Terrorism between Poverty and Marginalization Reviewing the Causes of Terrorism

Terrorism, an excessive use of power which leads to a state of panic, fear and terror among the public, has historically been the result of three aspects, a fragmented society based on exclusion, unjust exclusive power and the dogmatism of beliefs and ideologies (fanaticism and intellectual rigidity). What is most surprising is that each of these aspects is able to eliminate the space for moderation and consensus between countries and

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communities. This space allows for coherency and regulates behaviour that is rational and humane.

Historically, the goals of terrorism in the 1970s and 80s, were more political and ideological and for the most part sought legitimate claims, whether we are in agreement with these claims or not. Unlike the 70s and 80s, the 21st century came to drain human and material resources on a larger scale in order to spread terrorism and fear among the innocent. Leading us to question the underlying nature and motivations of these terrorist movements.

The spread of poverty, wealth inequality and scarce resources have undoubtedly contributed to the long-term situation of frustration, which has in turn raised different forms and patterns of terrorism. Some people believe that there are the so-called motivations for terrorism, the most important of

which is the situation of depression and the vanishing of identity, making the Islamic world the most striking example in this century in terms of the accumulation of terrorism and aggression motivations.

The impact of globalization is not limited to the economic, political and security spheres or cultural failures. Terrorism cannot be attributed to these driving forces because it has gone beyond them. Indeed, its failure to eliminate these attributes contributed to the birth of a form of terrorism that calls for unfavorable seclusion to claiming to maintain identity. This has become more alarming, since extremists are proposing their ideological terrorism as an alternative to what they perceive as a distorted and lame globalization. These two variables (a distorted and lame globalization and a dogmatic mentality) are presented in the debates of social networks – spreading with rapidly without any logic to this meaningless phenomenon. This has given rise to violent extremism that pushes people to commit terrorist behaviors.

Additionally, terrorism happens in a region where favorable factors exit with unprecedented rates are brought together at the local, regional and international, creating a situation where all aspects of life and civilization on earth are threatened, and has become an obstacle to the divine message that man is the successor of God on earth.

It is difficult to depend on a single factor on a single factor to understand terrorism or identify the reasons that push people to join terrorist organizations, because it the result of a combination of factors, both internal and external. For instance, the US occupation of Iraq is considered to be one of the main reasons for the emergence of one of the most extremist terrorist

organizations, Daesh. Of course, we cannot avoid mentioning the structural weakness and vulnerability of countries in this fragmented region. Indeed, the situation of unrest in Syria and Iraq has created loopholes in the social and political landscape, allowing terrorist groups to cultivate. Additionally, the exclusion and marginalization that the Sunni community suffers from and the reduced space for compromise between different parties has exacerbated the situation.

We also cannot exclude the economic deprivation as a factor, because without exaggeration, most of the perpetrators of the latest terrorist incidents in Europe suffer from poverty, live in neighborhoods with high rates of unemployment and suffer from marginalization. Others from the middle class were recruited, either through social media which portrays attractive visuals of these organizations or through visuals or material or moral temptations.

Nevertheless, there are those who believe that terrorist activity cannot be attributed to poverty alone, the evidence is provided by the poorest countries of the world who are not affected by terrorism. On the other hand, despite rapid economic growth and the rising per capita income some countries are affected by terrorism.

This has brought researches to deepen their reflect on the close relationship between material poverty and terrorism, and considering other variables that go beyond misery and poverty. A variable that is relative to identity and not just economics. Indeed, there are studies that indicate that most members of extremist Islamist movements are twenty years of age, from rural areas and towns, belong to middle or lower middle-class families, attained good

education as engineers and scientist and come from coherent families. Despite this reality, these individuals have found themselves on the margins of two cultures, one which corresponds to directly to their own lives and origins, and the second is a culture of adaptation imposed by a new material or intellectual context. As a consequence, their attempt to escape alienation and social marginalization marks the beginning of their terrorist activity.

Sean Wilentz, Professor of History at Princeton University, supports this notion, contrary to those claiming that the terrorists who committed in 9/11 did not do so for economic reasons that triggered their rebellion against material deprivation or poverty, but rather their goal was to change the world that put them in the shadows.   This thesis is supported by these individuals' standard of living, education and their economic privileges.

This observation demonstrates that terrorism in not the product of poverty alone; because not only are members of Islamic groups generally have a higher standard of living than other Muslims of the same country, but they are also more capable of participating in the political game. This is due to the possession of Islamic groups' means of persuasion, their mobilization capacity and the necessary financial resources.

These economically prosperous extremist Islamist groups have high standards of living, and the same is true for the United States and Europe. On the other hand, extremist Islamic movements in many poor countries did not thrive, which led many to argue that it is wealth not poverty that contributes to the development of extremist movements. The argument is that wealth allows

individuals the opportunity to reflect on ideological and political issues since their economic situation is secure.

The Western interpretation of terrorism in the Muslim world has led some to assert that material factors and poverty take precedence when considering the rise of terrorism, and not factors of marginalization or exclusion. Leading to scathing criticism of many researchers who are aware of the difference of cognitive and intellectual frameworks between the East and West. This perception has confirmed the incorrect and superficial material analyses of Islamic movements and their lack of understanding of non-material factors such as misinterpretation of Koranic verses, the entanglement of cultural practices, religious and historical traditions, and the exploitation of the intellectual vacuum among young people. There are other perspectives that call for a deeper reflection of other factors that are beyond economics that are not accounted for in Western research.

Therefore, the fight against terrorism does not depend on the improvement of economic growth through subsidies and economic aid. It is also not a question of adopting Western values, because it does not reduce the gap between the East and West and can prove to be counterproductive, especially when this case is applied and there is lack of awareness among citizens of the east. This would only reaffirm the sense of discrimination and the imbalance of resource distribution by the state, in turn leading to a perception of marginalization among the poor, who would now not only lack financial resources but social integration. This understanding was reaffirmed after the involvement of third generation British citizens in the London explosions in

July of 2005. It at this time, we began to use relative terminology to marginalization and the clash between two cultures, and relegating poverty as the primary factor for terrorism.

Nevertheless, in the fight against terrorism, we must be aware of the current developments in the Arab world, in this current phase of transition where we are witnessing chaos, instability and the collapse of the nation states. Creating an environment that is conducive to the rise of sectarian, religious or ethnic armed militias and the collapse of old power struggles, without creative alternative prospects for peace. Creating a predictable scenario for terrorism, violence, political and geographic fragmentation in the long run, especially since a consensual alternative is not conceivable in many Arab countries and communities.

Last but not least, it should be noted that most terrorists are unable to comprehend that terrorist activity does not lead to liberation; rather the most ferocious resistance and struggles are historically relative to the merits of their objectives declared and through legitimate means; yet another approach to terrorism and media.