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One Person’s Terrorist Is Another Person’s Freedom Fighter

People define terrorism in diverse ways. However, this does not erase the world’s problem related to its definition. Professionals and institutions have not come to the correctly common definition of it. Such indefiniteness provokes some debates on the ways of defining terrorism in order to find the means to combat it. In order to address this problem, Daniel Vencill and Zagros Madjd-Sadjadi have started from asking questions.

In their quest, these experts ask whether a precise definition for terrorism can be found. In order to be more accurate, they ask whether the definition can be abstract having no real presence (66). This lack of precise definitions cultivates a common simple definition for any act of terrorism. The primary definition is that, “one person’s terrorist is another person’s freedom fighter” (Madjd-Sadjadi and Daniel 67). This paper analyses the credibility of using this phrase as a terrorism definition. It shows that this definition is not right for explaining this term. It also shows that it has some truism enabling the task bearers to find a precise definition.

This definition raises many critics from different scholars. Weinberg claims that using this phrase as the definition establishes misunderstanding between an activity and a goal. It substitutes the phrase establishing guidance towards discovering the common definition (Weinberg 25). Other debates are discussing a real meaning of such terms as a “freedom fighter” and a “terrorist”. In addition, the main concern triggers to the issue
related to what extent one can use these words interchangeably. However, there is the truth in the use of this phrase, even though they are not completely applicable. This aspect of looking at terrorism brings the attention towards the critical issues that one evaluates while tackling a terrorism concept.

One significant common challenge in the use of this phrase for the definition is the misunderstanding of the means and ends around this concept. Failing to consider this aspect would be to assume that the definition of terrorism should be primarily made on the goals and not the ways for achieving aims. During a close look at the definitions referred to terrorism, the common theme is that they focus on the motivations of criminals as well as on the approaches they are applying. In order to prove his point of view, Weinberg (30) states that terrorism is a method applicable to achieve diverse goals. These aims include liberating a region from the oppressive ruling or imposing fear on a targeted subject. With this knowledge kept in mind, one should remember that the achieved goals not usually approve the means used during these scenarios. More acceptable, the personnel should define terrorism according to the approaches used to achieve the targeted aim per any individual or a group analyzed.

It is relevant to note that both freedom fighters and terrorists invoke the fear feeling in the targeted parties. However, fear differs according to its kind. While freedom fighters scare the people they are fighting with, terrorists make innocent civilians frightened. Freedom fighters go to war with soldiers while terrorists are fighting in most cases with innocent civilians. They use people, as a rule, as a means to attract the government’s attention. While both might be initiating some freedom, terrorists make an impression of negative freedom. Their motives behind such freedoms usually trigger the
oppression to other people. For example, terrorist groups in the Middle Eastern region strive for freedom to control some regions in the targeted country. This is not only negative for civilians there, but it will also have a bad impact on the rest of the world (Martn 63). Two different terms defining the same person bring a conflict of interests and misunderstanding to those people which accept the message. The definition should be correct legally and morally.

The language used in this phrase is also appealing. As experts have analyzed the history, some presentations of terrorists show them as “freedom fighters”. Terrorist groups may easily convince the newly recruited terrorists that they are actually being the freedom fighters and not terrorists. For example, the terrorist groups based on the Muslim religion state their own concept that they are leading the war against Infidels as well as other religions (Coolsaet 15). Such imposing plays a significant role in ensuring the utmost loyalty of its members. In disputing of the terrorist perspective as freedom fighters, Burns and Kate (10) have emphasized that this is impossible to use both terms. A freedom fighter and a terrorist cannot be applied to the same person. Madjd-Sadjadi and Daniel (70) have tried to offer a proper distinction between these two terms. They have explained that the freedom fighter uses a lawful military tactics for reaching some legal political targets. The respondents justify these tactics as they may be applied to get the victory in some conflicts. On the other hand, terrorists lack a legitimacy aspect. Diverse states and regions define terrorism differently. This may present that there is the lack of any common definition concerning the same. However, even among these various terms, this phrase cannot act as a definition. It brings the conflict concerning the message; thus, the recipients may be confused.
To explain the above point for further, the actions of terrorists and freedom fighters may be explained. The former ones do some cruel activities on behalf of liberation. Such terrorists fight against innocent people. They injure or kill weak, though these groups may have no impact on them. They explode buses with innocent children on their way to school or kill every person in a quiet village. Their main aim is not to liberate, but to destroy everything on their way. Instead of helping, they instill fear in all the targeted people. As a result, this brings the instability and many other challenges due to such actions (Baylis, James and Colin 55). The people killed by them are being the political targets to terrorists. However, these innocent people do not have any impact on them or anyone else that they have to suffer for.

It is significant to understand that any person is responsible in accordance with the label put on him or her (Richardson 50). There is the danger hidden in one person who receives these two terms simultaneously. This hazard is related to both legal and moral terms. According to legal terminology, the person standing before the court as a terrorist may hide himself or herself under a mask of freedom fighter. The law is critically sensitive on the ambiguity and gaps while analyzing all proofs. Similarly, a freedom fighter could easily be confused with a terrorist. From a moral perspective, many people have their own moral that makes them aware of their actions or anything else. The terrorist probably knows that his or her actions are hazardous. As for a freedom fighter, he or she knows the legality of the actions done. If these two terms do not pose any difference, then the freedom fighter can fail to provide his legal duty. This is the moment when he or she feels that such actions may be classified as terrorist.
This lack of definition serves as an advantage in some aspect. Through finding the precise definition for terrorism, the concerned parties should also find some distinct terms on the acts of freedom fighters and terroristic acts. In the UNO (the United Nations Organization) General Assembly, Yasser Arafat stated that the disparity between the terroristic lies and revolutionary comments had been the reason behind the fighting actions of each party. He further stated that any person fighting for a just cause could not be termed as a terrorist (Martin 66). In such a way, one person cannot become a terrorist from one side while being a freedom fighter from the other part. His or her actions cannot serve the two purposes. However, it is also significant to consider the culture and religion of the country (Coolsaet 44). Israelis refer to the suicide bombing attacks as the terroristic acts. On the other hand, Palestinians consider the same as the acts for freedom and those people sacrificing themselves and others to be with Allah.

As one analyzes deeper the critics regarding this terrorism definition, one may realize that there is a confusion in the goals and approaches to these aims. Furthermore, the definition for terroristic lies in the approaches used to achieve the purposes should be as well analyzed. From another angle, the phrase used to define terrorism is not irrelevant. The concerned parties can use this term in order to identify the distinct definition for terrorists and freedom fighters. Identifying these terms will help to reach further the right definition for this issue. The parties should still consider various cultures, religions and other human practices that may influence on people’s perceptions of these terms.

One step is to identify all existing definitions. You should analyze these terms from the religious, cultural and political perspectives. These perceptions will allow the
evaluator to get a broader understanding of this concept. While analyzing other
definitions related to the following phrase, one may realize a conflict of interests. During
the analysis, Richardson (60) has noted the common characteristics for these definitions.
These terms have a political inspiration. Furthermore, they involve some violence threats
or violence in them. The definition also serves a purpose of passing a message.
Additionally, a victim and an act have a symbolic relevance. The initiator of act is a sub-
actor (Richardson 61). Moreover, the message is not determined for the same audience
and victims. Finally, a terroristic act has some civilians as a target. Even with this
analysis, this is not easy to come to the general conclusion and term. The ordinary
language for explaining this concept has to be applied.

As stated before, this is hard to drive a common term. The complicated
perspectives and opinions on terroristic acts make this task a challenge. Scholars must
define these distinct terms before creating general terms. This will prevent them from
making the same mistakes and using the one term instead of the other one. The phrase
“one person’s terrorist is another person’s freedom fighter” is not the right definition of
terrorism as discussed before. However, even with its faultiness, it has its truism. One
must correct the mistake by finding the problem underlying the subject analyzed. The
concerned parties cannot find the common definition without finding the problem in the
currently accepted term. In order to give the precise concept for terrorism, the concerned
parties should base their opinion on the approach used rather than the goals achieved. In
other words, people justify their goals (ends) through the means used. People cannot fight
for freedom while targeting innocent civilians. Freedom fighters fight with other people
using weapon in a legal manner. In order to avoid the conflict of interests, it is also
relevant to note that two contradicting terms cannot describe the same person. One may be either a freedom fighter or a terrorist. The person cannot act in both roles.
Works Cited


