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Date

Terrorism and Counterterrorism

Question One

Terrorism poses a real threat to the American public, but it is not worth the ridiculous amounts of dollars spent on fighting it, as a matter of fact, the lurking danger that terrorist organizations, such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS, pose are overhyped and overblown by the government and the media. Moreover, the seeming safety America has had since the 9/11 attack does not justify the insane expenditure by the department of homeland security; hence, we need to keep asking ourselves if the gains and the alleged safety is worth the funds and lives expended in fighting terrorism. At the moment, including the terror victims of the 9/11 attack, the likelihood of a United States' resident perishing following a terror attack is 1 in 3.5 million annually, yet the government keeps spending more of the taxpayer's money in making the likelihood even lower (Mueller and Stewart, "Evaluating Counterterrorism Spending" 239). After the 9/11 attack, the increased spending by the Department of Homeland Security could be justified because of the confusion, hysteria, and haste it experienced in trying to respond, but the expenditure currently is not justified. Despite the low likelihood of a terror attack on the US soil, during the 10th 9/11 anniversary, domestic expenditure on terrorism was increased by \$360 billion over that in 2001. Subsequently, expenditure on fighting homegrown and overseas have increased by over \$110 billion, at the same time, the nation and the private sector have increased terrorism expenditure by \$200 billion (Mueller and Stewart, "Evaluating Counterterrorism Spending" 239). Admittedly, the cause for the rise in the expenditure is the fear of terrorism itself not the probability of its occurrence; thus, other growing hazardous concerns have been ignored by the government.

After the 9/11 attack, Americans concentrated on the horrible impacts of terrorism and failed to recognize the fact that it was very unlikely for such an incident to occur again. They demanded a substantial response from the government even if the risk magnitude did not warrant the response. The government played to the demand and the fears of the public to justify the expenditures on counter-terrorism. The government continues to inflate the capacities of the terrorist organizations, yet the extremists are disjointed, small, lethal, and miserable; despite carrying out some attacks, their capabilities are by far inferior to their terror desires. Again, despite the huge expenditure in fighting domestic terrorism, the department of homeland security is yet to uncover any single jihadist sleeper cell in the US. The government ought to see the jihadists for what they are; short on know-how, prone to mistakes, operationally unsophisticated, and having little learning capacity. Besides, since 9/11, the terrorists have been unable to detonate even a simple bomb; therefore, the expenditures on terrorism should be diverted to other sectors of the economy that are of more concern to Americans. And finally, just because the public experiences difficulty in understanding terror likelihood when emotions are in play, it does not justify the government's ridiculous expenditure on fighting terror whose likelihood of occurring is rather microscopic (Mueller and Stewart, "Evaluating Counterterrorism Spending" 240).

Question Two

In Global War on Terrorism, it is prudent that the US continue to focus on using smaller, leaner military forces that can be deployed anywhere. Also, more focus should be in using unmanned aerial vehicles, intelligence operations, special operation force, aerial refueling, network security, cyber protection. Also, through psychological operations, they can win the hearts and minds of jihadist sympathizers as opposed to resorting back to large scale conventional war operation, as it was in Afghanistan, because terrorism itself is not a conventional war. Thus, the new approach in use should continue.

Although, the terrorist organizations have orchestrated several terror attacks lately, including those in France, the majority of Americans remain opposed to the return of US troops to the Middle East. According to a survey by Ipsos after the Paris attacks, 76 percent of Americans are against sending US troops to fight ISIS, and, surprisingly, 65 percent do not even want small special operation units involved (Mueller and Stewart, "Terrorism and Counterterrorism in the US" 231). Instead, the majority of Americans want the aerial bombings intensified and more aid given to the local forces to battle the jihadists on their own. Based on past experiences on having American ground troops, the new shift is the way to go, because with ground troops, the commitment gradually wanes off and invariably the indigenous forces gives a devastating blow to the US troops and the American resolve crumbles. Subsequently, Washington and the terror victims its attempting to save always end up in more terrible situations than before the troops were deployed, because when the US finally withdraws its troops, the jihadists perceive it as an apparent sign of weakness. In 1994, when the US troops withdrew from Somalia, Osama bin Laden interpreted it as a victory to the jihadist movements and consequently carried several attacks on US embassies and culminated them with the 9/11 attack on US soil (Mueller and Stewart, "Terrorism and Counterterrorism in the US" 235). As a result, sending US troops into either Syria or Iraq would be a misstep by the government because of the several reasons.

First, having US troops in the caliphate regions will only provide the terrorists with easy targets. At the moment, jihadist operatives are finding it hard to have any American targets to launch their attacks on; hence, sending out troops would make their tasks much easier. The second reason is that by having the ground forces in these volatile areas will only provide the extremists with captives to influence the US policy and resolve. The jihadists are quite adept when it comes to manipulating the opinions of the public through social media. Therefore, through immolation and beheadings of any captured ground soldier will greatly undermine the government's and people's resolve to counter terrorism, because they know how to capitalize on American hostages to advance its agendas and interests. The third reason is that sending ground troops takes the pressure off the country's local forces to effectively fight the extremists for their homeland. The fourth reason is that sending ground forces will lead to taking sides in civil wars, because they will become unwitting participants in those areas of political agendas that have little to do with a fighting jihadist. Lastly, ground forces have the potential to become a driving force for occupation ultimately. ISIS, for instance, became significant after American forces withdrew from Iraq; hence, despite defeating the earlier jihadist group, a new group emerged to fill the vacuum the American troops created when they left. Therefore, sending the troops would be pointless, because a different group always emerge to occupy the left vacuum. In conclusion, aerial counter-terrorism measures are the way to go (Mueller and Stewart, "Terrorism and Counterterrorism in the US" 228-240).

Question Three

One of the major causes of terrorism is the US unwavering support for Israel in its military superiority in the Middle East. The US unconditional support for Israel at the expense of other Arab countries has only led to the proliferation of more terror groups whose aim is to see the annihilation of the US and Israel. Both Bush and Obama administrations have granted Israel with the green light to do as they wish, except, perhaps, attacking Iran. Moreover, the US Congress continues to circumvent the policies to assert their complete devotion for the survival of Israel.

During the Lebanon War of 2006 and the Gaza War of 2008-2009, the US gave Israel a diplomatic cover including 2010 an Israeli attack on Mavi Marmara. As a result, it is no surprise that one of the main reasons for Osama's justification of terrorism against the US is because of their unconditional support for the Israelis and always ignoring the plight of Palestinians because of Israel's inhumane treatment. However, the war on terrorism cannot be ended by the US conceding to terrorist demands, such as stopping our financial and military aid to Israel or by opting to withdraw completely from the Middle East, because such a move would be grave and will only serve to embolden the terrorist groups. Besides, the US government should continue enhancing the military superiority of Israel, because most of the Middle East countries seek its total annihilation.

The aid provision to Israel is beneficial to both sides, because it also serves the US strategic interests in the volatile region. The aid helps Israel in fighting common threats, such as global terrorism and Islamic radicalization, hence, Israel is an effective ally of the US in fighting terrorism. Nonetheless, the aid enables Israel to take greater risks in seeking overall peace and stability in the middle-east (Boutton and Carter 1146-1163).

Question Four

The Global war on terrorism is not winnable. The war on terror can in no way be compared to conventional warfare, and it is more of a global conflict that is not necessarily defined by the winners or losers concept. Therefore, in the war of terror, victory should not even be sought; however, we can develop mechanisms and create conditions that make jihadists and their sympathizers unacceptable in many parts of the world. Consequently, the focus must shift from thinking that war on terror is a conventional war, or that jihadism is AlQaeda and its affiliates, such as ISIS, Al Shabab. At the moment, it is more of ideological warfare, something more powerful than the jihadist organization as has been observed in the recent Belgium and Nice attacks. All the jihadists share a common standpoint and can act alone from anywhere across the globe, hence, the war on terror is even challenging, because it's against faceless enemies who lie within, thus, the use of military force in its entirety will not end the war.

In the quest to fight terror, both the successful resolution of "The Troubles" in Ireland and the successful defeat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka have provided insightful wisdom in how to effectively fight global terrorism to eliminate waste of resources, time, and lives. The two incidents teach us that no purely military solution can win against extremism insurgency. Hence, if there are political problems that stem from the root causes of the extremism, then only political solutions can solve the problem and not the military. In the Northern Ireland scenario, the military would have successfully contained the IRA, but it could not have wiped them out, hence, it was only the offer of negotiation that stopped the violence. In Sri Lanka, the military's victory over the LTTE has not resulted in peace and the government's failure to negotiate a settlement and only reverting to violence will yield no peace in the long term, if the underlying political grievances remain unresolved in Sri Lanka. The other lesson we can learn is that the extremist groups do not just surrender to talks or settlement, because they have to acquire a narrative to tell their supporters and sympathizers about what they have

managed to achieve, thus, how far and why the sacrifice was worthwhile. Therefore, the government should not put tough pre-conditions to talks that will be perceived to them as outright surrender (Gorka 19-28). Therefore, it is a mistake to insist on precondition terms before commencing talks. Therefore, to contain terrorism, we should adopt the lessons from Sri Lanka and Ireland.

Question Five

The defeat of terrorism is not inevitable, again it is not easy to determine with any precision if the terrorists are on the losing side of history just yet. Today, terrorism has undergone metamorphosis to become more of ideological warfare. We should be willing to listen to their explanations and negotiate settlements at times, but we continue to hang onto the policy of “The US does not negotiate with terrorists”. Terrorism will also continue, because we carry on imposing our Western stereotype of the extremists and paying no attention to the socio-economic issues that cause the emanation of jihadist ideologies in the first place. As long as we will keep ignoring the significance of their ideologies, terrorism will continue even if the current jihadist groups, such as ISIS, were destroyed. Currently, and for the next 50 years, the new trend in terrorism will be orchestrated through lone wolf terrorism, as has been witnessed in Belgium, France, and Turkey.

In the future, we will also have to consider the possibilities of the terrorists gaining access to weapons of mass destruction, such as nuclear missiles. The access to these weapons could be possible through the help of defiant nations, such as North Korea. Also, both lone wolf and homegrown terror attacks will rise, because the jihadist still has strong power in kidnapping or radicalizing their followers to carry out their terror ideologies. Furthermore, in the next 50 years, we must also be ready to deal with the new computer-savvy terrorist who will seek to exploit the internet’s ubiquity and technological advancement. Cyber terrorism based on the internet will primarily be used in launching future attacks including the use of drones. Consequently, counterterrorism measures will have to be geared towards protecting the cyberspace, because it has become the most volatile front for suffering a terror attack. Therefore, it is upon the Department of Defense, CIA, FBI, and Homeland Security to ramp up their portfolios in cyber terrorism. Thus, the new war for the next five decades will be more on jihadist radicalization and cyber terrorism instead. We also have to contend that war on terrorism has no clear cut end or conclusion and all those counter-terrorism measures can be implemented without expecting clear cut victory (Cronin 59).

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