

Globalization and international terrorism: A threat to world peace and security

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Abstract

Recently, there is a growing trend in violence, both at national as well as international level, in the form of terrorism. It is present in our everyday lives and in every part of the world and affects our lives in one way or another. Whether terrorism affected us directly with the loss of a loved one or an incident we were a part of, or indirectly by heightened security at the airports causing delays, sudden drop in a stock values we own, or emotionally by the countless reports and images displayed by the media, it has affected us all and shows no signs of going away anytime soon. Globalization has facilitated terrorists to operate at international level in pursuit of global aims. Rather than using terrorism to change a single society or government, terrorism has gone international in pursuit of global aims.

Collectively, terrorist organizations pose the single greatest threat to international peace and prosperity. Organizations such as Al Qaeda have established a worldwide network of operatives, with links to other terrorist organizations to provide mutual support and assistance. This network has developed links with organized crime, drug trafficking, state sponsors, and companies and corporations sympathetic to its causes. Cumulatively, a virtual nation has been created that possesses the means to conduct war—and in fact has declared war on the world—posing a significant military and foreign policy challenge to which the world has had no pre-planned response. The problem of terrorism cannot be interpreted as a problem of single country or region. This is a global phenomenon with global consequences and in this regard requires a holistic approach. Since terrorism has become a global threat, the question relating to human rights has become pervasive at all levels of society.

Keywords: Globalization, Terrorism, Terrorist Organizations

Introduction

Recently, there is a growing trend in violence, both at national as well as international level, in the form of terrorism. It is present in our everyday lives and in every part of the world and affects our lives in one way or another. Whether terrorism affected us directly with the loss of a loved one or an incident we were a part of, or indirectly by heightened security at the airports causing delays, sudden drop in a stock values we own, or emotionally by the countless reports and images displayed by the media, it has affected us all and shows no signs of going away anytime soon. Globalization has facilitated terrorists to operate at international level in pursuit of global aims. Rather than using terrorism to change a single society or government, terrorism has gone international in pursuit of global aims.

Collectively, terrorist organizations pose the single greatest threat to international peace and prosperity. Organizations such as Al Qaeda have established a worldwide network of operatives, with links to other terrorist organizations to provide mutual support and assistance. This network has developed links with organized crime, drug trafficking, state sponsors, and companies and corporations sympathetic to its causes. Cumulatively, a virtual nation has been created that possesses the means to conduct war—and in fact has declared war on the world—posing a significant military and foreign policy challenge to which the world has had no pre-planned response. The problem of terrorism cannot be interpreted as a problem of single country or region. This is a global phenomenon with global consequences and in this regard requires a holistic approach. Since terrorism has become a

global threat, the question relating to human rights has become pervasive at all levels of society.

Meaning of Globalization

Globalization has many definitions, but at its root it is about the planet getting smaller and the free flow of people, goods, capital, and ideas across borders. Globalization has been sped up by technology and it makes traditional notions of sovereign nation-state powers more and more irrelevant. It is not merely a trend or a fad but rather an international system. Globalization has its own technologies: computerization, miniaturization, digitization, satellite communication, optic fiber and Internet, which reinforces the defining perspective of globalization. Once a country enters into the system of globalization, its elites begin to internalize the perspective of integration and try to fit in a global context. There is not only an increase in terrorist acts but more alarming is that these new acts of terrorism are directed against citizens and not against governments. The world is rapidly moving to realize the idea of a global village. Globalization of the world was the ultimate celebration of the political, economic and social homogenization of the global populations.

On political front there is a consensus that democracy was not only the best but also the only legitimate way of organizing modern polities. On the economic front, the globalization of the economy was a foregone conclusion as nations scrambled to liberalize their economies in order to live up to the new standards set by the World Trade Organization. In the social arena, lifestyle and tastes shaped by multinational consumer corporations such as Nike, Levis, Coke, MTV, were well on the way to westernizing the global popular culture.

Meaning of Terrorism

Terrorism is no longer a marginal problem, such as a nuisance that can be tolerated. It is a real, important and growing threat to the peace and stability of all legitimate states- that is all those states which live under the rule of law. It is an international threat. It is one of the most complicated phenomena of the contemporary world. When it comes to terrorism, we have two antagonistic poles of interpretation; either an act is qualified as terrorist, else regarded as a heroic gesture. Terrorism has multiple faces and may be hiding under the name of a religion, philosophy, politics, or any other name. Terrorism is a way of life. Terrorism is an unconventional battle tactics used to achieve purely political goals that are based on acts of violence, sabotage or threat made against a State, organization or social group against civilians having the specific purpose of producing effect psychological generalized fear and intimidation. All terrorism involves the quest for power: power to dominate and coerce, to intimidate and control, and ultimately to effect fundamental political change. Violence or the threat of violence is thus the sine qua non of terrorists, who are convinced that only through violence can their cause triumph and their long term political aims be attained. Terrorism is an unconventional war against the governments regarded as legitimate according to the state supported standards of their time. One of the aims of terrorism is to keep this war going.

Globalization and Terrorism

The terrorist network at work today uses the technological tools of globalization, and they ignore (or attempt to transcend) the normal definitions of the nation-state. It is ironic that global terrorism, the phenomenon of terrorists operating in and against several nations simultaneously, was facilitated by globalization and now it has become the biggest challenge to globalization. Global terrorism depends on the success of globalization. In fact one may very conceive of global terrorism as a facet of the global culture resulting from globalization.

In the late 1990s, it became obvious that terrorism had changed. It is called 'new terrorism' as the terrorist now employ new ways for terrorists to operate and express their violence. The 'new terrorism' had resulted from the forces of late modernity and, in particular, globalisation. The structures of terrorist organizations have become more diffuse and their reach has extended into transnational space. In contrast to the more formalised organisations of 'old' terrorism, 'new' terrorist groups are often described as networks, because hierarchies have been replaced with personal relationships. Furthermore, these structures often extend beyond national boundaries. Unlike old terrorism, which usually had a well-defined geographical 'centre of gravity' to which all the group's activity could be related, some of the new terrorists have no single permanent geographical point of reference. Globalization encourages religious fundamentalism. Earlier, there was no single religious terrorist movement worldwide. But nowadays most terrorist groups are not only transnational, but some like Al- Qaeda are really global. Al-Qaeda depends little on state sponsorship, it is supported financially by the business and various shade foundations. Recruiting new followers knows no national boundaries, but is worldwide, although concentrated in North Africa and Southeast Asia.

Another potential linkage between globalization and terrorism is the fact that some terrorist elements perceive globalization as harmful to them and to their communities culturally. This belief derives from new Western products that influence the way the local people behave. Indeed, some of the root causes for some terrorist attacks against western targets is the idea that some believe that globalization is a corrupting influence. But, one interesting circumstance that concerns terrorism in relation to globalization is the idea that those same groups that deride the western influence imported along with globalization use its products such as internet for their organization's causes. In this sense they despise the West for its values and cultures, but not for the goods and services that the West provides which help them further their terrorist activities.

International terrorism is essentially political in character with an additional dimension of transcending of national boundaries. It is an extremely subtle and most powerful form of terrorism operating with remote controls. The promoters of this terrorism have access to huge funds, weaponry and shelter. Advances in science and technology have made the most sophisticated and fast moving means available for promoting terrorism in any part of the world with controls operating from long distances across the continents. This type of terrorism may have a commercial dimension as well. It comprises those terrorist incidents that have clear international consequences: incidents in which terrorists go abroad to strike their targets, stay at home but select victims because of their connections to a foreign state or attack international lines of commerce. Transnational terrorism is forced to rely on international transport system to reach targets and on global media to provide publicity and communication of political demands. The need for improved international cooperation is growing. Today, mostly terrorism is inherently international and even transnational in character due to technological developments and interdependence.

The Fight against Terrorism

The fight against terrorism is difficult. The biggest problem is that it cannot be totally eliminated. It might change in form, but it will survive because there will be groups unsatisfied with politics, economics or the system at all times. It is a long-term process and steps should be taken carefully and quickly. The citizens should be aware of the happenings and be able to react to them. Public voice is important in politics. As the constituents of legitimate political entities, citizens need to show how they think and feel through the people they vote for and put in charge. Organizations of any kind have the same responsibility as the citizens. When dealing with an issue such as terrorism, regardless of the transnational, international or non-governmental nature of the organization, the common desire to struggle against a common enemy would help unity. As non-state institutions, nongovernmental organizations make up a bigger share of public voice. The states, as the sole actors of the realist thought, have enforcement power. While citizens and organizations can be influential and powerful with their agenda-setting capability, states have the capacity to enforce the agenda items. The most effective tool in the fight against terrorism is cooperation at the international level. Having the strongest position, states should have a common ground on which to base the ideas and to discuss options, in order to be able to act

together in consensus. To be successful in shaping the international agenda will require a willingness on the part of all nations to play a more prominent part in all aspects of the global struggle against terrorism.

Conclusion

After September 11th, it was widely said that nothing would be the same again. But we are still living in the same world with the same danger and threat and now we are more aware of the consequences and the price of a terrorist act. By this act, terrorism showed its face to the leader of the world, for the first time. As with trade and communication, terrorism also globalized.

Given the wider context within the 'new' terrorism has emerged – that is, late modernity and globalization – it will be important for us to understand that the risk from terrorism can be minimized but that it cannot be eliminated entirely. Terrorism has become more efficient, easier and more dangerous with the help of globalization and terrorism cannot be eliminated totally but can be minimized with the help of international cooperation and international law. Unlike war, it is not possible to end or resolve terrorism through negotiation. It is not possible to communicate with the terrorists unless those people or organizations are accepted as legal and worth the communication. Terrorism is the use of fear with physical and psychological force to achieve a particular purpose aiming to reach an audience for a strong effect.

Unfortunately, the age of globalization has helped terrorists enormously. Globalization has triggered terrorism and made the fight even more difficult. The efforts to prevent terrorists from moving their resources is leading to greater scrutiny of banks and setting up of new measures that will slow down the flow of capital. The fear that porous borders allow terrorists to enter target countries is leading to new rules about border patrol, VISA regulations, and monitoring of foreign travellers. New security measures at airports have already raised the costs of travel and are affecting the profitability of the airline industry. Governments are increasing international cooperation to monitor the flow of information, people and monies across borders. These heightened measures are a result of the change in priorities. Cost is now second to security and therefore in pursuit of safety, profits are being sacrificed. If this state of affairs persists, globalization be retarded and the very instruments that facilitate and accelerate globalization will be blunted. The most important weapon to fight terrorism is international cooperation and law. But to successfully implement this, a more equal, wealthy, transparent world is needed. It can only be achieved with a fair globalization of the world. The concern is to find the right tools to fight against terrorism and minimize the problems and losses it causes. Steps have been taken at the international level to fight terrorism. International law can help the fight against terrorism but the world needs a law revolution.

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