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Morality of Terrorism



Constraints on Definitions

1. Too broad – definitions include too many acts as terrorist

- a. Bush Sr.: "the unlawful use or threat of violence against persons or property to further political or social objectives"
- b. "the threatened or actual use of force or violence to attain a political goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation."

2. Too narrow – definitions include too few acts as terrorist

- a. Lackey: terrorist refuses to direct attacks toward military objectives
- b. political terrorism: limited to one form of terrorism

- Khat's hope is to find a definition that is neither too narrow nor too broad, one that does not exclude some kinds of terrorism, one that is neutral and does not beg the question of morality of terrorism

Elements of Terrorism

- Acts of terror share these elements and a definition/description must include them
 1. historical, cultural, and socioeconomic root causes
 2. immediate, intermediate, and long-range goals
 3. forms and methods of coercion and force
 4. nature or kinds of organizations and institutions (political systems) practicing or sponsoring the terrorism
 5. the social, political, economic or military context or circumstances in which the terrorism occurs

Khat's Definition

1. "Terrorist acts are acts of coercion or of actual use of force, aiming at

- a. monetary gain (predatory terrorism),
- b. revenge (retaliatory terrorism),
- c. a political end (political terrorism), or
- d. a putative moral/religious end (moralistic/religious terrorism)."
- the core concept is the use of force or violence for certain ends

Bifocal Character

2. Bifocal character of definition – distinction between
 - a. the "immediate victims" – those who are the immediate targets of terrorist acts
 - b. the "victimized" – those who are the indirect but real targets of terrorist acts

Just War and Morality of Terrorism

- **Jus ad Bellum**
 1. Competent Authority Condition
 2. Just Cause Conditions (substance, forms, proportionality, last resort)
 3. Right Intention Condition
- **Jus in Bello**
 1. Principle of Proportion (political vs. military)
 2. Principle of Discrimination

What's Fundamental Conditions of Jus in Bello

1. Principle of necessity:
 - a. One should not cause more destruction than necessary to achieve one's objectives
 - b. Principle of necessity: forbids actions if there is a less destructive/harmful means of accomplishing the same goal
2. Discrimination: noncombatant immunity prohibits the deliberate harming of innocents
3. Proportionality: proportionality requires that means are proportional to the ends

Do Certain Types of Terrorism Conflict with Just War Theory?

Jus ad Bellum	TYPES OF TERRORISM				
	Predatory	Retaliatory	Political	Moral	Religious
Authority	?	?	?	?	?
Just Cause	Y (611)	Y (611)	Y/N (if moral)	N (611)	Y (611)
Proportionality ³	Y (611)	Y (611)	U or Y (614)	U or Y (614)	U or Y (614)
Right Intention	Y (611)	U ¹	N ⁵	N	N
Jus in Bello	• Y = there's a conflict • N = there's no conflict • U = uncertain whether there's a conflict • ? = not addressed				
Proportion ⁴	Y (611)	? ⁶	U (614-5)	U (614-5)	U (614-5)
Discrimination ²	Y (611)	U (612)	U (612-3)	U (613)	?
Last Resort/ Necessity	Y (612)	Y (612)	?	?	?

Points and Examples

1: Assassination of an aggressor's leader would be terroristic if the group intended to pressure the group to stop aggressive actions -- this an act of aggression and not an act of self-defense (611).

Walzer would disagree with this--why think that one cannot kill your aggressor's leaders in an act of self-defense especially if the intention is to end unjust aggression?

2: What to make of this notion of moral innocence/guilt? Would some combatants be considered morally innocent since they are not causally connected with certain acts? (613)

Points and Examples

3: Problem is how to estimate the expected good of some political/moral/religious acts of terrorism. Any sort of calculation is difficult at best. Khat. argues that since the expected good is not forthcoming and likely not to come, then there is no good resulting from acts of terror.

4: Military proportionality requires a calculation of actual outcomes of acts, not just expected outcomes.

5: It looks like political, moral, and maybe religious acts of terrorism could be committed with the right intentions.

6: Is revenge in proportion just "an eye for an eye"?

Terrorism and Rights, I

A. Humans have a minimal right to life, i.e., a negative right to life (negative right to life – right not to be unjustly or wrongly killed)

i. Right to life and other protective norms prohibit killing except in exceptional circumstances – these exceptional circumstances include,

a) the protection of the equal rights of others (including soldiers defending the rights of a country's citizens),

b) certain acts which are the lesser of two evils (e.g., euthanizing terminally ill patients in severe pain), and

c) certain acts which violate no one's equal human or other moral rights or the principles of fairness and justice (e.g., assisted suicide)

ii. Right to life entails a right to one's physical and mental security and integrity

iii. Right to life entails a right to be treated as a moral person with a life of value

Terrorism and Rights, II

B. Terrorism violates its targets' right to be treated as a moral person in that it violates,

i) respecting the victim's autonomy as individuals with their own desires, interests, plans and projects, commitments and goals through humiliation, coercion, terror or death,

ii) acting toward the victim with an attitude of respect for feelings, desires, aspirations, goals and projects (with respect for their life having value), and

iii) respect for the victim's culture or ethnic, religious or racial identity or heritage.

Terrorism and Rights, III

C. Rights Argument Against Terrorism

1. Humans have right to life and a right to be treated as moral persons.
 2. Any act which violates this right to be treated as a moral person is morally wrong.
 3. Terrorism violates its victims' right to life/right to be treated as a moral person.
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4. Therefore, terrorism is morally wrong.