Is Terrorism a Unique Form of Violence? An Assessment of the Academic Critique

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ABSTRACT

The longstanding question over whether or not terrorism is a unique form of violence that demands its own unique set of responses is one of the most outstanding theoretical and conceptual problems in the terrorism discourse. The contentious debate has generated and actively sustained a number of competing theories and convictions. Amidst all this, the already convoluted concept of terrorism has become all the more peculiar. The attempts to undermine the uniqueness of terrorism, in particular, pose a serious challenge to the chances of terrorism ever becoming an independent field of academic research. Given the fallout, it becomes necessary to especially reassess the critique that strips terrorism of its uniqueness and distinctiveness.

Key Words: **Terrorism, Unique, Conceptual, Theoretical, Definition, Critical.**

Introduction

Notwithstanding the incessant debate over the meaning and definition of terrorism, the question of whether or not terrorism is a distinct form of violence has invited its own fair share of critique and pillory. There is a marked disdain for any special treatment granted to terrorism on account of it being unique and distinct. Scholars have long debated the standalone characteristics of terrorist violence and have sought to challenge its exclusivity. Since, the emergence of the critical discourse on terrorism, these plenary attacks have become more pronounced and mainstream.

Attempts to undermine the uniqueness and distinctiveness of terrorism have over the years generated and nurtured a number of circular debates and arguments in the academic discourse. From seeing terrorism merely as an extension of warfare to placing it in a broader context of violence and from advancing an interdisciplinary approach to advocating methodological pluralism, scholars have actively sought to discredit and redress the uniqueness of terrorism.

As the tendency to undermine the distinctiveness of terrorism gains currency and academic acceptance, it becomes necessary to also assess its inevitable fallout. Among other things, this propensity has not only resulted in creating profound confusion over the common inference of the term terrorism, but potentially also seriously hampers the chances of terrorism becoming an independent field of study

and academic inquiry. This paper primarily seeks to investigate the fallout of this academic misadventure.

Warfare Thesis, Broader Context and Interdisciplinary Advocacy: Standout Challenges to the Uniqueness of Terrorism

Attempts to challenge and undermine the distinctiveness of terrorism, though typically attributed to the critical scholarship, are in fact not new to the study of terrorism. Traditionally, a number of orthodox terrorism scholars have also long challenged the 'uniqueness' of terrorism. Foremost among such attempts is the tendency to see terrorism as a form of warfare. Advocates of this position have historically argued that terrorism is neither new nor some novel form of violence. Instead, they posit that terrorism should be seen as an extension or a form of warfare.

Andrew Silke is a leading proponent of this school of thought. In *Terrorism and the Blind Men's Elephant*, Silke (1996) narrates the popular Indian folklore about three blind men that approach an elephant and try to perceive it through their sense of touch. Each of the blind man touches a different part of the Elephant and arrives at a completely conflicting and contradictory conclusion. Silke (1996) subsequently compares terrorism to an elephant and equates the attempts to understand it with futile efforts of the blind men that hopelessly try to perceive the elephant. This analogy, according to Silke, has been made possible because of the increasing tendency to view terrorism as some unique form of violence. He believes that the propensity to treat terrorism differently, prevents academics (much like the three blind men) from seeing the bigger picture and appreciating terrorism for what it really is (Silke, 1996).

While there are a number of reasons why terrorism is treated differently as opposed to being seen as a form of warfare, Silke (1996) believes that it is primarily because of the term's pejorative undertone. The notion of terrorism is heavily value-laden that tends to delegitimize any form of violence to which it is successfully attached. Since the notion of war in general does not carry such emotional baggage, therefore attempts to view terrorism as an extension of warfare appear to create a contradiction of sorts. In order to avoid this potential contradiction and to account for the inherent immorality of terroristic violence it is felt necessary by many to treat terrorism differently.

Silke is profoundly critical of such line of reasoning. According to him the stated differences between terrorism and war are merely illusionary. Since the differences primarily stem from the inherent immorality of terrorist violence, Silke sets out to address the issue by questioning and exposing the implied morality of wars. He argues that wars not only account for more non-combatant casualties than any other form of violence but generally also tend to be far more destructive and pernicious. In light of the deaths and destruction caused by wars, the moral dilemma posed by terrorism does indeed appear to be disproportionate and unfair.

If we account for the atrocities committed during wars, then we will be forced to redress our prevailing concerns with terrorism's inherent immorality. This, Silke argues, will also allow us to see terrorism for what it really is- a mere extension of warfare devoid of the novelty and uniqueness typically associated with it.

Stripping terrorism of its uniqueness and seeing it within the broader context of warfare will supposedly allow us to overcome the many conceptual and theoretical problems posed by the term. According to Silke (1996), only the scholars that view terrorism as a form of warfare are on the right intellectual track, whereas all the rest are trapped in a dangerous illusion where the enigma of terrorism continues to grow perennially. "It is my contention" Silke (1996) concludes, "that seeing terrorism as warfare is finally seeing the elephant for what it really is, and until we reach an acceptance of this, we will remain groping in the dark." (p.27)

Much like Silke, Everett Wheeler (1991) is also of the opinion that terrorism should be seen as a form of warfare. Deeming them largely inadequate and divorced from history, Wheeler is fairly critical of all contemporary approaches that distinguish terrorism from warfare. Acknowledging terrorism's multiple faces that appear to defy generalizations, he places modern-day terrorism "within the larger framework of universal history, in hope of shedding new light on terrorism's conceptual origins and theoretical debts" (Wheeler, 1991, p. 7).

Using an historically grounded approach, Wheeler traces the roots of terrorism to the Greco-Roman tradition of primitive warfare. "Terrorism", he argues, "forms a subset of the ideas included within the ancient concept of stratagem, and in modern practice it has become a conceptual offshoot of guerilla warfare" (Wheeler, 1991, p. 10). The military theory of stratagem and guerilla warfare typically involve reliance on surprise, trickery, hit and run tactics, ambush and avoidance of direct confrontation with the enemy. Cumulatively these elements can also be seen as "hallmarks of primitive warfare" (Wheeler, 1991, p. 18) that have historically been employed for some tactical and strategic gain over an opponent. Wheeler (1991) believes that since these elements are also the defining characteristics of modern day terrorism, it is therefore only logical to conclude that terrorism has always been a form of warfare. To view terrorism otherwise would therefore be historically inaccurate.

According to Wheeler, the uniqueness and distinctiveness associated with terrorism will disappear once its long pedigree is acknowledged and the phenomenon is simply treated as a modern-day extension of primitive warfare. In his own words, "the apparent uniqueness of contemporary terrorism and its conceptual distinctions from guerilla operations soon dissolve when terrorism is set within a broader historical context" (Wheeler, 1991, p. 27).

Attempts to see terrorism as a form of warfare and efforts to undermine its distinctiveness inadvertently leads critics to draw direct parallels with wars. Traditionally wars are believed to be driven by a set of rules, whereas terrorism is

seen as a form of violence that categorically and deliberately violates these rules of violent engagement (Hoffman, 2006). Foremost among these set of rules governing the conduct of wars is the longstanding provision of non-combatant immunity. Skeptics of the warfare thesis are of the opinion that terrorism primarily and in some cases specifically seeks to violate the principle of non-combatant immunity. Moreover, wars are believed to be sometimes moral, just and even necessary, with their conduct determined by the long established tradition of the just war thesis (Walzer, 2006). In comparison, no justificatory space is typically granted to terrorism and there is believed to be no mechanism in place that could monitor and determine its conduct. These convictions largely prevent scholars from seeing terrorism as a form of warfare.

Virginia Held, among others, is deeply critical of all such convictions. She believes that the criteria employed to distinguish terrorism from wars is dubious at best. Held is critical of the restricted application of the just war thesis and argues that it can readily be applied to terrorist violence as well. She expresses strong reservations over treating terrorism as a unique form of violence that is distinctly immoral, illegitimate and heinous especially when compared with wars in general. "Terrorism", Held (2004) points out, "is not uniquely atrocious… war is especially heinous, and so is terrorism, but in actual circumstances some uses of violence may be justified, and terrorism may not be more unjustifiable than war" (p. 57). Lionel McPherson has similarly expressed concerns about the inherent immorality of terrorist violence. He raises objections over the violation of the non-combatant immunity principle by terrorism specifically. "The principle challenge" McPherson (2007) argues, "for those who believe that terrorism is distinctively wrong lies in accounting for non-combatant casualties of conventional wars" (p. 525).

Prominent theoretician of terrorism, Alex Schmid, is also profoundly critical of treating terrorism as distinct and unique. He argues that such a distinction prevents us from seeing terrorism for what it really is. Schmid (1992) believes that terrorism should simply be treated as "peacetime equivalent of war crimes" (p. 7), where the terrorists actions could be considered as crimes against humanity. Schmid's solution, though seemingly novel, is also primarily motivated by the desire to view terrorism as a form of warfare.

Just as there is insistence on seeing terrorism as a form of warfare, there is also an increasing emphasis on placing terrorism within the broader context of violence. Michael Boyle, for instance, points out that the study of terrorism is increasingly getting detached from the study of political violence. This attitude, Boyle (2012) argues, has resulted in the treatment of terrorism as an exceptional form of violence and treating terrorism as an exceptional form of violence is dangerous and counter productive. Helen Dexter (2012) argues along similar lines and points out that categorization of terrorism produces a "moral hierarchy of violence" (p.123). According to her, one of the reasons why terrorism is categorized is because it prevents moral critique of violence itself by isolating the

bad (terrorism), from the good (legitimate violence). She goes on to draw the familiar comparisons between terrorism and war to show that terrorism is not distinctly unique.

In addition to seeing terrorism within the broader context of violence and warfare, there also have been attempts (particularly by the critical scholarship) to promote 'inter-disciplinary approach' in the study of terrorism. Such an approach is intended to relegate the uniqueness of terrorism by placing it in a broader context and through endorsing a multi and interdisciplinary study of terrorism. Richard English (2009), for instance, proposes "inclusivity" and "pluralism of methodological and disciplinary approaches" (p. 381) for the study of terrorism. Richard Jackson (2012), possibly the most renowned critical scholar, also argues along similar lines and advocates a multidisciplinary approach. Anthony Burke (2008), another notable critical scholar, also endorses pluralism and encompassing works that exist in the field of terrorism studies. Although this inter and multi-disciplinary advocacy is usually associated with the critical camp, but some orthodox scholars also strongly second this position. Boyle (2012), as a case in point, argues that since the last decade or so, the study of terrorism has become a self-contained area of inquiry, largely disconnected from other fields. He believes that the interconnections between terrorism and other fields must be realized and this can only be achieved through a multi and inter-disciplinary study (Boyle, 2012).

The attempts to see terrorism as a form of warfare or placing it within the larger context of violence or even advocating an interdisciplinary approach (features that are repeatedly emphasized by the critical scholars in particular) are all essentially tied down to undermining the uniqueness of terrorism and isolating it from its moral underpinning. Needless to say, all such efforts have had limited success as the phenomenon of terrorism continues to defy typologies and generalizations. Moreover, all such convictions are also having a visible impact on the field of terrorism studies as they categorically hinder the prospects of terrorism becoming an independent area of social inquiry.

Discussion and Analysis

To recapitulate the discussion so far, Wheeler (1991) believes that most academics fail to see terrorism as a form of warfare because "political circumstances outweigh strategy; and that in war an audience is defended, but in terrorism parties compete for an audience" (p. 11). Silke (1996), on the other hand, argues that the main reason why majority of scholars fail to see terrorism as a form of warfare is because of the revulsion that terrorist acts generate among observers. Donald Hanle (1987) notes that state terrorism posses the greatest difficulty for interpreting terrorism as warfare. Similar reasons are also given for failing to see terrorism within the broader context of violence or addressing the phenomenon

through an interdisciplinary approach. Seeing terrorism as a form of warfare or placing it within the larger context of violence raises questions over the legitimacy of war and violence itself. The problem essentially with all such approaches is moral.

The propensity to isolate terrorism from its moral underpinning received a significant boost in the last decade particularly after the launch of the journal *Critical Studies on Terrorism*. The necessity for this arose from the post 9/11 misuse of the term terrorism by states and the perceived academic inability to see beyond the much-demonized non-state terrorism. Some of the claims of critical scholars carry weigh as there has indeed been a trend in the orthodox/dominant discourse, especially since 9/11, to exaggerate not only the threat of terrorism but also terrorism itself. It certainly also does appear at times that some academics within the dominant discourse were even furthering and facilitating the cause of their respective governments (See e.g. Jones & Smith, 2009; Boyd & Scouras, 2010).

Jackson (2012) highlights this problem by referring to Foucault's concept of 'subjugated knowledges' and points out that historical and contemporary knowledge related to terrorism exists but is being continuously disqualified by the dominant discourse for being naïve and inferior. He further argues that this suppression of knowledge does not last long as the dominant discourse (because of having incomplete knowledge) eventually fails to deliver. This failure of dominant discourse leads to the 'insurrection' or eruption of subjugated knowledges. Jackson (2012) regards the rise of critical studies on terrorism as such an eruption. Burke (2008) also points out this problem by highlighting the 'knowledge-power interplay.' He argues that no knowledge is neutral and despite positivist claims, knowledge is not a mirror of reality. Knowledge instead tends to serve power in secret with its hollow claims of objectivity. The existing knowledge on terrorism likewise also tends to serve the interests of power holders. Burke (2008) believes that the rise of critical studies on terrorism signals the end of a particular kind of traditionally state-guided terrorism studies.

The widespread post 9/11 panic did indeed cause great harm to the study and understanding of terrorism. Terrorism suddenly transformed into a Frankenstein monster that defied any logic and explanation. Held (2004), for instance, points out that after 9/11 terrorism became so horrendous that even trying to study and understand the phenomenon was equated with exercising it. Such an extreme position allowed the term to be misused for relative gains. Many states used this situation to their advantage and exploited the label to justify their otherwise questionable actions to suppress various insurrectional movements that they opposed. Thus, warranting an act as terrorism provided the governments with a license, a license to kill or to do whatever they want.

Many academics, particularly within the orthodox school sadly also furthered the government's cause by treating terrorism as essentially terminal and advocating a harsh and violent set of responses as the only way to deal with it.

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Richard English (2009), for instance, rightly points out that the orthodox studies "have provided an unhealthy ideological legitimation of Western states in their struggle against non-state terrorism" (p. 377). Furthermore, since 9/11 the phenomenon of terrorism has largely been associated with non-state actors. Even leading academics in the field started focusing almost entirely on non-state terrorism. As Burke (2008) notes that the definition of terrorism, forwarded by Bruce Hoffman, excludes state terrorism from it. This restriction of terrorism to only non-state actors conflicts with the term's ontological roots as the term was first coined to describe actions by the state (the French reign of terror).

Such a constricted approach to the study of terrorism raises serious epistemological questions and poses normative challenges for conceptualizing terrorism. This extreme orthodox moral position has resulted in the rise of critical studies, which mainly emphasizes on bringing the state back into the terrorism equation and because of the extreme position that sees terrorism as necessarily evil and defying any logic, the critical position sadly goes to its own extremes of often seeing terrorism as morally justifiable and even acceptable. Ironically, the critical ethical considerations are reserved only for non-state actors. Although it is partially because the non-state actors are the weaker party, but it is mainly because the non-state actors have long occupied the centre stage of the dominant discourse. The critical position of deliberately limiting its ethical considerations to only non-state actors is reflective of their opposition to the mainstream discourse.

Usually justification for terrorism is sought when the ends, rather than the means are emphasized (Guelke, 2006). Lately, some scholars have even gone to the extent of justifying terrorism without any emphasis on the ends. Jeremy Waldron (2004), as a case in point, focuses on the motivations that drive the terrorists, such as revenge for some wrong or injustice done, or bring to light some issues that have long been neglected. Such ethical considerations for terrorist actions even when the act is isolated from its arguably legitimate end, goes on to highlight the other extreme that characterizes the critical position.

Thus the critical scholars, in their attempt to undo the harm done by the extreme position in the dominant discourse, have gone to their own moral extremes through pursuing an agenda of isolating terrorism from its moral underpinnings altogether. This agenda, among others, has involved approaches like placing terrorism within the broader context of warfare and violence and proposing an inter/multidisciplinary approach (as discussed earlier).

Critical scholars that propagate inter/multi disciplinary approach essentially argue that the tendency of orthodox scholars to treat terrorism as a unique category of violence, has led to the severance of terrorism from other fields of inquiry. Conversely, the argument that terrorism is completely detached from other fields is essentially flawed. Although the study of terrorism recently has, to some extent, become an independent area of inquiry, however this happened gradually and after significant inputs from other fields, such as psychology and sociology. We know,

for instance, that most terrorists, if not all, are normal human beings who choose their actions rationally and are not mentally deranged psychopaths as was once the perception. We know this because the findings were made possible through inputs from the field of psychology (See e.g. Merari, 1991).

Like psychology there also have been inputs from various other fields like sociology, anthropology and history. This input from other fields has from time to time offered a fresh look at the subject, which has immensely contributed towards understanding the complexities of terrorism. However, more often than not, these outside approaches have looked at only singular aspects of terrorism and frequently tend to suffer from factual inaccuracies (Merari, 1991). The main problem with the critical inter/multi disciplinary approach is that it stresses upon studying terrorism through the lens of other fields whilst undermining the exclusivity of terrorism itself. An interdisciplinary approach that downplays the exclusivity of terrorism by placing it in a broader context essentially undermines the development of terrorism studies as a separate academic discipline.

Avishag Gordon (2010) highlights this problem of inter/multi disciplinary approach to terrorism. She argues that for a discipline to fully develop in its own right, it has to be eventually detached from other lines of inquires and develop in its own right. Gordon (2010) believes that one of the reasons why terrorism still lags behind other evolving research fields is because it is usually incorporated into other grand fields and subjects of inquiry. The continuous trespassing between terrorism and other fields never enabled the discipline to develop its own distinct boundaries.

This has been a continuous problem for terrorism studies; there has been far too much trespassing (especially since 9/11). As a result of this trespassing terrorism has not only failed to develop as an independent discipline, but also continues to pose normative, analytical and conceptual problems. Although terrorism essentially is an offshoot of political violence and benefits immensely from the study of insurgency, guerilla warfare and other forms of political violence, however the real success in truly understanding terrorism arguably lies in being able to tell the difference between terrorism and other forms of political violence. This will never be possible as long as the uniqueness of terrorism is not acknowledged and if it is repeatedly confused with other forms of violence.

This dilemma inevitably steers us towards the other problem of seeing terrorism in the broader context of violence and warfare. Support for the interdisciplinary approach and the advocacy over seeing terrorism within the broader framework of warfare, are essentially attempts to undermine the uniqueness of terrorism and strip it of its moral undertones. Sadly, all such broad and inclusive approaches not only damage the chances of terrorism becoming an independent discipline but crucially also pose an epistemological dilemma.

Placing terrorism in a broader context of violence and warfare has resulted in the practice of seeing terrorism in all other forms of violence such as insurgency and guerilla warfare. This practice has reduced the term terrorism to some

commonplace method or tactic that can be used and employed by anyone at any time. As a result there is a growing tendency within the academic community to see terrorism as merely a method that is employed by various actors pursuing some political agenda (See e.g. Jones & Smith, 2009; Neumann, 2009). The boundaries of terrorism have thus become exceedingly blur and the term has become a common denominator that can be used by any political actor at any time.

Various acts of violence during civil wars/insurgencies often stray of conventional tangents and tend to be aimed at civilians, even deliberately (Kalyvas, 2004). However, from the larger context of the movement itself, which is largely viewed as legitimate (the 2011 Libyan uprising for instance), such actions are usually considered accidental, incidental or simply criminal. There is a strong reluctance to use the term terrorism for all such acts. Interpreting such actions as terrorism would entail that the term terrorism is being used to refer to a set of isolated incidents. However, the consequences that such a use will have for the entire movement (which is largely believed to be legitimate) goes on to show that terrorism is more than just a method.

It has been pointed out earlier that the reasons to isolate terrorism from its moral underpinning and undermining its exclusivity is essentially rooted in the misuse of the term by states and its endorsement by some extreme segments of mainstream terrorism scholarship. This dangerous trend has prompted many scholars, particularly the critical scholars to take up the issue. Sadly, however, this has merely led to deconstruction efforts concentrated largely on readdressing the phenomenon of terrorism in an effort to change its pejorative and judgmental overtones.

Admittedly it is very difficult to prevent states from misusing the word terrorism but does such a misuse justify researchers trying to change the meaning/connotation of the term that defies common usage and understanding? Why can critical scholars and others, not accept the implied immorality of terrorist acts? Why must they keep insisting that the conceptual ambiguity is because of the emotional baggage the term carries? Is genocide not a pejorative term? Why is there arguably more conceptual clarity on genocide than terrorism, when both the terms are value laden? Why can we not accept terrorism with all its emotional baggage, when we can readily accept genocide? Why do the critical scholars not realize that in order to understand terrorism without its underlying moral implications and condemnatory nature, they will first have to convince not just the common man but also their own ranks?

The term terrorism, throughout history, never truly enjoyed a positive or even a neutral connotation, as is emphasized in the works of Ted Gurr, Paul Wilkinson (1977; 1997) and Grant Wardlaw (1989). A partial reason for this is that for legitimate and less questionable actions, there always have been alternate positive and neutral terms, like guerilla warfare and insurgency (Guelke, 2006). Thus, going around trying to deconstruct the phenomenon and altering its meaning, just

so the term could become more neutral is not the right way to go about solving the problem. Such an approach not only creates conceptual landmines for terrorism scholars but also casts a shadow of uncertainty over the relatively better understood terms of insurgency and guerilla warfare. The only normatively plausible solution would be to address the problem within the acceptable and generally agreeable premise that sees terrorism as inherently illegitimate.

Any serious attempt to understand terrorism cannot and should not try to evade its uniqueness and moral underpinnings. The study of terrorism has long benefitted of constructive inputs from other fields and from the study of warfare and violence, as long as such inputs did not undermine its exclusivity. So part of the solution to understanding terrorism will be to study it in comparison with guerilla warfare, insurgency and other forms of warfare and not within them as that would reduce the term to merely a method. Terrorism after all, is a form of political violence. It is also fruitful to have inputs from other fields like psychology, sociology, history and anthropology but without undermining the autonomy of terrorism studies as a distinct and autonomous area of study and inquiry. So rather than an inter/multi disciplinary approach that essentially aims to undermine terrorism's exclusivity and poses serious challenges for it to become an independent subject, a comparative approach that upholds terrorism's distinctiveness will perhaps be a much productive and constructive alternative.

It is important to note here that the reciprocal criticism of the extreme moral standpoints in the terrorism discourse is often exaggerated and blown out of proportions. As Richard English (2009) points out that many non-critical scholars would agree that both states and non-state actors can be terrorists and "that state terrorism should be studied" (p. 378). As has already been pointed, many scholars in the orthodox camp indeed do not dispute this, and many of them share similar thoughts with the critical camp. This highlights the problem that the critical scholars have largely failed to appreciate the depth of orthodox scholarship and have a tendency to see the entire dominant discourse as a stage for furthering the interests of states.

The obsession of critical scholars to criticize the orthodox camp unconditionally has not only eluded them from the important task at hand but has also taken them to their own extremes. The extreme moral position in the mainstream discourse, on the other hand, have also lashed out at the critical scholars and have attempted to undermine and disregard all of their work. Jones & Smith (2009), for instance, go to the extent of placing the critical scholars and the Islamists in the same camp as both supposedly share a common contempt for the Western world. Such attacks on each other are only taking the two positions to further extremes and terrorism in the midst of all this has managed to become even more contentious. Meanwhile, the traditional orthodox work has not only been sidelined but also appears to have been long forgotten.

It is for this reason that a return to traditional orthodox study of terrorism, particularly the classic orthodox work is extremely important. Most of the pre-9/11

terrorism literature can potentially be categorized as classic orthodox work. Although the moral problem exists in the classic work as well, but terrorism was neither demonized nor was it viewed as being justified and neutral (what most critical theorists have set out to do). Instead, a more balanced approach, without compromising the uniqueness of terrorism dominated much of the classic orthodox terrorism studies. Furthermore, the classic works also incorporates both state and non-state actors. The works of Ted Gurr, Paul Wilkinson (1977; 1997), Grant Wardlaw (1989), Brian Jenkins (1975; 2001) and Walter Laqueur (1987; 2004) are particularly notable. The more recent yet extremely influential work of Martha Crenshaw (1992; 2011), Bruce Hoffman (2002; 2006) and Alex Schmid (1992; 2004; 2011) (who also tend to take an evenhanded approach towards terrorism) is also very crucial. A contrast of the classic and the contemporary influential orthodox work could lay down the essential conceptual framework imperative for understanding and deciphering terrorism.

Conclusion

The central argument of the paper can be summarized by Grant Wardlaw's assertion that "at base, terrorism is a moral problem" (1989, p. 4). Solving the problem by deliberately avoiding all concerns with morality has so far not yielded any positive results. The emotional baggage, judgmental overtones, pejorative connotation, implied illegitimacy etc are all elements that make terrorism unique and standout. The best approach would therefore be to acknowledge the moral underpinning and to address the problem within the established and commonly understood premise without compromising the uniqueness of terrorism.

The traditional orthodox literature will immensely facilitate this cause as it offers the most stable normative platform for conceptualizing terrorism. Due to the recent trend of demonizing terrorism in the dominant discourse to legitimize a set of otherwise objectionable responses, which has not only led to the misuse of the term but has also taken state terrorism completely out of the equation, it is important for the all theoretical and conceptual work to be also critically reflected.

Furthermore, since an inter/multi disciplinary approach essentially undermines the exclusivity of terrorism discourse and hampers its development as an independent academic discipline, therefore, a comparative approach should instead be preferred. Most of the other fields often offer great insight into terrorism, a comparative approach that does not compromise terrorism's uniqueness, therefore would be extremely beneficial for the research. Deconstructing terrorism in an attempt to alter its commonly understood meaning and usage is not the right way to solve the problem; building on what already exists (the groundwork for which has already been laid down by the traditional orthodox scholarship) coupled with upholding its longstanding uniqueness, possesses the greatest potential for emancipating terrorism studies.

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