

History of terrorism in the united states



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The definition of the term terrorism is still subject to a long and continuous debate in international bodies. Currently, the term terrorism has not attracted a universally accepted definition. The Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act of 1989 of the UK defines terrorism as the use of violence for political ends, with the primary plan of installing fear in the public or a portion of the public. Many scholars have criticised the definition found in The 1989 Act (UK) as being too shallow. The definition restricts terrorism to political reasons, and fails to include religion as a major force behind many terrorist attacks or threats. The Terrorism Act of 2000(UK) addressed the shortcomings that were found in the 1989 Act.

(Carlile2007)the United States Department of Defense defines terrorism as the planned use of unlawful violence or such threats with intention of inculcating fear. The definition further continues to state that the intention of terrorist acts is to coerce governments in conceding to goals, which might be political, religious, or ideological. (Zelman, 2011). The United States Law Code is the law that deals with terrorism in the United States, and contains a definition that covers all aspects of terrorism. The Code recognizes that politics, religion, or ideological reasons might equally motivate terrorism. (Zalman, 2011).

History of Terrorism in the United States

The history of terrorism in the United States can be well understood by highlighting the origins of terrorism internationally. The roots of terrorism are deep and wide. United States is not the cradle land of terrorism. The earliest known acts of terrorism are attributed to a 10th century organization in the Roman Empire. Romans knew the organisation as sicarii. Its members were drawn from Jews who felt that they could not follow their religious dictates as

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long as they were the subjects of the Romans. Other early groups like the Assassins exhibited the traits of modern terrorism in a variety of forms but one of the major characteristics of early terrorism was the assassination of key figures in what the groups considered as enemy targets. Scholars have consistently argued that although the early terrorism groups operated in antiquity the organisations are credited with inspiring the modern trends of terrorism. (TerrorismResearch, 2011).

In 1622, Powhatan Native Americans attacked a small town called Jamestown, killing almost 35% of its residents. This marked the first recorded case of a likely terrorism attack in America. However, the first terrorist organisation in the history of the United States is the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) that was formed in 1867, and with membership of white supremacists. The organisation was non violent in its initial stages of inception, but it later turned to violence in 1867 by murdering, and beating up black voters, and supporters of Republican Party. Nathan Bedford Forrest, a former general, who is accused of starting the civil war that sought secession of the south, led the organisation. The KKK group caused intimidation to the black people and in effect changed significantly the political scene in the United States by changing the voting patterns during the election period. The KKK disbanded itself in 1873 due to a massive crackdown by the federal government. Studies prove that the tough anti-KKK laws were significant in the political achievements of the Ku Klux Klan, and the laws cannot be attributed to the collapse of the group. The effects of the KKK group are still eminent in the present day society due to the existence of racial supremacy extremists.

The anarchist movements emerged after the end of the Ku Klux Klan in 1872 and presented a new form of violence and challenge. The 1886 bombing of the Haymarket square brought about the first wave of modern international terrorism. The assassination of President McKinley in 1901 coupled with a series of bombings directed at government officials, and the 1920 Wall street bombing marked the peak of the terrorist activities of the anarchists. The anarchist threat continued until 1927 when key figures in the movement were executed by the federal government. There were very few terrorist attacks on the United States soil between 1920 and 1960s, though the exception 1954 shooting of Congress by Puerto Rico is notable. Many of the left wing shot up during the cold war period until the fall of USSR in 1991. The fall of many leftist organisations is attributed to collapse of the Soviet Union, and the gains of the pressure groups rather than the work of the FBI. The FBI instituted a counter intelligence program from mid 1960s to early 1970s that is credited with the success of fighting terrorist groups. The FBI used unorthodox means in the cause of the implementation of the counter intelligence program. This elicited a lot of public outcry especially from the church, and in 1978 the government responded by enacting the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act that prohibited the use of techniques adopted by the FBI in domestic terrorism investigations. Since 1990s to date many terrorist attacks have been thwarted by the FBI, although 9/11 attacks have been blamed on management failures rather than the lapse in security. Today the majority of terrorist attacks on the United States come from white supremacist.

How the Russian revolution and the Irish Republican Army influenced terrorism in the Western hemisphere.

A number of scholars describe the Russian revolution as the one of the most important revolutions in world history, after the American and the French revolution. The Russian revolution was one against economic oppression, and the lack of democracy. Czar's dynasty ruled Russian with an iron fist and in the 20th century Russian came into picture as a country whose citizens were greatly oppressed by the czars because of the feudal dictatorship practised by the czar's dynasty. This fact was coupled by the fact that Russian had not experienced the revolutionary uprisings that was common in other European countries. The czar's dynasty was overthrown through acts of terrorism and rebellion from a small group of revolutionaries who overthrew the dynasty. The Bolshevik Party that was led by Lenin took advantage of the turmoil and anarchy that followed the change of the system to assume leadership of the country. A political system that was to bring a new world order took over with the ideals of communalism in mind. The Marxist revolutionary theory was put into practice in Russia and many countries were influenced by the new wave of events. (Rational Revolution, 2004). The Bolsheviks encountered internal opposition from the Czars' white army that caused the civil war in Russia. The Bolsheviks formed an army that was referred as the red. The conflict and fighting between these two armies brought about the Russian civil. In conclusion, the Russian revolution is a result of two revolutions February and the November revolutions. The February revolution led to the ouster of the tsar by mass uprisings against the Tsar leadership, while the November revolution was a result of Lenin's

supporters who ousted the interim government of then. (Rational Revolution, 2004).

The Irish Republican Army was a formation of different groups within Ireland all with a common goal of fighting for freedom from Britain. The Army is popular for organizing the Easter Rising of 1916 to end British rule in Ireland by creating an independent Irish republic. They are one of the most important events in the history of modern Ireland. The different groups joined hands to form the Irish Republican Army, which was responsible for organising and executing the rising. The rebellion began on a day when the British army was preparing for the First World War. They assumed control of major buildings and announced the independence and formation of Irish republic. (Allison, 2010).

The question here is how did the Russian and the Irish revolutionary's impact on the present-day terrorist groups? The groups that fought for revolutions in Russia and Ireland had a characteristic of an underground movement that is a common feature of the present day terrorist groups. The groups were composed of elements, which were dissatisfied in the public that were bent on disrupting government operations through public acts. Many terrorists groups throughout the world have adopted this methodology. The expectation of radical political change with deadly attacks is a common feature that in the early revolutionary periods in Russia and Ireland that have taken deep root in the contemporary terrorist groups. (Foley, 2011)

The differences in left wing, guerrilla ideological terrorism and the recent trend toward right wing, religiously motivated terrorism.

Left wing extremism is grounded on the Marxist ideologies that seek to replace the capitalism system with the Marxist-Lenin communism system. The members of such groups are drawn from working class movements that seek to eliminate the class distinctions. The ideals of communism evolved from left wing extremism. However, the threat posed by left wing extremists did not die with the fall of USSR. Leftist extremist are responsible for a number of terrorist acts within the United States. They are now live, well within the soils of the United States, and will be found in white supremacy extremists, and such other organizations. (Seeger, 2001). Right wing extremists are emerging as increasing threat. This has been noticeable in United States and some European countries where violence against ethnic, racial or political minorities has been the norm for decades. For example, the lynching of black people in the United States or the violence against immigrants in some European countries. The wave of right extremists is wide in North America where violence is directed towards government representatives. Ideological terrorism is characterised by the use of threats. For instance, where a state threatens an economic sanction against another state if opposes certain political ideologies. (Bjorgo, 2011)

Religion is common justification for those who carry out a terrorism attack. Religious groups use terror as a means of obtaining their desires. Many people throughout the world seek power. This forms the basis of religion terrorism. The act of hating people because their religion or ethnicity is different from that being promulgated is common. (George, 2006)

How has the introduction of weapons of mass destruction into terrorism affected methodologies of preventing and detecting terrorism?

The soviet military used the term weapons of mass destruction to denote nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. The debate on the possibility of the use of weapons of mass destruction by terrorists has been discussed for a long time since the 9/11 attacks. The term is currently used to point the resultant number of casualties rather than the means. The 9/11 airline crashing into the world trade centre produced more casualties than the 1998 deadly attacks on the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. The Centre for Non-proliferation studies at the Monterey Institute of International Studies conducted a study on the possibilities of the use of biological weapons by terrorists prior to the 9/11 attacks. The threat that biological weapons pose highlights the need to expound the meaning of weapons of mass destruction to include biological weapons given the number of casualties that can arise if such threats are executed. The current trends in terrorists' attacks have demonstrated that there is likelihood of terrorists being capable of obtaining weapons of mass destruction. Producing weapons of mass destruction is hard task that terrorists have to cope with, hence their preference on the continued use of the conventional weapons. However, reports indicate that terrorists groups like al Qaeda are working hard to acquire weapons of mass destruction. (Bowman, 2002)

How has modern terrorism shaped the Department of Homeland Security's mission?

The 9/11 attacks prompted the department of homeland security to come up with new ways of fighting modern terrorism. FBI considers the stretch between Port Newark and Newark Liberty Airport as the most dangerous

stretch in the United States. Actually New Jersey was hit hard by the 9/11 terrorist attack. The department of homeland security requires priority in budget allocation. The department of homeland security has proposed several initiatives that will ensure the security of American nationals against any terrorist attacks or threats. Some of them are already in place. They include; improved port security to ensure the safety of all shipping vessels, ensuring chemical security in the various chemical plants in this country, and ensuring the safety of the aviation and rail sectors. (Launtenberg, 2011)

Conclusion

Modern terrorism is a call for a renewed form of relationship between federal, state, and local government agencies, and private corporations in order to boost the security and safety of Americans. The federal government should boost its cooperation with the all the interested partners. There a number of negative effects that terrorism causes on a state from political, social, and religious sectors of governments, communities, businesses, and individuals. Economically, terrorism changes the GDP of a country, may cause an increase in unemployment levels, and the decoration of health of particular sectors of the economy. Politically, there might be unstable political relationship between states leading to poor diplomatic relationship, and the general social status of a people will deteriorate due to the intimidation and fear installed by terrorism. (Morag, 2004)

Terrorism is a vice that should be eliminated at all cost with appropriate partnership of international partners.