

# Terrorism and criminology



Terrorism and Criminological Theories Terrorism has become a phenomenon with diverse ramifications in the contemporary world. Often seen as an amoral and disproportionately violent act in response to certain situations, terrorism the favorite debate topic of social scientists and political analysts the world over. Though not justifiable by any account, it is quite often a mere reaction to state terrorism of many kinds. The people who are involved in terrorist acts are quite often the dispossessed and deranged victims of extreme oppression. However, it cannot be discounted that terrorism as an ideology has also influenced people, for instance students, who are not necessarily oppressed.

Criminological theories offer explanations for certain terrorist acts. Social disorganization theory explains the communal terrorist acts. In a society where the collective efficacy of social institutions have failed, a general unrest may emerge, which would eventually lead to terrorist acts. Such an atmosphere facilitates organized crimes that are a reflection of the lack of respect for the failing systems and also of the notion that the punishment for such crimes will be less severe where the legal justice has fallen apart with the failed institutions. Racial and ethnic heterogeneity in socially disorganized communities are apt to come to direct conflicts. In such communities the poverty rate will also be high, which will; also lead to crimes that would gain the proportions of terrorism. Gang wars and organized crimes are most often transformed to terrorism in general. While the disruptions may emerge as an internal affair in the beginning, it is possible that the frustration and wrath may later be directed against other communities or nations. The disenchanting populace of a socially disorganized community is often the targets of international terrorist

recruiters.

The theory of rational choice and deterrence is another criminological theory that effectively defines certain terrorist acts. It can explain individual and communal terrorism in a social structure. The theory explains criminal acts as personal or rational choice. The existence of a swift, severe and certain system of punishment in a state is apt to deter an individual or a society from committing a crime. If we analyze the amount of terrorism that emerges from states where the punishment system is weak, the theory can be proved beyond doubt. A state that fails to execute proper punishments will also fail to keep terrorist activities in check. The general assumption can be summarized that people will resort to criminal or deviant acts if they are not in apprehension of punishment. Criminologists advocate general and specific deterrence to bring back order in such situations. However, oppressive measures taken by the state are very often an obvious reason for terrorism, and the idea of punishment needs to be clearly defined so as to avoid confusion between a just system of punishment and oppression. Effective social awareness with regard to punishment has to be carried out, so as to define the power of punishment.

Though criminology offers insightful theories that could define certain terrorist acts, it is always advisable to consider each terrorist situation in isolation for further analysis. A very delicate balance between theory and pragmatic aspects has to be maintained for a proper understanding of terrorism.