

Theology, ethics and terrorism research paper examples

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Theology, Ethics Terrorism

Introduction

Terrorism has been a global contemporary issue as the number of terrorist acts has been on the rise in the recent past as more radical and fundamentalist groups have embraced it as a means to an end. Scholars have differed on a standard definition for terrorism due to varying perceptions on what it entails and its intended outcomes (Fisher & Wicker, 2010). Terrorism can be described as the methodical application of intimidation through threats and violence with an aim of actualizing political, religious or ideological ends. It is a premeditated form of conflict that seeks to influence the actions and decisions of the victims so as to exploit fear among the victims, coerce a target, publicize a cause or change a perceived status quo.

More often than not acts of terrorism are marked by irrationality and fanaticism leading to use of horrible unsanctioned methods such as the hijacking of aero planes, suicide bombing and the torture and murder of hostages among others which cause death or grievous bodily harm (Hamburg, 2002). Terrorism is characterized by the generation of a sense of fear and terror among the victims, the systematic use of violence and the targeting of innocents and noncombatants. It is practiced by political parties, sub-nationalistic groups, religious entities and insurgents who influence human fear to achieve their objectives. Examples of terrorist groups include Al Shabaab of Somalia, the Hizbullah of Lebanon and the Al Qaeda of Iraq among others. Terrorism poses a lot of hard questions for scholars of theological ethics and conflict resolution/peacemaking as they seek to

understand whether it is ethical or not and if it can be morally justified despite its negative connotations.

Ethics and Terrorism

Within an ethical context, terrorism is an emotionally charged issue that draws intense emotions from both its victims and its perpetrators. For the victims, terrorism generates hatred, repulsion and thoughts of vengeance as they feel violated while the perpetrators are fuelled by their powerful beliefs and convictions. Ethics refers to a set of moral principles that are guidelines in determining what is wrong or right (Justenhoven&Barbieri, 2012). It is ethics that ensure individuals make proper moral judgments. Theological ethics concentrates on the crucial component of divine command as the baseline for moral righteousness whereby right or wrong what God or the gods have prescribed is. It defines concepts of what is morally good or bad and addresses various practical issues of morality. Terrorism is a pertinent issue in theological ethics mainly because its ethical nature is subjective making it hard to establish whether is an ethically justifiable act depending on the point of view that is taken (Lee, 2002). Scholars of theological ethics have tried to understand terrorism through various concepts that are long standing divine foundations for ethics. These concepts analyze the ethical nature and context of terrorism.

Trying to understand terrorism from a consequentialist standpoint means that it is judged based on its consequences and whether they are good or bad. This implies that actions can only be morally wrong or right once the consequences are analyzed in terms of how they affect people. Therefore, in

the case of terrorism, does the objective of the act justify the harm inflicted on its victims? More often than, the means terrorists employ have detrimental consequences on their targets that the perception that isn't morally justifiable. However, there are certain calculated instances whereby terrorist aims have been achieved with good consequences such as the liberation from oppressive foreign rule.

Non consequentialist approaches, on the other hand, do not only take into consideration the final results but also reflect on aspects such as the fulfillment of duty (deontology) and character (virtue ethics) and context (situation ethics) among others. From this point of view, terrorism is hardly ever justified because of two reasons. One, as it goes against the respect for the rights of a person by treating them as a mere means to an end that can be used as pawns in the quest for power. Second, terrorism is a grey area in term of guilt or the lack of it thereof of its targets. Terrorists tend to extend the responsibility of its victims drastically in order to justify their acts i. e. by making generalized comments. For example, Osama Bin Laden tried to justify acts of terrorism on United States citizens who were guilty by association as they supported a government and practiced a culture that didn't respect Islam.

Theology Perspectives of Terrorism

It is crucial to understand what results to violence, in order to explain the moral expectations and dilemmas facing Christians. The major variance between Islam and Christianity is that while the New Testament makes twenty- two references for what depicts sinful nature, the Koran gives none.

This means that Islam teaches its faithful only about sin against God. Sin is defined as disobedience of the law and its command. Understanding the predisposition of the two religions will broaden one's understanding of the roots of terrorism. Moreover, the implications of sin and a sinful nature as elucidated by religion.

Islam as a religion is centered upon good works and practices during the existence of human being in the world. The Koran delves into the five pillars of Islam which every Muslim must perform and profess during their life time. The five pillars are a personal responsibility. Muslim faithful is expected to pray five times in a day, fast, give to the poor, recite prayers (shahada) and make a pilgrimage tour at least once. It is believed that upholding these pillars results in salvation. Uncertainty is common in Islam religion because the work righteous theology does not guarantee eternal salvation. This fact leaves a lot of Muslims in a state of reverie as their future with Allah is uncertain. They instead hope that their actions while on earth are sufficient to please Allah. The ambiguity of the situation, leads them in a pursuit to secure their own redemption by incorporating and entertaining radical, violent and legalistic reforms. These outbursts are generally directed toward the societies and cultures that are considered to be invasive and negative toward the Muslims and Islam as a whole. The World Trade Center bombing of September 11, 2001 was directed to this cause. The terrorists involved in the bombing believed that the United States was a threat to their religion hence prime enemies and the only way to combat this was through violence.

Radicals demand exclusive allegiance to Islam and campaign for violence as

a way to defend their religion and culture. Martyrdom operations claim that their inhumane acts are not directed to women and children but to leaders and echelons of higher power and authority.

Contrary to Islam, Christian Realists believe that the nature of human being is inherently evil and sinful. God has provided sufficient grace and provided salvation. Unlike in Islam where salvation is not guaranteed, Christianity provides a well laid out framework for salvation and security. Although forgiveness of sins is granted through prayer, Christianity does not provide for perfection. This is because human beings have a sinful nature. Moreover, the world is not perfect but redeemed. Redemption was attained when Jesus sacrificed himself for the sins of man. Christians are expected to uphold Christian values and live by the commandments and provisions stipulated in the Bible. Moreover, emphasis is laid on being staunch Christians and not conforming to the ways of the world. Spiritual reality is a voluntary concept. Jesus did not force his disciples to follow him; instead he appointed them through the proclamation of the gospel. In addition to these, Christians prioritize their lives on succeeding in their careers and daily activities and enjoying their life and social constructs as opposed to harming others (Hollinger, 2009).

Terrorism based on Christian beliefs is an example of wickedness and iniquity of man. Christian realism indicates that human beings are all equally evil before the eyes of God. God's love is unconditional and sufficient to redeem us thus there is no reason as to why we should not love our enemies. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said: " Loveyouenemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father In

heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”(New International Version)It is pivotal for Christians to understand these key elements in their faith while executing their daily duties. They should acknowledge that life is not only about choosing between right and wrong but is a choice of several evils.

A number of concerns have come up in light of identifying the connection between religion and violence, articulating response to terrorism, and defining the concept of just war. People hold varied opinions regarding the involvement of religions and violent activities. The traditional use of norms and standards has encouraged violence against acquitted individuals and organizations. Principles of discrimination are not sufficient to justify moral conduct in war and cannot be used exclusively to address intricacies during war. Acts of terrorism are always not acceptable.

Response towards terrorism may take the following forms: - by assessing the amount and severity of the symptoms, analyzing the relationships between individuals and organizations that are interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and evaluating the causes of distorted relationships. Terrorism is more often than not associated with political reasons. The resulting response is only directed to the symptoms as opposed to including aspects of international and intercultural relationships which might be contributing to aggravating terrorism. Attacking symptoms is comprehensible because terrorism arouses emotions of panic and wrath. There are different ways of peacemaking and conflict resolution. These methods are used to tone down occurrence of terrorist acts before they occur. Most, if not all terror attacks, can be avoided as long as there is peaceful co-existence among religions.

Healthy interpersonal relationships exist with an overall duty to love and respect other human beings.

Avoiding conflict is a way of ensuring peace prevails. People avoid conflict due to different reasons that revolve around the negative force and attitude surrounding the vice. Human being should learn to be good neighbors by accommodating other people's ideologies and religious autonomy without necessarily swearing allegiance to their practices and beliefs. Confronting others can work, but force should not be used. Peacemaking may narrow down to compromise where individuals may be forced to split their difference to attain a common ground. In the presence of a third party, the arguing parties may incorporate collaborative problem solving (Sloan, 2009).

In the process of peacemaking, causes of conflict and conditions thereof may be handled using relationship analysis both at the individual and international levels. Explanations ought to be sought including the opinion of professionals and scholars. At the individual level, psychologists and philosophers are engaged whereas at the societal level; economical, anthropological and sociological opinions are pursued.

Preventive diplomacy is extremely beneficial to conflict intervention. It involves constant monitoring, early warning and actions. Early intervention was achieved in Macedonia by the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force during the genocidal implosion (Solalski, 2003). Conflict settlement and conflict resolution can be used to promote peace in people's livelihoods. All these factors are geared towards fostering lasting peace throughout the continent.

Current terrorism trends focus on ethnic minorities, national and ethnic

predispositions mainly from marginalized and humiliated communities. A grey area exists between the actual state of affairs and the preferred state of affairs causing discomfort among minority groups. This stems conflict, and eventually terrorism is employed as the last resort considering all other methods have been tried and tested to no avail. This is caused by the intensity and frequency of experience and frustration in anticipation of reprimand and retributions of their actions.

In conclusion, terrorism is one of those global intensely debated issues with different arguments being presented for and against it based on various concepts, morals values and principles. Scholars of theological ethics find themselves between a rock and a hard place as they struggle to find a universally accepted position on whether terrorism can be morally justified or not and. Furthermore, it has become difficult to narrow down on which conflict resolution techniques to apply to counter terrorist practices due to its highly violent nature that seems to only respond to violent retaliation in kind.

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