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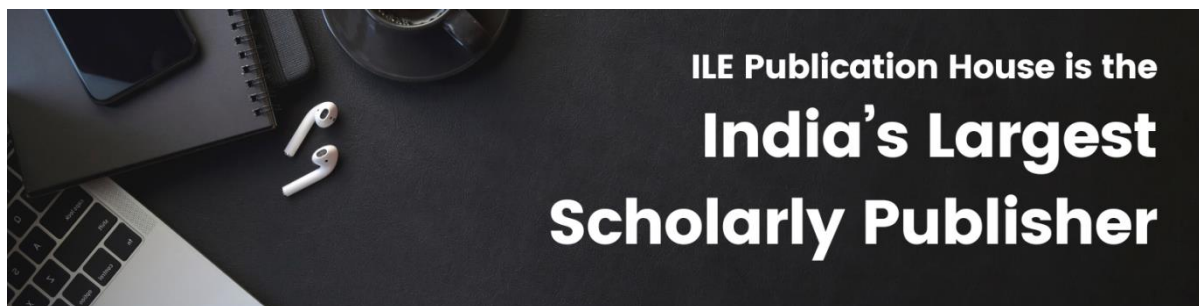
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No. 08, Arul Nagar, Seera Thoppu,

Maudhanda Kurichi, Srirangam,

Tiruchirappalli – 620102

Phone : +91 94896 71437 – info@iledu.in / Chairman@iledu.in



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State-Sponsored Terrorism: Unveiling the Typologies, Impacts, and Motivations behind Covert Geopolitical Machinations

Author - Aysha Aazmy Moideen, Student at NUALS, Kochi

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Abstract

A journalist was murdered in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul by Saudi government agents;⁸⁸ an ex-Russian spy and his daughter were poisoned with a nerve agent in Salisbury, allegedly by Russian intelligence agents⁸⁹. These 2018 events are connected to an area that receives little to no attention in political discussions; state Terrorism⁹⁰. What is Terrorism by the state? It is comparable to non-state Terrorism, which entails acts of violence committed against people or groups not involved in armed conflict but motivated by political, intellectual, or religious beliefs. The crucial distinction is that government agents are committing violence⁹¹.

Despite the recent incidents, it is unquestionably not a new phenomenon. Although the contemporary form of Terrorism only emerged in the second half of the 19th century, there is a propensity to regard it as a current issue, partly due to the dominance of terrorism studies by particular academic disciplines⁹². This paper shall examine the different types of support the states provide, their motivations, the impact of such

sponsorships, and the regimes that do not actively support Terrorism but allow it to fundraise and recruit.

Keywords: Criminal Jurisprudence, Criminal Law, National Security, Counter Terrorism, Human Rights Law.

Introduction

Having a long-lost history, state terrorism stretches back to the French Revolution and terror. Murder has been repeatedly deployed as a tactic against those deemed threats to the state or a leader of the masses in the Soviet era and by Russian Intelligence⁹³. Leon Trotsky remains one of the infamous victims of Soviet state terrorism, killed in Mexico City by a Soviet agent in the 1940s⁹⁴. Even in the post-Soviet era, the trend continues with the death of various critics and opponents of the Russian state and President Vladimir Putin⁹⁵.

Defining Terrorism and state sponsor

Governments often denounce any political activity as "terrorist-related," while violent groups try to brand the governments they oppose as "terrorist regimes." US support for Israel is regularly denounced in the Arab media as a form of sponsorship of Terrorism, while the

⁸⁸ ALJAZEERA, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/2/26/timeline-of-the-murder-of-journalist-jamal-khashoggi> (last visited Oct 6, 2022).

⁸⁹ BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-43315636> (last visited Oct 6, 2022).

⁹⁰ Jackson, R., *Knowledge, Power and Politics in the Study of Political Terrorism*, In Jackson, R., Smyth, M.B. and Gunning, J. (eds.), *Critical Terrorism Studies: A New Research Agenda*, 66-83 (2009).

⁹¹ Andrew Silke, *State Terrorism*, In Routledge Handbook of Terrorism and Counterterrorism 66, 66

(2018), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328115901_Routledge_Handbook_Of_Terrorism_And_Counterterrorism.

⁹² Module 1 INTRODUCTION TO INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM, https://www.unodc.org/documents/e4j/18-04932_CT_Mod_01_ebook_FINAL.pdf (last visited Oct 12, 2022).

⁹³ Psychology of Terrorism,

<https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/208551.pdf> (last visited Oct 12, 2022).

⁹⁴ HISTORY TODAY,

<https://www.historytoday.com/archive/months-past/leon-trotsky-assassinated-mexico> (last visited Oct 6, 2022).

⁹⁵ The Washington Post,

https://www.washingtonpost.com/gdprconsent/?destination=%2fnews%2fworldviews%2fwfp%2f2017%2f03%2f23%2fthere-are-ten-critics-of-vladimir-putin-who-died-violently-or-in-suspiciousways%2f%3futm_term%3d.7c8bf6ff41cd&utm_term=.07c754cd044f (last visited Oct 6, 2022).



United States has formally branded several governments - most of them in the Middle East - as state sponsors of terror, singling them out for economic and political punishment⁹⁶.

Some critics claim that Terrorism is easy for any clear-headed individual to understand, with the focus on definitions little more than an exercise for intellectuals that detracts from the horror of Terrorism.⁹⁷ Others dismiss the idea of defining Terrorism as hopelessly relativistic, repeating the adage that one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter⁹⁸.

A lack of a definition creates more problems than it solves. Labelling an act as Terrorism quickly becomes meaningless. Depending on the speaker, Terrorism becomes a synonym for crime, peaceful political activity, state repression, and other desirable and horrid phenomena quite different in purpose, nature, and impact⁹⁹.

Similarly, by lumping all state actions about Terrorism into one category, we lose the opportunity to recognize different motivations and, more importantly, to craft more effective solutions that require a nuanced understanding¹⁰⁰.

Bruce Hoffman, one of the leading analysts of international Terrorism, defines Terrorism as having five distinguishing characteristics: (1) "ineluctably political in aims and motives"; (2) "violent - or, equally important, threatens violence"; (3) "designed to affect the victim or target in a way that has long-lasting psychological effects"; (4) "conducted by an organization"; and (5) "perpetrated by a subnational group or non-state entity."¹⁰¹ Another characteristic that can be added is that the attack deliberately targets non-

combatants¹⁰².

Attacks conducted for financial gains, such as violence linked to narcotics trafficking or revenge, would be excluded as non-political even if they involved political leaders¹⁰³. In practice, many terrorist groups finance themselves through crime and narcotics trafficking, making it difficult to disentangle a group's effort to finance itself¹⁰⁴. Acts perpetrated by individuals are excluded, as the definition focuses on groups¹⁰⁵. Non-violent acts such as drawing graffiti would be excluded unless they explicitly threatened violence¹⁰⁶.

Although "non-combatants" seems straightforward, there is no widely accepted definition. For example, the United States State Department includes military personnel on duty but are not immediately engaged in combat as non-combatants for Terrorism¹⁰⁷.

Thus, al-Qa'ida's attacks on USS Cole that killed seventeen seamen in October 2000 and the Lebanese Hezbollah's bombing of the Israeli Defense Force barracks in Tyre in 1983 that killed 141 people qualify as Terrorism, even though the targets would be legitimate if an actual state of hostilities existed¹⁰⁸. The picture is made even cloudier if police officers, intelligence agents, and other non-military personnel, often the spear's point in counterterrorism, are included as non-combatants¹⁰⁹.

Non-combatant status can be painted as a spectrum, particularly from the point of view of a terrorist group¹¹⁰. At the upper end are prominent combatants such as soldiers, intelligence personnel, and political leaders who are directly engaged in fighting terrorists and responsible for security¹¹¹. Farther down but still

⁹⁶ Terrorism Versus Democracy: The Liberal State Response: Second Edition, <https://philpapers.org/archive/NEAGWO.pdf> (last visited Oct 22, 2022).

⁹⁷ Supra note 7.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Supra note 7.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Microsoft Word - tezin son hali2.doc, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/52940064.pdf>. (last visited Oct 12, 2022).

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Supra note 5.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Chapter1.pdf, <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/rwss/2016/chapter1.pdf>. (last visited Oct 28 2022).

¹⁰⁶ Supra note 7.

¹⁰⁷ Country Reports on Terrorism 2019 - United States Department of State, <https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2019/>. (last visited on Oct 28, 2022).

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Supra note 5.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Supra note 7.



high are government officials such as diplomats or police whose actions tremendously influence counterterrorism but who themselves are not part of the immediate fray¹¹².

Still farther down are other public officials whose employer makes them symbols of the state but are not involved in counterterrorism beyond helping provide good government¹¹³. Private Citizens with jobs linked to counterterrorism, such as arms manufacturers, are the next stop¹¹⁴. Lowest on the list are citizens whose jobs have nothing to do with counterterrorism, such as construction workers, office administrators, or business people¹¹⁵.

Classification of state sponsors of Terrorism

Strong supporters are backers that are both highly committed to the terrorist group and can offer it significant resources. Iran's support for the Lebanese Hezbollah exemplifies this category¹¹⁶. Weak supporters fall into regimes that support the terrorist group but have few resources. The Taliban's backing for al-Qa'ida would exemplify a weak supporter¹¹⁷.

Lukewarm supporters in a regime may favor terrorists or their cause in a general sense but do little to advance it directly. Iran, for example, maintains ties to several radical Shi'a groups in the Persian Gulf, but after the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing, it has done little to advance its cause¹¹⁸.

Antagonistic supporter states to support a terrorist group but seek to control it or weaken its cause. Syria's often hostile relationship with

several Palestinian groups, including Yasir Arafat's Fatah, typifies such an ambivalent relationship¹¹⁹.

Passive supporter regimes do not directly aid terrorists but knowingly turn a blind eye to their activities because many people in their society favor it. Saudi Arabia, for example, allowed various jihadists linked to al-Qa'ida to raise money and recruit in the Kingdom with little interference before September 11, even though the regime did not directly aid Bin Ladin's organization¹²⁰.

Unwilling host regimes are too weak to stop terrorists within their borders or lack the intelligence to do so. These may include failed states like Somalia or weak regimes like the Lebanese government of the early 1970s, which tried but failed to crush the Palestinian terrorist presence on its soil. By my definition, such hosts are not "supporters" of Terrorism but rather their victims¹²¹.

Why do states sponsor Terrorism?

States work with terrorist groups for various reasons, and the effects often vary. Some terrorist groups become far more deadly and active, while others become weaker or more restrained.¹²² Understanding how and why states support Terrorism will make recognizing state-backed groups' risks to governments and citizens worldwide easier. Better understanding can also improve efforts to coerce sponsors into halting their support or even turning against their former proxy – vital steps for stopping the scourge of Terrorism¹²³.

The most important of these reasons is often strategic interest, as Daniel Byman opines in *Deadly Connections*.¹²⁴ Terrorists offer another

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Supra note 5.

¹¹⁴ Supra note 7.

¹¹⁵ See, for an illustrative example, Ayla Schbley, *Religious Terrorists*, pp. 237-241. Schbley provides a review of Hezbollah members' ranking of targets based on her interviews.

¹¹⁶ Crimes Committed by Terrorist Groups: Theory, Research and Prevention., <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/211203.pdf>. (last visited Oct 2, 2022).

¹¹⁷ Terrorism Out of Weak States - Carnegie Endowment for International Peace., <https://carnegieendowment.org/specialprojects/TerrorismOutofWeakStates/>. (last visited on Oct 22, 2022).

¹¹⁸ BYMAN, D, *DEADLY CONNECTIONS: STATES THAT SPONSOR TERRORISM* 4 (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press 2005).

¹¹⁹ Supra note 7.

¹²⁰ 1434_sab_s_anal_4_final_rev., <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/byman20050201.pdf>. (last visited on Oct 24, 2022).

¹²¹ 09-81183_c1_4_final.indd., <https://www.unodc.org/documents/terrorism/Publications/FAQ/English.pdf>. (last visited on 11th Oct, 2022).

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ ANDREW AND MITROKHIN, *THE SWORD AND THE SHIELD* (Quillen 2005).

¹²⁴ Supra note 16



means for states to influence their neighbors, topple a hostile adversary regime, counter US hegemony or achieve other state aims¹²⁵.

Iran helped disrupt the Middle East Peace Process by backing the Lebanese Hezbollah, HAMAS, and other radical groups. This influence was possible even though Iran is hundreds of kilometers from Israel and has no military or economic influence to affect the conflict otherwise¹²⁶. Support for Terrorism is cheaper than developing conventional military capabilities, and it can allow states to influence events far beyond their borders¹²⁷.

Backing terrorists also can serve a broader range of regime objectives, including domestic and ideological ones. The Taliban gave al-Qa'ida a haven in Afghanistan out of ideological sympathy and to gain allies in their civil war against the Northern Alliance¹²⁸.

Whatever the motive, state support can transform a radical group. Iran helped change the Lebanese Hezbollah from a disorganized and rag-tag collection of fighters to one of the most formidable guerrillas and terrorist groups in history. Perhaps most important, terrorists enjoying state support are far less vulnerable to their target regime's countermeasures¹²⁹.

Conclusion

The American Intelligence Central Intelligence Agency allegedly sponsored a car bombing in Beirut in 1985 to kill a cleric connected to Hezbollah¹³⁰. The explosion killed 80 individuals instead of its intended target. Moreover, a former MI5 agent named David Shayler claimed in 1998 that MI6 was behind a failed assassination attempt on Muammar Gaddafi in 1996 that claimed the lives of several other

people in addition to its intended victim.¹³¹

State terrorism, according to political scientist Ruth Blakely, is motivated by the "opportunity offered by the harm to scare others," in addition to the desire to kill the targets¹³². In other words, their actions are similar in that they all aim to terrify and punish a larger audience. Recent developments indicate that such a desire on the part of many different states is not going away soon.

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¹²⁵ Supra note 7.

¹²⁶ What Is Hezbollah? | Council on Foreign Relations., <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-hezbollah..> (last visited on Oct 22, 2022).

¹²⁷ Supra note 5.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Supra note 24.

¹³⁰ Casey Reported Behind '85 Lebanon Bombing - The New York Times., <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/09/27/world/casey-reported-behind-85-lebanon-bombing.html..> (last visited on 22nd Oct, 2022).

¹³¹ British secret service bungled plot to kill Gadafy, paper says – The Irish Times., <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/british-secret-service-bungled-plot-to-kill-gadafy-paper-says-1.180397..> (last visited on 14th Oct, 2022).

¹³² Ruth Blakeley, *State Terrorism in the Social Sciences: Theories, Methods and Concepts*, Contemporary State Terrorism, 12 (2018).



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