

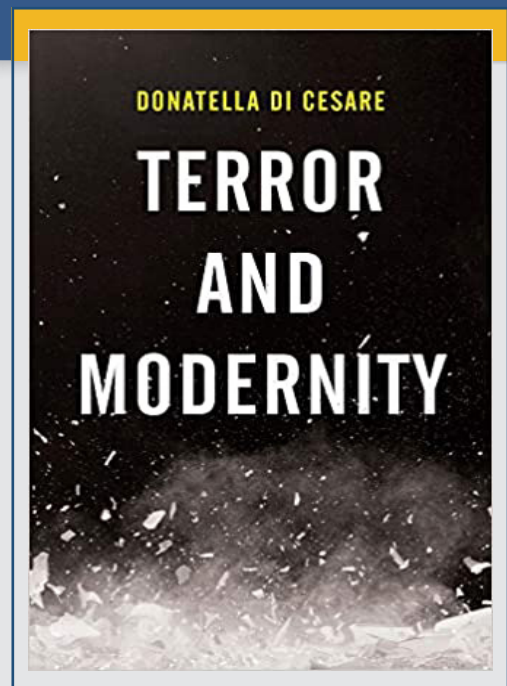
ISSUE
21



الائتلاف الإسلامي العسكري لمحاربة الإرهاب
ISLAMIC MILITARY COUNTER TERRORISM COALITION



BOOK REVIEW



TERRORISM AND MODERNITY

Donatella Di Cesare



Book Review

Monthly Issue - Islamic Military Counter-Terrorism Coalition

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January 2021



Book Review

TERRORISM AND MODERNITY

In her 'Terrorism and Modernity', Donatella di Cesare, Professor of Theoretical Philosophy at the Sapienza University in Italy, provides a detailed account of the terrorist attacks that struck the Bataclan Theater in Paris in November of 2015, which killed 130 people and injured hundreds. She takes a historical approach and argues that terror is not a new phenomenon; rather, it is one that has always been a key part of modernity. The author takes us back to the days of the Red Army Faction in Germany and the Red Brigades in Italy in 1970s when the term 'terrorism' first came to surface and gained prominence.

PHILOSOPHY AND TERRORISM

There can be almost a consensus that extremism and terrorism make up a manifestation of a dangerous deviation from the good manners of healthy society and balanced behavior; both extremism and terrorism are an intrusion into illegal violence that contradicts the basic principles and values of our modern, civilized communities. However, "Terrorism and Modernity" stands out against such a trend; the author believes that terrorism is a logical and natural response to modernity and globalization. Does this view bring about a misunderstanding of the relationship between terrorism and modernity?

When asked about terrorism, philosophers often provide an unfamiliar definition of such issues. "Terrorism and Modernity" cites and draws practical evidence that terrorism can be investigated and assessed in a new approach untrod before and thus sticks out from what used to be more conventional.

"Terrorism and Modernity" falls into four main chapters. Chapter One, "Cosmic Terrorism," is a historical and cognitive introduction, in which the author replays the facts of the Bataclan Attack in Paris, then cites several telling examples of modern terrorism and the response displayed by governments and institutions.

Chapter Two, "Terrorism, Revolution, and Sovereignty" discusses the reality of terrorism, being a notorious sign of fear that terrorist groups are striving to instill and sow in the hearts of citizens. The author also addresses the psychology of terrorists, and the relationship of terrorism with revolutions, global politics and sovereignty. It also compares the partisan, guerrilla and terrorist trends within countries, and explains the points of agreement and differences.

Chapter Three discusses the controversy surrounding the relationship between terrorism and modernity; terrorism per se is a mere reaction to modernity, or a natural product thereof. It also discusses modern terrorism and associated various crimes (car bombs, explosions, massacres, beheadings) and its future.

Chapter Four, "Modern Phobocracy," addresses the clash of civilizations and class struggles manifested in secularist fundamentalism and capitalist terrorism, and their attack on religious fundamentalism. The author further explains the decline of democracy and the increase in intelligence services monitoring citizens in a time of war on terror.

UNDERSTAND REALITY

The author takes a historical and philosophical approach to understanding reality, analyze the relationship between modernity and terrorism, shed light on terrorism in the context of modernity and associated challenges, emphasizing that modern terrorism that has afflicted communities is not a new phenomenon; rather, it is an extension of modernity and an integral part thereof.

In fact, the investigation into ideology-driven wars and the struggle between Islamist fundamentalism and western ideals, or the portrayal of terrorists as nihilists, distracts attention from the salient fact that terrorism at its nadir relates to the struggle for power and sovereignty between groups, individuals and states. The glaringly marked interest in placing power in the hands of the state and its institutions is a feature of modern communities; such orientation per se stokes terrorism to be a weapon in the hands of those who are subjected to state violence. With this in mind, they feel that the only haven they have for salvation from its tyranny is conducting anarchic and unlawful violence, or as termed by the author 'terrorism'. The author cites several telling examples, such as the Red Brigades, the 9/11 Attacks of 2001, the Paris and Belgium attacks, ISIS, and the Edward Snowden case.

The author provides an introductory section that puts into bold relief the appalling phenomenon of terrorism, whose victims are often innocent people who have no involvement in political or ideological conflicts between states and groups. The author walks the reader through an in-depth analysis of killing civilians in terrorist attacks. often referred to by the term 'terrorism'; such acts are most likely carried out by people who live in the poor

western neighborhoods of France, Belgium and elsewhere; they feel neglected and scattered, so they resort to revenge.

TERRORISM AND MODERNITY

The author mentions an important topic related to the terrorists' intentions and interests. The author adds if we inquire about this problematic issue, the attention turns to purely Western issues related to the heirs of the French Revolution and the people of modernity, not to the new terrorists, whether Muslims or non-Muslims. This is why the author believes that modernity is a historical development of human invention and creativity, from primitive tools and weapons to precision medicine, the nuclear bomb, globalization and then terrorism, and very few places have not been affected by modernity although globalization is almost ubiquitous. If terrorism is a descendant of modernity, then modernity per se is the legitimate son of the European Enlightenment. Is terrorism an integral part of western modernity, or are there other factors that direct terrorism? The answer to this question lies in two foci: terrorism and modernity.

1. MODERN STATE, MODERNITY AND TERRORISM

The author discusses the modern state and sovereignty, and the belief that it is the only one that has the right to monopolize and use violence. Despite many objections, state-driven violence becomes legitimate and legal in this case. The states of rule and law in which we live today were not born honed to perfection overnight following the overthrow of the regimes of kings and emperors in the Middle Ages; rather, they gradually took over their powers, and thus became the legal practitioner of violence in the name of legitimacy and security.

Lenin understood very well that, far from criticizing the sovereignty of a state, the reasons that enabled those who controlled such sovereignty when they use it to exploit and fight the working class, by resorting to the proletariat revolution. Lenin realized the depth of the issue of sovereignty and its relationship to the monopoly of coercion and violence towards society or in its service. The author adds that the dictatorship of the proletariat, which the Marxist-Leninist movement approached towards the bourgeoisie, is also considered a legitimate type of terrorism.

To understand how some trends attempted to change reality and brush aside sovereignty from the modern state, the author refers to how the old "anarchists" wanted to brush aside the state and its institutions, while the anarchists sought to abolish the state bureaucracy towards the self-organization of society. The author believes that today's terrorists seek to steal and monopolize this sovereignty, or rather, to possess the power of threat. The author further explains that the goal of terrorists is to be the sole and primary source of fear and absolute sovereignty over the fate of citizens. This makes the perpetrator feel being hemmed in by more panic and emptiness.

Is there a way for modernist westerners to protect themselves from violence and the sovereign oppression of the state? There is a clear arrogance in the way intellectuals, even leftists, address the current issues of terrorism and religious wars in the Middle East, without realizing that by their superiority over others they have fallen into the sanctification of the state and have become modern priests of the civil state. By this, they feed the ideology of contempt towards religious





fundamentalism, for their belief that salvation can only be achieved by catching up with socialism.

The author believes that the modern western state is not merely a peaceful coexistence between the state and its citizens, on the one hand, and between the citizens themselves, on the other hand. Rather, the state's policies and responses to terrorist acts show that it is keen on monopolizing such terrorist acts. This modern sovereignty is also a kind of permanent terrorism, but it is legitimate and legal terrorism.

The author further explains that western countries are gradually moving towards security systems; it has become natural for the army and police to deploy their heavy weapons, which are only used in wars, in their public squares and facilities. Therefore, terrorism remains one of the axes of the modern democratic state that is not satisfied with its symbolism. Rather, it sows terror among its citizens and manages it with sophistication and intelligence. The author acknowledges that the police and deterrence institutions are an original and important addition to state sovereignty.

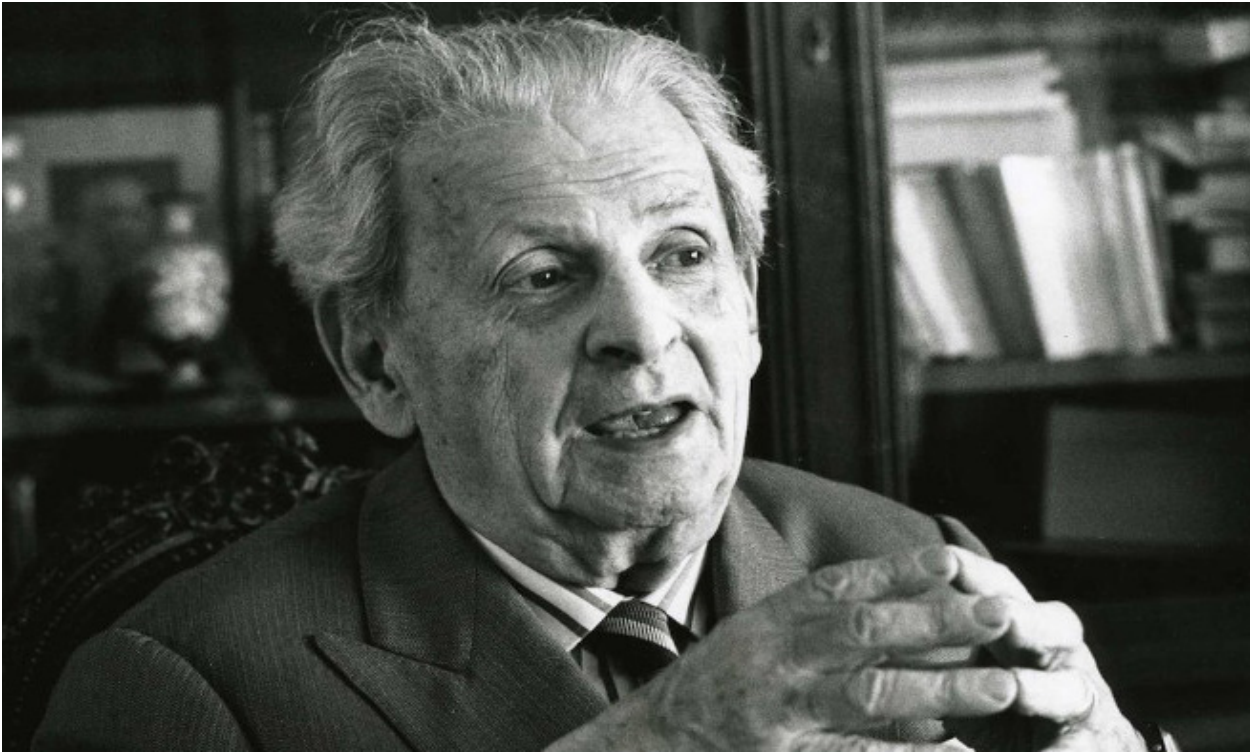
2. TERRORISM OF GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS

The author emphasizes that terrorists are interested in modernity based on their vision. Today, governments are losing the right to "monopolize lawful violence", so to speak, as individuals and groups can now perpetrate violence to sow fear and chaos among citizens. This manifestation of terrorism prompts us to think about the conditions and policies favorable and conducive to such acts, such as globalization and technology, consumer

communities and modern luxury. It also urges us to analyze the consequences for the society in which the terrorist believes that everything is permissible and acceptable.

For a government to be legitimate, fear should be covertly cultivated and instilled among citizens through media and institutions. Terrorism and democracy are the outcomes of modernity; full democracy means dispensing with terrorism to run the whole gamut of the government issues and organize citizens' affairs. Terrorists follow the same approach to influence the course of events in the world, and this influence may be effective, because terrorism can sometimes be dominant given its unremitting attempts to change and control the future. The future of terrorism lies in the fear of the future. It is dominated by panic and intimidation from the unknown future that may be even more terrifying and tragic.

Terrorists challenge our convictions about the peaceful western societies whose members live in comfort, reassurance and self-composure. The author emphasizes that terrorists aspire to kill the desires, temptations and western tendencies within themselves before thinking about killing themselves and the westerners themselves. Terrorist anti-modernity and the west can take different manifestations, including but not limited to traditional crimes, drug use or contraband and modern terrorism. Such rejection is reproduction of the reverence for traditional violence and anger that we find in religion, which is a sacred anger that



calls for unconditional sacrifice and redemption for the sake of a noble and sublime cause in which terrorists are both heroes and the core elements.

Is this criticism of modernity devoid of any right? Is it to reproduce the philosophers' critique of modernity and change in general in a violent manner? Addressing these questions prompts us to look at ourselves and our reality. We are receptive to the violent tendency of the world. The author claims that we are living in an era more violent and bloody than the two world wars, and more detrimental and fatal than the previous conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union, as the world is in a critical stage of inequality between classes and governments, and violent and armed globalization. We are hemmed in by many conflicts triggered by governments and groups, and the welfare of the West feeds and capitalizes on the misery and poverty of the Third World, even partially, leads up to incomplete or fake modernity.

The author levels another barrage of criticism of Western intellectuals: One of the colossal blunders that many intellectuals slip into is the belief that everyone aspires to western modernity, ignoring that armed terrorism seeks to defile it and diminish its alleged impact that it is the focus of progress and advancement. This trans-boundary attitude and denial of the values of the West is a new reality that compensated for Communism in its defiance against the West as an alternative project.

The author presents the positions of some eminent philosophers and introduces us to a dialogue with

the traditional critics of modernity, like Nietzsche and Heidegger, who denounced the spontaneous nature of modernity to destroy everything contrary. The author disagrees with Habermas and others who considered modernity a worthy project despite the limitations of some aspects. However, the author stands with the philosophy of Levinas, who criticizes the modern concept of humanity, according to which man is the owner of absolute sovereignty exempt from all responsibility towards surroundings. For Levinas, freedom without responsibility is a destructive, anarchic freedom of no principles.

The author advocates philosophy in a seemingly strange fashion, emphasizing that many of the events described as purely philosophical carry connotations of fundamentalist (radical) nature.

Whereas the author claims that wars in the past were only between armies, without the intervention of civilians or their involvement, history tells that armies did not differentiate between a civilian and a soldier when entering cities and countries, nor between an old man and a young man, the Mongols is much telling.

TERRORISM AND GLOBALIZATION

Terrorism is closely related to globalization, which is the driving force. Like globalization, terrorism does not recognize borders, local laws and special customs, as it seeks to create a unified and harmonious world in which no differences exist, and no difference between war and peace is marked, nor between military and civilian, nor

between the state of emergency and the natural state of the world. Terrorism seeks to direct the whole world towards a single destination; it is an attempt to oversimplify what is complex and to draw imaginary lines and target and fight a specific enemy. Equally important, it is also an attempt to change the course of history by force. The author believes this is unrealistic because it is about the metaphysics of terrorist attacks that do not achieve much progress on the ground, and do not change the balance of power or the course of history of the great powers.

The author believes that terrorism is a consequence of the Cold War, when the United States supported, trained, and armed the enemies of the Soviet Union. The destruction of the World Trade Center represents acts of suicide; it is the suicide of the attacking kidnappers and the suicide of those who were trained. Hence terrorism seems to be a symptom of the autoimmune diseases that mushroom across contemporary modernity.

Contemporary terrorism, in all its manifestations, balloons and snowballs into reality and spreads through media chaos, because it addresses the public opinion, and directly or indirectly impacts it. The symbolic challenge of terrorism, which could not be countered over the past few years, has sneaked into unprecedented possibilities for employing globalization. Terrorism is no longer seen as an extraordinary event on the path leading to irreversible progress. The acts of evil that were once believed to be defeated increased with the new world system; such evil acts have become more stubborn to have a permanent and pervasive presence. It is terrorism that says "NO" to violent and authoritarian globalization, and exposes most countries of the world to threat. This was evidently manifested by the 9/11 Attacks of 2001.

The experience of the 9/11 Attacks of 2001 was a new and terrifying message to Americans; war and devastation, as it befalls other countries, can destroy the first global icon of trade.

LABYRINTH OF TERRORISM

Terrorism sets many targets and develops numerous methods because it arises from an irreducible symbolic system. Terrorism lurks as the ghost that keeps the world in wait and on the alert for uncertainty. Terrorism is a form of revenge against the monopoly of power, retaliation in the name of all forces humiliated by the arrogant capitalist world powers. It is deeply seated and ingrained hostility from within, as a result of the internal disintegration of power. Beyond a shadow of doubt, this view has many advantages because it helps, in part, to dismantle terrorism by avoiding rhetoric and narratives of disdain, derision and

contempt, which neutralizes terrorism, at least morally, and presents itself as a tool that does not deserve praise or hate; rather, it is seen as a realistic act resulting from history and world events.

There are three common paradigms in the current interpretation of terrorism. The first paradigm is the clash of civilizations, according to the formula of Samuel Huntington. The second paradigm is class struggle; what fuels violence is the great economic and social inequality. The third paradigm is a holy war that is being waged in the name of religion.

Massacres were not perpetrated in cahoots with modern terrorism; rather, such massacres sneaked into reality almost hand in hand with the existence of humans. If violence is part of humanity, then why is its occurrence more shocking when pairing up with modern terrorism, and less with state terrorism, which claims the lives of millions of victims, causing despicable destruction? Until now, global terrorism is still understood as hateful terrorism against the West and against the values and virtues of humanity; it is understood as blind terrorism driven by a vengeful fundamentalist ideology that annihilates everyone else. Against such a backdrop of tug-of-war, any understanding or negotiation between terrorists and their respective enemies is reduced to impossibility.

The author rewinds the past to jog our memory and recall terrorist incidents, such as the nuclear attack on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the destruction of Dresden in Germany by the Allies in 1945; the entire city center was more like a combustion chamber that presented a new model of thermal terrorism at the time. As such, countries set the tone to use terrorist methods; even Churchill is blacklisted by some countries as a terrorist; even the British Prime Minister himself readily admitted such accusation.

TERRORISM AND ISLAMISM

The author believes the first step leading up to extremism is the rebirth or sincere repentance. This is equally true for those who have converted to Islam and Muslims who converted to a new doctrine other than their fathers'. Through extremism, a terrorist seeks panacea, purification, atonement, repentance, and a manifestation of asceticism amidst the world notoriously rife with rampant corruption and hypocrisy. It is also a path to salvation and recovery, gaining the pleasure of God and submitting to His commands.

The term 'extremism' that has overshadowed the world acts very much like an explosive device as it instills and stokes terror and fear. Security measures and intelligence services that follow unprecedented standards seek to go ahead of terrorism to clamp

down on its acts. Many concepts that were foggy and fuzzy, such as extremism, fundamentalism, and intolerance, have sneaked into an incubator in the fundamentalist space; it is difficult to define the relationship existing between terrorism and extremism. Research on extremism is a key to understanding terrorists, their motives that drive them to sacrifice their lives and the lives of others, in order to convey a message or make a position. The positive side of this research is to lay bare the issues swept and brushed aside by the media.

The author explains that Islamism is a reaction by Muslims to modernity in the eighteenth century, when Napoleon's forces invaded Alexandria in 1798. Akin to secularism and rationality, modernity ushered in cannon fire, causing sorrows, victims, and a black history. Modernity, however, triumphed and its leaders ruled the world with their political strategies, technological advances, and reasoning. The author turned the spotlight in her discussion on governance and the authority of God on earth; Sayyid Qutb and his attack on modernity as disbelief, ignorance and gullibility, as he urged people to put God's laws into action over the earth at any cost, even with violence; holy sovereignty is God's sovereignty over the earth, which secular modernity has sought desperately to denigrate.

In the same vein, the author believes that the terrorists are neither fundamentalists nor traditionalists. On the contrary, they are primary actors in the conflict, endlessly patient waiting for the great signs of life on earth; they are convinced that they possess the truth even though others do not understand their vision. The author also believes that modern terrorism is like capitalism; both of which have gone beyond the ceiling of intellectual creed, and have become religions and two ways of life, rich in principles and directives. However, unlike capitalists, terrorists face a death that they see as a victory per se, not a sacrifice and a loss of their lives meaninglessly. They seek desperately to defeat reality, and to replace it with a new one, so that God's laws will prevail on earth and will override false positivist laws.

The author further explains that the clash between the exclusivist secular orientation and the traditional literal religious orientation leads up to a deep sense of discomfort that can be attributed to the alleged return of religion to the public sphere. Instead of discussing "clash of civilizations", we should address conflicts all over the world within human civilization itself, which lead to conflicts and small wars. The author emphasizes that a person may be a fundamentalist or extremist without being a terrorist; only those who want to blame Islam and all Muslims and stigmatize them with terrorism. Although this is a tool used by Islamophobics because it is a steady pathway towards

Christianity and Judaism, making the struggle between enlightened and progressive secularism and religion in general. Judaism and Christianity, however, abandoned literalism and religious fundamentalism in government, and concluded an agreement with the state since the early ages of modernity. When the side of the scale, Islam has recently entered into the new "secular pact" for governance and facilitation.

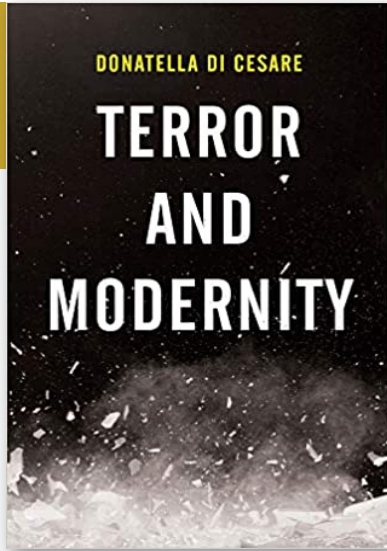
The author also draws examples cited from the Iranian Revolution of 1979, which brought about a final break with the past. Political Islam, as such, has become influential in contemporary history, leaving its own impact on political theology. This is what the western left, which relied on "liberation theology" avoided. Therefore, why is the same thing not being repeated with contemporary political Islam?

CONCLUSION

The author has provided an unprecedented philosophical analysis of modern terrorism. That is why her book is an added value to anyone interested in deeply understanding contemporary terrorism and associated mysteries.

The author sheds fresh light on social facts and influential experiences in modern communities. With this in mind, the author provides us with a piece of advice; instead of justifying everything in the western world, it is critically important to unconditionally abandon all forms of modern sovereignty that can justify and legitimize violence and terrorism. However, the reader may become flummoxed by some questions that have been deliberately left unanswered. The proposal to abolish the 'authoritarian state sovereignty' may throw communities into disarray because the organization of human communities needs institutions, governments, laws and officials who ensure that such laws are put in place. Can we separate sovereignty and government? Shouldn't we search for down-to-earth and feasible solutions without resorting to destroying sovereignty? Will these solutions make us more enlightened, or will they lead to chaos and terror more threatening than we live in today?

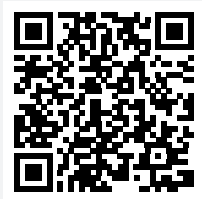
Some themes and ideas discussed by the author are interestingly spellbinding, riveting and mooted albeit perplexing for the reader. Regardless of some of the author's personal views spelled out implicitly or explicitly, which can be difficult to tolerate and acquiesce to, what really sticks out in the book is how the author stakes out her gloomy view of the world order that unfolds in Chapter Four 'The New Phobocracy'. The author adamantly insists that the security state is a state dominated by fear; it also controls its people by instilling fear. It is a phobocracy that sows fear and intimidation and panic and anxiety.



TERRORISM AND MODERNITY

Publisher : Polity
1st edition (June 25, 2019)

ISBN-10 : 1509531483
ISBN-13 : 978-1509531486







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