Constraints on the Global War on Terror in the Post Cold War Era

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Abstract

In this paper the author aspires to profile the difficulties involved in the war against terrorism in the post cold war era. Terrorism has become a very topical issue in the world. The world today is threatened with extinction due to the threat posed by terrorism. Terrorism is a age-less phenomena, which has began to exhibit a new energy and a new dimension. The frequency of which terror attacks occur every day, shows that terrorists are moving far ahead of government that are posed on curtailing their activities. Defeating terrorism in the near future might not be easy, despite various regional and international conventions against terrorism. The finding of this paper is that, there is no universally accepted definition of terrorism. The term terrorism is one of the most emotive and subjective words in the English language. Any attempt to define terrorism will be predicated on the assumption that, some classes of political violence are justifiable whereas others are not. Terrorism is a noticeable language; capable of creating fear and alarm to gain attention. The paper equally reveals that, two decades ago terrorists' motives were associated with nationalism and separatism and leaned towards revolutionary and cold war ideological zeal. Today, there are greater complexity, diversity and unpredictability, due to the fact that suicide bombers have committed terrible acts in different parts of the globe. The finding of this paper is that, many terrorist organisations traffic in humans, computer chips, nuclear material, toxic wastes explosives and drug. Also, different types of terrorism are in existence and each of them is unique to the present time, namely, state sponsored terrorism, mass causality terrorism, chemical and super terrorism. States without ballot-box democracy and states with constitutional frameworks are at risk from terrorism. The paper concludes by stating that terrorism poses a big challenge to democracies and counter-terrorism legislations and force cannot end terrorism.

Introduction

The present century is grappling with the threat of terrorism which appears to be the most challenging obstacle to world peace and human existence, as it is holding mankind to ransom. Terrorism has today become a topical issue in the world. This is because terrorists use

fear as a means to achieve their aims and objectives. In that sense, terrorism is by nature coercive (Wieviorka 1993).

Events in the mid-1990s, such as the first bombing of the World Trade Centre in New York in 1993, the use of nerve agents chemical weapons in underground train network in Central Tokyo in 1995, the tragic events of September 11, 2001, the Madrid, London and Brussels terrorist bombing, have convinced the world of quantum change in methods employed by terrorists (Laqueur 2000). The highlighted events have taught the world that in situations of desperation, terrorists would not make any distinction between their core and peripheral targets. Terrorists are frustrated individuals, who believe that a near perfect future lie just around the corner, once the present order is destroyed. Terrorism uses fear as a means to achieve its aim and objectives. It is by nature coercive, dehumanising and designed to manipulate it victims and the society at large. States affected by terrorism are experiencing an erosion of the quality of life and a heavy toll on the life styles andwork habits of political leaders, international diplomats, business executives and the general public. (Mylroe, 2001).

Terrorism is ultimately a human problem which produces victims, refugees, homeless and internally displaced persons.

International efforts to stop the terrorist groups from carrying out terrorist acts of terrorism have not yet yielded any meaningful result. This clearly demonstrates that defeating terrorism is not going to be easy. It also goes a long way to show that the world is not succeeding against terrorism. The frequency at which terrorist attacks take place today, indicate that terrorists are ingenious and are clearly a few meters ahead of those who are seeking their extermination.

The problem of terrorism can be confronted, contained and defeated but the phenomenon itself can never be completely defeated. The war against terrorism in this century is complicated because it is a war in which no one has a clear picture of who the enemies are (Cooper, 2201).

The above factors have constituted obstacles to states and frustrated global efforts in the war against terrorism. Some of these factors will be examined in this paper.

Terrorism: A Conceptual and Theoretical Discourse

Terrorism is a phenomenon and is part of human existence, terrorist acts that take place within a society are always as a result of several factors. It is always difficult to point to a single explanation for the emergence of terrorism.

Terrorism is mostly depicted as if it is totally negative. Terrorism is a fluid and infinitely elastic concept which can be twisted into different shapes and has become an issue over which scholars find themselves in sharp disagreement with each other. There are divided opinions on the nature, causes, types and impact of terrorism, and as such, there is no widely accepted theory on which scholars agree.

There have been questions as to what constitutes terrorism. But for the purpose of this study, terrorism will be perceived from the frustration – aggression theory which was developed by John Dullard and modified by Leonard Berkowits and Aubrey Yates (1962). It appears to be the most suitable theory for the explanation of terrorist acts.

In an attempt to explain aggression, scholars point to difference between what people feel, what they want or deserve, to what they actually get. Feirabends (1969) observes that when there are differences between expected need satisfaction and actual need satisfaction when people's expectations is not attained immediately, there is bound to be the tendency for people to confront those they hold responsible for frustrating their ambitions. According to Gurr (1970:24), the greater the discrepancy between what is sought and what seem attainable, the greater will the chances that anger and violence will engender.

The frustration-aggression theory provides that aggression is not just undertaken as a natural reaction or instinct as the realists and biological theorists assume, but that it is the outcome of the frustration in which the legitimate desires of an individual is denied him/her.

The view that humankind is evil by nature has a long tradition. The biological theory argues that human beings are animals, albeit higher species of animals and would fight naturally over things they cherish. It is believed that conflict is inherent in man and this can be explained from man's inner properties and attributes, and hormonal composition. That aggressive instinct will be provoked when man is threatened and challenged. The destructive tendencies in human beings are products of dialectical struggle between the instinct associated with life and survival.

Constraints on the Global War Against Terrorism After the Cold War

The war on global terrorism after the cold war is complicated because it is a war in which one man's heresy and unbelief is another man's fighter for the true faith. The war against terrorism is complicated by certain factors, namely, the dialectical heterogeneity over what terrorism is (Thackrah, 1975).

Clutterbuck (1975) defines terrorism as the use or threat of violence against small numbers to put large number in fear, or has stated by an ancient philosopher, kill one frighten ten thousand (10,000). The term terrorism is highly ambiguous and rather difficult to define within political circles. It brings out strong emotions which result in confusion. Social scientists, philosophers and historians have developed working definitions of terrorism that suit their particular research models.

Jenkins (1984) calls terrorism the use or threatened use of force designed to bring about a political change.In a definition closely related to Jenkins, Laqueur (1987:72) says terrorism constitutes the illegitimate use of force to achieve a political objective in which innocent people are targeted. He adds that attempts to move beyond a simple definition are fruitless because the term is controversial. Today, volumes can be written on the definition of terrorism by experts on terrorism, but they will not add one iota to our understanding of the topic.

Terrorism manifests itself through distinctive deployment of a variety of criminal acts calculated to harm human life and other interests. In-spite of the spread of terrorist incidents throughout the world, terrorism has neither a precise definition nor one which is widely acceptable. Like many political terms, it is pejorative.

Some governments are prone to label as terrorism, all violent acts committed by their political opponents. While anti-government extremists often claim to be the victims of government terror or state-sponsored terrorism (Copper, 1977).

More significantly, the term terrorism can also apply to acts of violence, kidnapping, hijacking, bombing, arson and hostage-taking, which are not intended by the perpetrators, to be terror-producing. To many observers however, almost any act of violence can be included under the rubric of terrorism.

At the same time, the United Nations General Assembly has also been unable to agree on a standard definition of terrorism. The United Nations debate in 1972 in search of a universal definition of terrorism proved fruitless. The Sixth Legal Committee of the United Nations General Assembly 1972 – 1973 posits that, terrorist acts are no more than necessary "acts of communication" intended to show the determination and devolution of desperate people trying to counter the superior power arrayed against them. It goes further to state that terrorists are engaged in a "holy cause" more important than life itself (Ziring, Riggs et.al 2005).

The performance of the United Nations in defining and combating terrorism is very controversial. Some observers claim that, United Nations has been actively promoting terrorism through its support of wars of national liberation and its formal recognition of Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and African National Congress (ANC), who were occasionally given substantial recognition by the United Nations General Assembly, and their leaders were permitted to address the plenary body .

Till-date the legal committee of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) is still searching for a definition of terrorism that would satisfy all its members and gain the approval of all (Roseanu, 1992).

Justification of Terrorist Acts.

Copper (1977:10), Hacker (1976:11), Gurr (1988:43) and Post (1987) have observed that since the end of the second world war in 1945, terrorism has been used to obtain three primary benefits:

(i) To carry out low-level warfare on behalf of client states who cannot afford direct combat:

(ii) To gain attention for causes that threaten to pass unnoticed; and

(iii) To express political importance and frustration.

The fight against terrorism has greatly been constrained by terrorists who carry out violent acts seeking to justify their actions. Post (1987) posits that terrorist groups are very much like criminal groups, who having been rejected by mainstream society, employ acts of terrorism as the only source of social reward because of its members' isolation. Former national liberation movements in Africa, the Middle East and Asia used terrorism to bring world attention, to their cause. At the same time terrorist groups like Abu-Nidal, Al Fatah, Hizbollah, Islamic Jihad and Al-Queda among others have used terrorism to gain worldwide attention.

Terrorists are people who are propelled by a conviction in the justness of their cause, and it is always very difficult to change a man who is convinced of the righteousness of his cause. The actions of terrorist are not governed by consistency and reason; they are based on inaccurate perception of reality. One of the aims of a terrorist organisation is to convince its audience to

see the world as it does. Dehumanisationand deification of the enemy dominate terrorist thinking. The struggle is an obligation and a duty, not a matter of voluntary choice; therefore most terrorists often think of themselves as morally superior, more sensitive and nobler. They do not see what they are doing as mass murder or the killing of innocent civilians. Today what the terrorist want is mass destruction, nothing more, nothing less.

Environmental Constraints

Terrorism is an age-less phenomenon and it has begun to exhibit new dimension. Roberts (2001) observes that terrorism has changed because in the past, traditional terrorist groups used to want political concessions. But today, the aim of most of the terrorist groups is mass destruction and casualties. Even though some terrorist groups still target military installations and diplomatic missions, some have expanded their list to include attacks on so-called soft targets, such as mass transportation systems, sporting events, bustling urban locations and hotels.

Some analysts believe that social injustice and the denial of equal participation in a political system are the root cause of terrorism. If these causes are eliminated, terrorism would no longer have a motivation to develop. Terrorism can also be eliminated by attacking poverty and injustice which are prevalent in many societies today. This is also another impediment in the eradication of terrorism.

Another new dimension is religious extremism which has its origin to the 1979 Iranian Revolution which brought into power Ayatollah Khomeni. The Iranian revolution caused another form of terrorism to spread from the Middle East.

Taheri (1987) observes that the leaders of Iran believe themselves to be of God's city of faith on earth. The city of faith must be in conflict with the city of war as it would be immoral to enter into any arrangements with the city of war, no matter how attractive or politically expedient such an alliance might be. Shiites are at war with the devil. No follower of God can ally with Satan. The call to battle is therefore the call to martyrdom, according to Taheri.

Prolonged civil strife in Lebanon which was characterized by kidnapping, car bombing and hostage-taking created a very conducive environment for producing terrorists, of which many became members of the Hezbollah terrorist organization (Jabe, 1997). At the same time, the West Bank youth of Palestinian origin have grown up under years of Israel occupation. Such an environment ended up producing terrorists among a generation that had known nothing but bloodshed and enmity. Such an environment made it difficult to acquire education. These youth have to fight for their survival and carrying a gun or being inducted into a militia is seen as a rite of manhood. It is certainly not easy to confront an enemy who is likely to make no distinction between a soldier wearing camouflage and an armed civilian in Kaftan; it is thus not going to be easy to win this type of war against terrorism. (Ben-Rafael, 1987).

Suicide Terrorism and Bombing

Over the years, terrorists have changed their tactics and adopted the classic form of terror and became suicide bombers. They are now willing to die but unwilling to die alone; as they drag many into gruesome and untimely death through suicide bombing. The act of suicide bombing

can be characterised as the Kamikaze terror of the 20th century. Suicide bombing has become a common feature of terrorist tactics over the past decade particularly in Israel, where such acts are being carried out by Hamas and Hezbollah members against Jewish targets (Meyer, 2000). Suicide bombing has also been carried out by Al-Qaeda in the United States; in a reference are the September 11, 2011 simultaneous as well coordinated attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. There have also been suicide terrorist attacks in Madrid, London, Nairobi, Dar es Salam and recently in Brussels. Such suicide attacks have occurred in shopping malls, embassy buildings, airports, trading centers, among others, resulting in the death of innocent civilians. *Islamikaze* suicide bombers are often young men from poor families who are made and indoctrinated to believe they are going to paradise and that, their families will receive large sums of cash payments if they become martyrs. Majority of the *Islamikaze* are young with few responsibilities in life; many of them are not particularly successful in their lives and have poor self-esteem (Guanaretta, 2003). Fighting a suicide terrorist is the most dangerous and difficult for any trained soldier. It is thus very hard to deter someone who thinks that his mission has been sanctioned by divine order, as he will be dying with dignity and honour and with the hope that, he would be going to paradise and his surviving relatives would be financially looked after for the rest of their lives (Juergensmeyer, 2000).

Suicide attacks have also been used as means of preventing the interrogation of the perpetrators of terrorist attacks. Another benefit of suicide bombing is the extensive media attention that follows in its wake. An act of self-sacrifice in the name of terrorist organisation becomes a uniting factor within the group and for its members' sense of prestige and serves to inspire future volunteers.

Cyber-Terrorism

Another constraint is how to handle new forms of terrorism, namely; shoe bombing, nautical terrorism and others. Cyber terrorism has been described as the crime of the future involving a lethal combination of crime and computers. It threatens the safety of millions of people across the globe. This form of terrorism would appear to be more devastating than biological or chemical warfare. All computers, especially government and military ones contain information which terrorists might need. It is feared that the cyber terrorist can sabotage computer systems by using computer virus which gobbles up data and freezes computer system (de Angelis 2000).

This interference then throws national economies into disarray and at the same time disrupts military communication system.

Cyber-terrorists can easily access the processing control system of any business. Computerised bombs can be placed by terrorist on chemical or industrial sites. Banks and Stock Exchanges can be targeted resulting in loss of confidence in the economic system of the targeted country. At the same time, transport system can also be attacked resulting in accidents. Also, gas and electricity supplies can also be targeted, resulting in disruption of economic and political activities (Cooper, 1999).

Bio-Terrorism

This is believed to be the ultimate in warfare and is believed to be the next threat to humanity if terrorists happen to have access to it. According to Levinson (2002), there are three main types of weapons of mass destruction (WMB) and these are: biological agents, nuclear bombs and chemical weapons. For chemical weapons, the raw materials are powerful nerve toxins, which are easy to obtain, but they cannot inflict widespread damage.

For biological weapons, possible agents include anthrax and smallpox, and both are potentially lethal. Terrorists might decide to contaminate water supplies and the potential casualties figure of this type of terror attack would be hundreds of thousand or million(s). Underscoring the danger this type of terrorism poses to humanity and security is the ugly reality that chemical and biological weapons are relatively cheap and easy to produce.

Terrorists can easily make use of anthrax plague and small pox to kill as many people as possible to buttress political or religious ideologies. This kind of threat can only be countered by vaccines and antibiotics- as the recent anthrax scares in the United States and United Kingdom posts of September 11, 2001 events have shown (Moodie, 2001).

The most worrying aspect is that if these weapons happen to fall into the hands of terrorists, they are likely to wreck serious havoc on humanity.

The Threat of Nuclear Weapon

The possibility that terrorists may decide to attack nuclear facilities or to use radioactive materials to contaminate or create nuclear hoaxes has raised a lot of fears in governments as well as the general public across the world. The widespread of civilian nuclear reactors which are enriched with uranium and radioactive waste materials has raised some safety concerns for many who morbidly fear that desperate terrorist might attack through such means(Beres, 1990).

The main objective of the terrorist could range from seeking publicity, sabotage, extortion, creating fear and causing widespread damage and casualties.

The primary attraction for terrorists to acquire nuclear weapons is the fact any terrorist act associated with the words 'atomic' or 'nuclear' would automatically generate a lot of fear and panic in the minds of the general populace. Nuclear power appeal to terrorists who are crazy for and also like to gain worldwide attention as those who can wreak great havoc against their enemies. Nuclear terror constitutes the greatest threat to all democratic regimes worldwide. Far more than any other form of struggle, it represents a serious attempt to establish a political system by which a tiny minority wants to rule a vast majority. Being in possession of nuclear weapons will enable the terrorist to blackmail the leaders of a society into meeting their demands. Presently, nuclear terror seems more attractive as a threat than an action to terrorist groups.

State Sponsorship of Terrorism

Syria, Iran, Iraq, Libya and Cuba were one of the countries that used to be included in the list of state sponsors of terrorism, released by the United State Department of State in 1979. Intelligence and security agencies of Syria Iran, Iraq and Libya were suspected of supporting terrorism activities throughout the Middle East Africa and Western Europe (U.S Department of

State 1995). Syria was accused of supporting Palestinian groups such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and Islamic Resistance Movement (HAMAS) (Princhet, 1988).

After the overthrow of the Shah in 1979, Iran embarked on a campaign to export the Islamic Revolution to other countries in the Middle East. Iran therefore began the funding of militant Shiite groups such as Lebanon's Hezbollha as well as violent groups in Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain and the Gulf countries(Timmernan 1987).

In the months leading up to the United States invasion of Iraq in 2003 for allegedly having a stockpile of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), the administration of President Bush had cited as another reason for the invasion, Saddam Hussein's ties to dangerous terrorist groups as justification for ousting the regime. The Iraqi leadership under Hussein had provided financial, material, logistic support and safe haven to Palestinian terror organisation, Ansar Al-Islam, Al Qaida and Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) (U.S Department of State)

In 1969, Muammar Gaddafi, established a dictatorship in Libya that embraced a foreign policy of hostility towards the West and Israel, expansionist tendencies. Gaddafi turned to terrorist and revolutionary groups in order to support his expansionist motives by providing financial and military assistance to the Red Brigades in Italy, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in England and the Sandinistas in Nicaragua (Davis, 1994).

The policy of state sponsorship of terrorism by some states reinforces the pessimist's contention that, despite all efforts, the global coalition against terror will be very difficult to be active.

Globalisation and its Advances

Globalisation and its advances in science and technology is another constraint on the global war against terror. Globalisation has contributed to the growth of terrorism from a regional phenomenon into a global one. Terrorism is designed to achieve political change for the purpose of obtaining power in order to right a perceived wrong (Onwudie, 2001).

The technology associated with terrorism, including handheld radios and phones have allowed terrorist cell members and groups to operate independently at substantial distance from one another. E-mail and cell phone contacts among geographically separated group members allow them to conduct their attacks in separate location or coverage on a specific target.

Unfortunately, tools of trade and commerce have been converted into tools of crime. The elimination of many customs controls and the increasing movement of people, across international borders, have made it easier for terrorists to transport explosives, and avoid arrest, from one country to another.

Terrorist have also continued to use the tools of globalisation namely, television, internet telephone, microchip and servers to perpetrate terrorist acts. Like many human achievements, globalisation has both upside and downside. Globalisation is unwittingly enhancing the circulatory efficiency of terror. It is with the aid of modern communication gadgets that terrorist groups in isolated jungles, deserts and remote locations are able to co-ordinate their atrocious activities.

Like many of mankind's projects, globalisation has proved to be useful and harmful. Terrorist group have exploited the advantage of globalisation more efficiently than government. Globalisation has magnified the problems of terrorism. Rather than offering a solution to the world's difficulties, globalisation has become part of the problem. Governments around the world are struggling to protect their citizens from the excesses of terrorism enhanced by globalisation.

Conclusion

Terrorism is a direct threat to international peace and security; it is a crime against humanity and it is the most amoral of organised violence. Terrorism creates imaginary danger; it is an unpredictable and unexpected menace. Terrorist believe in destroying the key features of modern democracy which is characterised by religious tolerance and globalisation.

In recent times, terrorists have become more sophisticated as, many of the weapons used by them are getting smaller and harder to detect.

The war against terrorism as we have it is complicated because it is a war of which we know who we are but do not have a clear picture of who our enemies are. Revolutionary ideology and religious fanaticism have gone a long way to produce an environment very conducive for the growth of suicide bombers. The world today has different type of weapons against terror, but no one single weapon can eliminate it.

The global war on terror is also constrained by the fact that terrorists who carry out acts of terror have often sought to justify their actions. Like many of mankind's project, globalisation has proved to be useful and harmful. Terrorist groups have exploited the advantages of globalisation more efficiently than governments. Globalisation has magnified the problems of terrorism and enhanced their striking power. Rather than offering all solutions to the world's difficulties, it has become part of the problem.

The fight against terrorism is also constrained by confusion over a menu of strategic options as the most effectual means of offensive terror. Security forces cannot fire at an enemy who attacks and then easily dissolves into a multitude of innocent civilians.

It is also not easy to confront an enemy who makes no distinction between a soldier and the civilian, and the lack of a universally accepted definition of terrorism

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