniques. Respect is a keyword for Locke and his followers. Since he was a big believer in the separation of the branches of government, it's unlikely he would be much of a fan of Dick Cheney who tried to dramatically increase the power of the Executive Branch of the U. S. during the war on terror. He would have a very different opinion of the War on Terror than Burke.

Sources

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