



TERRORISM: GLOBAL CHAMELEON-LIKE THREAT REPELLED BY ALL RELIGIONS

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Other than the challenges of development, the second most notorious danger that Islam is facing today is the ubiquity of terrorism, which is an implacable enemy to humanity and such scourge to civilized communities throughout the ages. Given the amorphous nature of terrorism, it will always throw a spanner in the works of enlightenment and modernization, unless otherwise we fire on all cylinders and put in concerted and all-out efforts to reach an Islamic and global consensus to entirely eliminate all manifestations of terrorism.

It is critically important to refresh everyone's memory to be reminded that terrorism *per se* is not stoked up by Islam as some western fanatics are always fueling and drumming up such propaganda. It stands to reason that terrorism is as old as belligerency, be it national or transnational. Regrettably enough, terrorism has become glaringly rampant and can gnaw away at any countries at an unprecedented level of violence; terrorism has developed notorious abilities and capabilities to covertly plan and execute its crimes on a global level, hence, has grown more efficient and has gone to great lengths to spread terror in such a fashion that has never been experienced through history. Now ballooning into such plague, counterterrorism does require close and concerted international cooperation guided by an international strategy and active initiatives supported by the UN member states.

In '*Counterterrorism and The Role of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in The War against It*' (2010), H. E. Dr. Ali Awwad Asiri, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Lebanon, contends that terrorism *per se* did exist in different manifestations at least two thousand years ago. Asiri also points out that the roots and first instances of terrorism go back in history to the Sicarii; an adamant and priggish Jewish group that became active during the Roman occupation of the Middle East in the first century AD. Etymologically, the term *sica* means a little dagger used to kill extremist Jews who gave up Judaism – apostasy which was punishable by death penalty. Again, messages were sent to the Jews as not to cooperate with such apostates. It is the approach that mirrors the method of stabbing used by the new generations of terrorists that has recently increased.

The term terrorism came to existence and gained prominence through a specific practice that European countries resorted to at the end of the eighteenth century; such practice was previously

intended to intimidate citizens, prevent chaos and maintain law and order. More specifically, the foregoing term got into the dictionary during the French Revolution, as it was derived from the Jacobin rule led by Maximilien Robespierre in what was known as "the rule of terrorism" in 1793-1794.

For the whole world over decades, proposing one theoretical standard definition of the term 'terrorism' has really been a pressing concern, and – admittedly – we have not yet reached an inclusive definition of terrorism. What makes the issue more problematic is that the official definitions of countries, international organizations, academics and even those provided by the United Nations are all different. Still, there is one definition that I may prefer to use by Alex P. Schmid (2011), academic and editor-in-chief, according to which terrorism is a method of spreading anxiety by the repetition of violent action, used by an individual or group, or elements working hand in glove with a hidden or semi-hidden state, for special criminal or political reasons in that the direct goals are not the main ones; victims are randomly or intentionally targeted; terrorist methods may include coercion, propaganda and broadcasting messages.

In parts of the narrative and rhetoric of the West, terrorism and Islam are seen as two sides of the same coin! This misconception is glaringly caused by inculcating into the minds and emotions of the people baseless and flimsy incidents and discussions by some international official and unofficial media, making Islam under a cloud of suspicion and indicting it for being the source of radical, extremist and hateful ideology! However, in reality and only in the modern time, we have experienced many incidents to which Islam was not a party. The worst terrorist act before the 9/11 Attack was committed by Timothy McVeigh, an anti-American fanatic. Likewise, the Aum Shinrikyo cult, which released sarin gas on three lines in the Tokyo subway in 1995, is not associated with Islam whatsoever.

In 1985, Air India Flight 182 was blown up by Sikh extremists, killing 329 people. In a similar vein, yet at a higher level in the twentieth century, Hitler, Stalin and Sharon did kill a multitude of people across different countries. The Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), which was an armed leftist Basque nationalist and separatist organization in the Basque Country (in northern Spain and southwestern France founded in 1959, and the Red Brigades in Italy are all telling examples to the whole world.

Given all these realities, religion was not the only driver or *raison d'être* of terrorism. Since the beginning of the twentieth century until the 1980s, terrorism was cloaked in socialism, revolutionism, anti-colonialism, chauvinism, far-right terrorism and far-left terrorism, fascism and Sikhism. In Israel, for example, the supporters and followers of Rabbi Meir Kahane bear the responsibility for carrying out terrorist acts called "Vigil Justice" against Palestinians in the West Bank in locations such as the Sanctuary of Abraham Mosque, killing thirty worshipers. "Terrorism is not new, not a single enemy; rather, it a fashion of conflict that has sprung to existence for a long time ago. It has been a constant component, not only in the Middle East, but also in Northern Ireland, Spain and South Africa. The 9/11 Attacks were nothing but a sharp and sudden escalation of such a life-long phenomenon", explains Joseph Nye, an American political scientist.