

THE CIVILIZATIONAL HEGEMONY IN THE WAR ON TERROR

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Introduction

At a time when “individual terrorism” becomes such an ineffable evil in the mind of many (especially of the Americans since the September 11 attacks in 2001), it is unthinkable to even say anything more impartial about it.

Yet, contrary to the belief of many contemporaries, “individual terrorism” by the weak against the strong is important to civilization, as an opposing form of violence against “state terrorism” and “state-sponsored terrorism” by the strong against the weak.¹

Two questions are in order. Firstly, is individual terrorism necessarily undesirable? And secondly, if so, is it possible to eradicate individual terrorism? Perhaps the U.S. war on terror since 2001 is a good case study here to answer the two questions, to be addressed hereafter, in that order.

The Asymmetric Struggle for Global Countervailing Power

The answer to the first question hinges on the politically incorrect insight that “individual terrorism” (committed by, for example, suicide bombers), especially at the international level, serves as a major check-and-balance of any hegemonic force in world politics (e.g., “state terrorism” and “state-sponsored terrorism” so often committed by the U.S., Israel, and the U.K., just to cite a few major actors).

As already explained (and therefore not repeated here) in Chapter 6 of *The Future of Human Civilization* (NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2000) and summarized in Chapters 3-4 of *The Future of Capitalism and Democracy* (MD: The University Press of America, 2002), three most fundamental countervailing forces are rechantment (in the context of identity, especially though not exclusively at the cultural level), revenge (in the context of anger, especially though not

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¹ This article is the revised version of an article titled “Why Individual Terrorism Is Important to Civilization” which was posted online in *Share the World Resources* (April-July 2004), based on the original version in my 2-volume work titled *Beyond Democracy to Post-Democracy: Conceiving a Better Model of Governance to Supersede Democracy* (NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2004).

exclusively at the psychological level), and regionalism (in the context of inequality, especially though not exclusively at the societal level).

A good example of the expression of these countervailing forces is none other than the bloody conflicts between the Global South (or, in my technical term for an even broader category, the Others) against the hegemony of the Global North (or alternatively for a broader one, the Same).

Unless the injustice perceived and experienced by the Global South in this example (or in a more general term, the Others) in the hands of the Global North (or, for a broader category, the Same) in the last few hundred years unto now, for instance, is fundamentally corrected, the vicious cycle of violence between the Others and the Same is here to stay. This perceived injustice is clearly revealed in the two forms of terrorism practised by the Global North, that is, “state terrorism” and “state-sponsored terrorism” (as are often committed by the U.S., Israel, and the U.K., just to cite three major countries, although there are others too).

As William Blum once put it in a blunt but also ironic way, “If I were the president [of the United States], I could stop terrorist attacks against the United States in a few days. Permanently. I would first apologize—very publicly and very sincerely—to all the widows and orphans, the impoverished and the tortured, and all the many millions of other victims of American imperialism. Then I would announce that America's global military interventions have come to an end....Then I would reduce the military budget by at least 90 percent and use the savings to pay reparations to the victims and repair the damage from the many American bombings, invasions and sanctions. There would be enough money. One year of our military budget is equal to more than \$20,000 per hour for every hour since Jesus Christ was born. That's one year. That's what I'd do on my first three days in the White House. On the fourth day, I'd probably be assassinated.”[1]

The U.S. invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq in 2002-3, in the name of fighting for freedom and justice, when put in this new light, only make it all the more transparent as to why these places have become the hot spots for terrorism to thrive even more, not less. Some analysts in the field start to notice, for instance, that “[U.S.-occupied] Iraq has become an important battleground for al Qaeda in the past several months....The officials use words such as ‘magnet’ and ‘super magnet’ to describe the attraction that Iraq has for al Qaeda and other ‘jihadists.’”[2]

The more fanatic the U.S. war on terror becomes, the more intense the terrorist response will be. A research company based in London, World Markets Research Center, released a study showing the U.S. as a top target for terror attack, even some years after the U.S. war on terror.[3] After all, one can simply look at the recurrent conflicts between Israel and the Arab states in the Middle East and realize how futile Israel has been in fighting Arab terrorism without addressing the very injustice it has inflicted on its neighbors for the last few decades, if not longer. And the same logic also holds for the reverse situation, that is, about the impotent Arab

struggle against Israel's state terrorism.

So, when the fanatic reactions on both sides meet, the result is hardly less than a protracted bloodshed for humanity. To fight the war on terror by terror is equally terrifying. But this is not the end of the matter yet.

The Uphill Battle for Civil Liberties

And the answer to the second question lies in a sober understanding that the fanatic intensity of the U.S. war on terror, as already explained (and also not repeated here) in Ch.4 of *The Future of Capitalism and Democracy*, also facilitates a tighter control of society and culture towards the state of civil unfreedom, which is quite ironic in a way, since the war on terror is supposed to promote freedom, among other things. In this sense, terrorism can be eradicated with an extremely high price—a police state of unfreedom. The war on terror is also a war on freedom.

Civil liberties very easily become the first casualties. Any views and acts which show some sign of being critical to the administration on the war on terror are subject to potential legal and personal persecution.

In “The Rise of the ‘New’ Far Right Foreign Policy,” I already pointed out that “[i]n the last two years, many of Middle Eastern ethnic descent are the primary victims, as are those who show sympathetic support of their views. In the parlance of the administration, anyone who vocally disagrees with the war efforts and openly criticize the administration can be treated as, ‘giving comfort to the enemy’ and can be subject to legal persecution. The oppressive power of this political correctness can be pervasive.”[4]

This atmosphere of tightening civil unfreedom is especially protracted by the Department of Justice under the leadership of John Ashcroft. Fox Butterfield, for instance, reported that “[c]riminal experts say they have become increasingly concerned that the Justice Department under Attorney General John Ashcroft is moving to exert political control over previously independent agencies...”[5] It is no wonder that “the American Civil Liberties Union sent a letter to him in 2001 about this concern. Even the Amnesty International, in its annual (2003) report, criticized the U.S. as violating human rights, undermining international law, and endangering world peace.”[4]

The achievement of getting rid of terrorism can have an outrageously expensive price to pay: the reduction of society and culture into a police state, such that terrorism could not possibly function in it. For instance, North Korea, ranked 186th out of 186 countries in the study by the World Markets Research Center for the likelihood of a country being the target for terror attack, is considered least likely for terrorists to function there, because of its awesome police state.[3]

I already documented in Chapter 4 of my recent book afore-cited and therefore do not repeat here, about other cases of legal and personal persecution against individuals with politically incorrect views and actions towards the administration

on the war on terror. It suffices to add, however, that, in this troublesome time of ours, anyone who is thus politically incorrect is vulnerable to being treated and persecuted as a “terrorist,” just as human history has shown countless chapters of similar witch hunts (e.g., against the heretics, the infidels, the pagans, the gentiles, the witches, the counter-revolutionaries, the Communists, and the like).

The war on terror, in the end, is also a war on freedom.

Conclusion

Individual terrorism exists for some good reasons, be they psychological (for revenge in relation to anger), societal (for equity in relation to inequality) and cultural (for rechantment in relation to identity), as a countervailing expression against global hegemony.

Until the fundamental roots of injustice in state-terrorism and state-sponsored terrorism committed by the Same against the Others are substantially addressed, individual terrorism is here to stay. To call the individual terrorists “evil,” “haters of freedom,” or comparable derogatory names, as Bush and others often did, is as much ignorant as self-defeating, and the end result is the continued vicious cycle of human suffering, as it has since the beginning of human civilization.

The main point to remember here is two-fold, firstly, that individual terrorism exists as a countervailing expression against global hegemony (as in state terrorism and state-sponsored terrorism), and secondly, that the price to get rid of it is a police state. In both cases, there is no freedom without unfreedom (as already explained in Chapter 5 of *The Future of Human Civilization* and elaborated further in *The Future of Capitalism and Democracy*). And this constitutes a most fundamental civilizational dilemma in our interesting time.

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