

**SOUTH-SOUTH JOURNAL
OF CULTURE
AND DEVELOPMENT (SJCD)**

ISSN 1595-0298

VOLUME 7 NO 2 DECEMBER 2005

**AN INTERNATIONAL MULTI-DISCIPLINARY
JOURNAL OF CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT**

**TERRORISM AND INTERNATIONAL
PEACE KEEPING**

By

M. E. BASSEY

*Department of Political Science and
Public Administration
University of Uyo
P. M. B. 1017, Uyo*

SUMMARY

One of the greatest dangers facing the world today is terrorism. Terrorist groups - often state sponsored - currently seek to develop weapons of mass destruction for use against civilian targets. These loosely knit groups are especially difficult to combat because they often a variety of strategies, including suicide bombing that are not subject to the usual deterrent measures. Terrorism is currently a global issue and terrorists lack known locations where they can be attacked without civilian casualties. Global terrorism is largely a phenomenon of irrational individuals and so terrorist themselves bear full responsibility for their activities and deeds, and only by counter action can their activities be controlled. Against this background this paper attempts a preliminary assessment of the implications of terrorism for humanity at large. It addresses the measures put in place by world societies to reduce the frequency and severity of terrorists attacks, attempting to strike an appropriate balance between security and liberty.

INTRODUCTION

Terrorism is a contested concept. Scholars are not agreed on what it really means. Stehl in Obingene (2001:149) defines it as "the use of violence for political cause". Whether aimed at persons or property, whether aimed at civilians or government officials, terrorism is designed to win political conversions by instilling fear. Terrorism is unconventional political violence, since it is staged with the intent of reaching a wide audience through spectacular acts that violate accepted social mores and earn front-page headlines (Obingene 2002:149).

Asogwa and Omemma (2001) define the concept as the systematic use of terror or unpredictable violence against governments, publics or individuals to attain a political objective. Terrorism has almost commonly become identified with individuals or groups attempting to destabilise or overthrow existing political institutions. Terrorism is as old as History. The ancient Greek historian Xenophon (c430-c349 BC) wrote of the effectiveness of psychological warfare against enemy populations. Roman Emperors such as Tiberv (AD 14 -37) and Caligula (AD 37 - 41) used banishment, expropriation of property, and execution as means to discourage opposition to their rule. The use of terror was openly advocated by Robespierre as a means of discouraging revolutionary virtue during the French revolution. This led to his rule being called the Reign of terror (1793 - 1794). After the American Civil War (1861 - 1865), defiant Southerners formed terrorist organisations such as the Ku Klu Klan to intimidate supporters of Reconstruction. In the later half of the 19th Century, terrorism was adopted by adherence of anarchism in Western Europe, Russia and the United States. It was

believed that the best way to effect revolutionary political and social change was to assassinate persons in position of power. From 1865 to 1905, several kings presidents, prime ministers and other government officials were killed by the anarchists (Osogwa and Omemma 2001). The twentieth Century also witnessed great changes in the use and practice of terrorism. Terrorism became the hallmark of a number of political movements. In contemporary times, terrorism has come to be associated with technological advances such as automatic weapons and compact, electrically detonated explosives which have given terrorists a new mobility and lethality.

Terrorism had been used by one or both sides in anti-colonial conflicts (Ireland and the United Kingdom, Algeria and France, Vietnam and France-United States) in disputes between different national groups over possession of a contested homeland (Palestinians and Israel), in conflict between religious denominations (Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland), and in internal conflicts between revolutionary forces and established governments (Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Iran, Nicaragua, El-Salvado, Argentina). Terrorism was adopted as state policy by totalitarian and suppressive regimes such as those of Nazi Germany under Adolf Hitler, the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin, Nigeria under Sani Abacha. In those states, indiscriminate arrests, imprisonment, torture and execution were applied without legal guidance or restraints, to create a climate of fear and to encourage adherence to the national ideology (Obingene 2001:148).

Terrorism increased in its scope and content in the 20th and 21st centuries. July 22, 1968, twenty-one Israeli passengers and eleven crews were held hostage in Algiers by the Palestinians for five weeks. The hostages were released

in exchange for sixteen Arab prisoners being held in Israeli jails. Palestinian gunmen attacked another El Al airplane at the Athens airport killing one Israeli and wounding another. The perpetrators were arrested, but they were freed after other hijackers seized another plane. Two months later another El Al plane was attacked at the Zurich airport leaving the pilot and three passengers dead. One of the perpetrators was killed, one was freed almost immediately and the other was released following another hijacking. In addition to the attacks on international aviation, Palestinian terrorists carried out numerous bombings in Israeli shopping markets and malls and against and against other civilian targets. At the end of 1969, as Palestinian terrorism was increasing, the UN General Assembly adopted a Resolution, long sought by Arab members recognizing the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. In December, 1970, five Arab terrorists were arrested for conspiring to sabotage an El Al plane. They served a three-month sentence in Germany.

June 13, 1985, Arab terrorists hijacked a TWA jet full of passengers and flew it to Beirut where they murdered an American and threw his body on the tarmac. In the 1980s, Palestinian terrorists began a series of attacks throughout Europe on Jews at prayers. The bombing in October 1980 killed four Jews and injured twelve. The machine gunning of a Vienna Synagogue in August 1981 killed two and wounded seventeen. In September 1986, an attack on the main Synagogue in Istanbul wiped twenty-two and wounded four. In the 90s, series of terrorist attacks were reported ranging from the blast that leveled the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires killing 29 and wounding 242 others of May 17, 1992 in which Hezbollah claimed responsibility to the 1998 terrorists' bomb attacks on the United States Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.

Currently, the United States of America is the major target of terrorism. In the early morning of September 11, 2002, terrorists hijacked four air lines making routine domestic flights from the Eastern United States. What followed was surreal series of violent acts, which stunned the world. American Airlines Flight 11 (a Boeing 767) was flown into the North Tower of the World Trade Centre at 9.05 a.m. The images of the impact were immediately transmitted around the world and the sense of horror was intensified as both towers subsequently collapsed from jet-fuelled fires and structural damage caused by the impact. Amazingly, at 9.40 a.m., a third plane, American Airlines Flight 77 (a Boeing 757), crashed into the Pentagon (the American Military Headquarters in Washington). The fourth aircraft, United Airlines Flight 93 (also a Boeing 757) crashed into a field in Pennsylvania at 10.00 a.m. apparently after a struggle between hijackers and passengers. Approximately, 3,000 people were killed. All 266 passengers and crew aboard the aircraft died as well as the 19 hijackers. The attacks came as a great shock to the world. Live coverage of the collapse of a famous New York landmark left an indelible impression on millions of television viewers worldwide. Global reaction was for the most part one of outrage and sympathy, in recognition of the horrific nature of the attacks, as well as the personal loss suffered by families of the victims. Though initial fears of a much higher death count were avoided by the quick reactions of these in the towers and the heroic acts of firemen and police, it was apparent that the catastrophe was an act of terrorism with few recent parallels. As the shocks slowly transformed to sadness and anger, more sober reflections began to emerge concerning the nature of the attacks and the motives behind them (Nelson 2003:2). After

these attacks on the US, there have been similar attacks on Russia, Greece, Iraq, Israel, Spain, London, etc.

Indeed, terrorism has become a phenomenon through which the perpetrators channel their demands and grievances to the government. This they do through violence which they direct against unsuspecting targets mostly civilians. Terrorism is different from freedom fighting but oftentimes the two concepts are used interchangeably. One man's terrorist is thus another man's freedom fighter. For instance the US levels Osama bin Laden as a terrorist while many people in Pakistan, Afghanistan and other parts of the Middle East consider him a defender against the "great Satan", a protector of Islam, a shield between them and the horrors of Western Civilization. Also many people in Iraq think of coalition troops as terrorists against their fatherland and consider the Iraqi resistance (especially in the area of suicide bombing) as the fight for freedom and those engaged in it as freedom fighters.

WHAT IS BEHIND TERRORISM?

A major feature of terrorism currently is that it has been aided by the globalization process which makes it possible to recruit terrorists across transnational boundaries. The telephone, internet, and other global technologies of mass communication make it possible for terrorists to transfer information, technologies, and resources across the globe in matter of seconds (O'Malley, 2004). Globalization which suggests the collapse of international boundaries ensures that minute details of strategies plans are communicated to potential terrorists with ease and speed. However, terrorism is not without motives. Perpetrators of violence do so in order to send across messages of interest and concern to their

targets. Below are a few motives scholars have used to account for terrorism.

- i. **Individual Psychology:** An important aspect of terrorist attacks is the psychology of the individuals who conceptualize and plan the attacks. As in the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, while some of the hijackers were evidently unaware of the true nature of their mission until shortly before it was conducted, it is clear that many had been planning their ultimate suicide for years in advance. Driven by a number of perceived grievances and believing themselves to be in a war against a number of evils, terrorists regard the planning and execution of attacks as a great blow against their enemies in order to further their cause. Thus, the individual level of analysis as this could be termed crucial to understanding why some individuals could willingly kill themselves and many as well.
- ii. **Ideological Fanaticism:** Terrorism can be applied to address global ideological differences. For instance, the September 11 attacks were clearly aimed at the United States because of its place and role in the world. This is evident in the symbolic value of attacking the World Trade Center and Pentagon both located in the US. One strike was against what many would consider the ultimate symbol of world capitalism or globalization, the other being against the headquarters of the most powerful military force on earth. Again, the situation in the Islamic world itself whose many governments constantly struggle with their legitimacy was also a factor here. Many of these regimes are corrupt, repressive and incompetent.

These factors also result in domestic hardship, poor state of political discourse and the rise of militant Islam in these societies. The fact that the West supports many of these regimes as 'moderate' is insulting and speaks to the Arab world as complicity and active participation in their misery. Islamic-inspired terrorist groups are not only against their own home governments but against Western governments that support such moderate home governments. The attacks could be seen as acts of revenge, for the perceived destruction caused by American foreign policy over the past few decades. In Bush administrations "war on terror" while military action against the Taliban in Afghanistan was the most visible component of the agenda, the administration also put heavy pressures on countries known or suspected of supporting terrorism, defined as conveniently as possible to avoid opposition in groups in concert with American interests. The US found a close Ally in Russia, which claims to be fighting terrorism in Chechnya. The US had previously condemned Russia's military policies in Chechnya, now the US supports them. Meanwhile, "the war on terror" has permitted US to enhance its presence in countries as small as the Philippines and sell weapons to the troubled military dictatorship of Pakistan (Nelson 2003:4).

There are disagreements between the US and Europe on the extent of the terrorist threat, and there is little support for aggressive action against the so-called 'axis of evil' countries identified by President Bush in his January 2002 state of the Union speech. The US approach to its 'war on terror' may prove to be very

divisive, isolating the United States from most other countries, including its closest allies. Indeed, the war on terrorism has become a central component of wider debate on the future of American hegemony in global politics.

- iii. **Religious Fanaticism:** Islamic fundamentalism comes in many forms and takes many political shapes. In the main, it is driven by a desire to transform Islamic societies according to particular interpretations of the Koran and Islamic law. Bin Laden was influenced by spiritual leaders in the Islamic fundamentalist movement and was guided by a pan Islamic (rather than Arabic) ideology, one that rejects a secular political system and is particularly sensitive to Western values and cultural incursion. Based on the background above, Al Qaeda operations are directed against governments in the Islamic world judged to be compromising Islamic principles, governments believe to be oppressing Muslim minorities, and the West in general (and the US in particular) which is believed to be pursuing a policy suppressing Islam. As such, the attacks could therefore be regarded as an important blow in a holy war against the enemies of Islam. Notwithstanding, a majority of people living in the Islamic world are not adherents to the fundamentalist vision, nor do they believe that killing others will resolve the issues they confront.
- iv. **Grievance and Cycles of Violence:** There is a great sense of grievance towards the West, and the United States and Israel in particular, in much of the Islamic world. Israeli policy toward the Palestinian people,

and US support for Israel, is the important source of this acrimony. The US is perceived as acting with impunity, disregarding cultural sensitivity and reducing Arab leaders to self-interested oil selling lackeys. In this regard few of America's anti-Islamic behaviour include: the maintenance of harmful sanctions on Iraq, muted criticism of Russian military action in Chechnya, the slow response to the ethnic cleansing of Muslims in the war in Bosnia and refusal to accept the electoral victory of an Islamic party in Algeria. Most people in the Islamic world struggle to maintain their livelihoods in the face of corruption, rising prices, failing income, and unemployment. Avenues for political repression is commonplace in countries such as Egypt, where Western supported governments maintained strict control over free speech. These political and social conditions are breeding grounds for extremism and fertile territory for the preaching of hate, anti-Western propaganda and the recruitment of would be terrorists (Nelson, 2003:6).

However, most relevant to the debate on terrorism is the question of power. Terrorism is actually about power and who wields or exercises it. The central goal of terrorism is to achieve political ends, although terrorism actually may wear a religious garb. Terrorists activities often conceal questions of who gets what and how as well as what is considered good or bad. The political position of people and groups determine the uses to which they put global resources as well as the niches they occupy in world affairs. Muted groups often assert their niches and resentment about some events by resort to acts of terror.

COMBATING TERRORISM

Terrorism poses dangers not only to individuals but also to the stability of the state system. While subnational actors remain free to engage in terrorism, the power of the state diminishes. Today, terrorist groups with formidable strength capable of creating states within states have emerged. These groups undermine the ability of legitimate governments to rule. The anarchy produced by local terrorism escalates into a civil war, ultimately engulfing neighbouring countries and even more distant governments and their peoples. A dramatic example of this situation is the case of Lebanon and the Al. Quaeda of Afghanistan.

Terrorism also poses a threat to the smooth functioning of the economic system. Terrorist groups – those committed to the distinction of the capitalist system and those in need of funding, or both – have selected as primary targets the personnel, facilities, and operations of the business community at home and abroad. Business enterprises in some countries such as Argentina and Italy have contributed substantial payoffs to terrorist movements in order to secure relative peace (Yonah, 1979:xi).

Recognising the dangers, the state which oppose terrorism have pursued regional, national and international approaches to deal with it. Although nations are committed to the eradication of terrorism, it should however be realized that the entire world community does not view the terrorist and his actions as reprehensible. The goals and tactics of terrorist as perceived by some communist and third world nations are proper and not to be condemned. As earlier stated at the beginning of this paper, "One nation's terrorist

is another's freedom fighter". The reality of this state is revealed in the debates at the United Nations on ways to combat terrorism. Discussions deploring terrorist actions are frequently combined with statements stressing the need to recognize the right of national liberation groups to continue their fight for independence, for a new political and economic order, for basic human rights, etc. Notwithstanding, however, certain international legal framework has been put in place to combat acts of terrorism. For example, the 1973 United Nations Convention was aimed at assuring legal protection for diplomats, foreign officials and international organization officials. The European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism, the Bonn Declaration which was a major step toward international cooperation are all pointers to global efforts towards the eradication of terrorism. Again, the inclusion of resolutions of the Security Council points up the occasions when the council membership agreed that terrorist-related actions affected maintenance of international peace and security. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons although instituted to end nuclear arms race against the superpowers is also a step towards the prevention of nuclear terrorism. Combating terrorism calls for the restructuring of the strategic relationship among states. Such restructuring must be oriented toward a return to strategies of minimum deterrence and comprehensive nuclear test ban. Proliferation of Weapons of mass destruction poses grave dangers to the security of all nations. As observed by US National Security Adviser, Condoleezza Rice, "the Bush Administration recognizes that terrorism, rogue states, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction pose grave dangers to the security of all nations, and Bush's strategy has achieved great success in muting these threats. The Taliban

has been removed from power in Afghanistan and nearly two-thirds of Al Qaeda's senior leaders, operational managers and key facilitators have been captured and killed and the rest on the run permanently" (Washington File 2003:1). This is a right step in the right direction. Again, the global condemnation of terrorism by states and non-state actors alike across the globe is a positive signal towards the eradication of the menace. This all-out efforts which includes religious organizations across the globe is commendable.

In practical situation, the dethronement and subsequent arrest of former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein is a positive step towards combating terrorism. For many years, Saddam Hussein sat in the middle of the world's most volatile region, defying more than a dozen United Nations Security Council resolutions threatening his people, his neighbours and the world. Twice he launched unprovoked invasion of his neighbours. Saddam was also believed to be in possession of weapons of mass destruction and to have also used them to commit mass murder. He also harboured known terrorists. Equally of international importance and in a bid to join the war against terrorism is the stand of Gadhafi to rid his country of unconventional weapons. With the arrest and ongoing trial of Saddam Hussein some world leaders who had toed the hard stance of Saddam especially in the stockpiling of biological weapons are now beginning to give a second thought to their decisions. Report has it that Libya has agreed to allow snap UN nuclear arms inspection, just a day after declaring it was giving up plans to build an atomic bomb. The report further stated: We are turning our swords into ploughshares and this step should be appreciated and followed by all other countries... (Daily Sun 23:12:03 p. 11). Also countries like Iran, North Korea etc, are joining in

the war against terrorism by halting their nuclear weapons development programmes.

States should embrace dialogue rather than confrontation and violence in the settlement of their disputes. With the ongoing process of Globalization, the need for states to come together, sink their differences and relate as members of a common global village should be stressed. The superpowers should learn to respect the interest of the developing states. A major cause of terrorism is seen in the area of the oppressive tendencies of the major technologically advanced nations against the developing nations of the world.

CONCLUSION

Terrorism, a tactical and strategic as well as expedient tool of politics in the struggle for power within and among nations, is not new in the history of man's inhumanity to man. Indeed, from time immemorial, both established regions and opposition groups, functioning under varying degrees of stress, have intentionally utilized instruments of psychological and physical force – including intimidation, coercion, repression, and ultimately, destruction of lives and property – for the purpose of attaining real or imaginary ideological and political goals. Again, the advances of science and technology are slowly turning the entire modern society into a potential victim of terrorism, with no immunity for the noncombatant segment of the world population, or for those nations and peoples who have no direct connection with particular conflicts or with specific grievances that motivate acts of violence.

Based on the aforementioned points, this paper is of the opinion that to stem terrorism in the international system states should relate and coexist cooperatively rather than competitively. It is through the creation of this type of new world order that states can begin to maximize their preferences. National leaders should now begin to reflect and expand upon the principles articulated by former President Jimmy Carter in his speech at the University of Notre Dame. He said: "For too many years, we have been willing to adopt the flawed and erroneous principles and tactics of our adversaries, sometimes abandoning our own values for theirs. We have fought fire for fire, never thinking that fire is better quenched with water..." (Beres, 1987:123). To succeed in such an expansion, world leaders must learn to accept the inescapable interrelatedness of their national destinies. Leaders should come to the realization of the fact that states, like individuals are cemented to each other not by haphazard aggregation, but by the certainty of their basic interdependence.

REFERENCES

- Alan, M. Dershowitz (2002) *Why Terrorism Works*. London, Oxford University Press.
- Asogwa, F. AND Omenma Dilichukwu (2001) *Modern Dictionary of Political Science*, Enugu, Quiz Publishers.
- Awake!, *The New Look of Terrorism*, May 22, 2001.
- Fraser Cameron (2002) *US Policy After the Cold War*. London, Routledge.
- Joanne Wright (1991), *Terrorist Propaganda*, London, Macmillan Academic and Professionals Ltd. JonBischke
<http://www.truthadict.com/forum/printthreadphp/update.html>
- Beres Louis (1987) *Terrorism and Global Security*, Colorado, Westview Press.
- MacOgonor C. U. (2000) *The UN, NATO and the Post Cold War Management of Global Peace*. Port Harcourt, Rostian.
- Michael A. Ledeen (2000) *The War Against the Terror Masters*. New York, St. Martins Press. Nelson T.
<http://www.globalpolitics2nelson.com.update.html>
- Obingene, A. U. (2001) *International Politics - A Contemporary Perspective*. Enugu, J. T. C. Publishers.

- O'Malley C. (2004) *The Use of Terrorism in Twentieth Century Politics*, Nova Press, Chicago.
- Richard Falk (2003) *The Great Terror War*. New York, Olive Branch Press.
- Simon Reeve (1999) *The New Jackals*. London, Andre Deutsch Ltd.
- Umoh, Bassey E. (1996) *International Relations*. Uyo, Modern Business Press Ltd.
- Stehl (1977) quoted in Obingene Anthony and Chukwuemeka Emma (2001) *International Politics Contemporary Perspective*, enugu, J. T. C. Publishers.
- Washington File,
<http://www.iwar.org.uk/newsarchive/2003/11-0-2.htm>
- Yonah Alexander et al (1979) *Control of Terrorism: International Documents*. New York, Crane Russak.
- _____ (2002) *Combating Terrorism*. University of Michigan Press.