

THE SPECULATION ON “ISLAMIC TERRORISM”

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ABSTRACT

After the Taliban regained the power in Afghanistan, the pattern of Middle East is encountering a new change, and this situation clearly illustrates the fail of US counterterrorism in Islamic world likewise. Therefore, the speculation on “Islamic Terrorism” is necessary under the present international situation. This article is constituted by the qualitative methodology of comparative political studies and social psychology, and adopts the research methods of historical review and interdisciplinary analysis. Firstly, there is an introduction about the origin of the definition of “Islamic terrorism”, which is a result of hegemonic discourses of the West. And then, psychologically speaking, the definition of “Islamic terrorism” should be a multi-standards cognition, and the fail of US counterterrorism war in Middle East is a case. Through the overall context, this article concluded the civilizational speculation on Islam and domestic Muslim groups, and a theoretical advise is proposed in the end.

Keywords: Islam, Terrorism, Speculation, US-Eurpe, Middle East

I. The Reality Check of “Terrorism”: The Western Hegemony in Discourses

Terrorism, in the most general sense, is dominated by the Western world. As a matter of fact, the result of hegemonic discourses of the West. The killing of 11 Israeli athletes during the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich is regarded as the initiation of modern “terrorism”.(Schiller & Young, 2010)¹ And there is a heated debate over the definition of the word “terrorism” among representatives of western countries and the third world at the United Nations. Waldheim, the

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then Secretary General of the UN, proposed that “the UN should no longer stay silent on the current ubiquitous violence led by terrorists, and practical measures must be taken to avoid further bloodshed.” (KOREY, 1973)ⁱⁱThis proposal had found favour with the majority of western countries, but lost favour with many representatives from Asia, Africa and Latin America. They represented that “people who fight for liberty against the oppression and exploitation imposed by foreign powers have rights to combat by any means including violence.” Numerous developing countries agreed that the word “terrorism” is not applicable to the countries that have been occupied by foreign invaders, and people who have been deprived of basic human rights, dignity, freedoms, and independence.(Bangura, 2015)ⁱⁱⁱ

Hence, according to the context above that the definition of terrorism is, in fact, a matter of political stance, with no universal standard. However, a reality check accordingly, the earliest terrorism could date back to the Crusades initiated by the Catholic world against the Islamic world in the medieval period, intending to release the shrine, Jerusalem, from Islamic pagans.(Riley-Smith, 2011)^{iv}It’s an act of state terrorism lasted 300 years, the ideological war holding the slogan of religious liberation. The West in modern times, likewise, defines terrorism based on attacks launched by Islamic extremist groups on Israel, Munich massacre, and aircraft hijackings thereafter. These have changed the concept of international security to a certain extent.(Calahan, 1995)^v From the standpoint of the West, such attacks on civilians and civil transports are terrorism for certain. As for Muslims in Islamic world, Israel signifies the power of the West over the Middle East, the product of contemporary Crusades, and the result of hegemonism and colonialism imposed by imperialist powers. Thus the speculation of terrorism should concern Islamic vision likewise. How do they consider the definition of “terrorism”?

II. The Game Course between the Definition on Terrorism and Multi-standards Cognition

Analyse the Islamic psychology towards the so-called terrorism from the historical perspective. The in rooted hostility and vigilance of Islam against the West are the results of historical and conventional conflicts. Which reinforces further the base of popular will of terrorism. From the 19th century to the end of World War I, the Islamic world was declining and had mostly been reduced to colonies or semicolonies, suffering from unprecedented persecution, and the crises of human rights and development. (KIRK, 2018)^{vi}Hence, the masses of Muslims hold strong sense of humiliation and desire for vengeance. In terms of the conflicts between Christianity and Islam over a thousand years, Christianity is, for the time being, in the regnant, but Muslim countries are, at all times, ready for revival and resistance.

Then, from the perspective of westernized government in the Islamic world, the Islamic

countries virtually hold no trust in the US, no matter if they are pro-neoliberalism or anti-neoliberalism, or pro-US or anti-US. The social Darwinism and the Bretton Woods Rules based on the power and strength are imprinted on the international system of monotheism, and result in the occurrences of Stockholm syndrome. Namely, the persecuted party holds, instead, veneration and dependence on the West. The pro-US and pro-neoliberalism Islamic government and the public regard the US as “*Jannah*” (heaven) and “*Pharos*” (lighthouse). As a result, they believe that the terrorist attacks would only incur the revenge from the West, and then deny the legitimacy of such attacks.(Kelly, 2014)^{vii} The similar situations also existed in the Asia-Pacific Philippines colonized by the US, and the Taiwan District by Japan.

From the perspective of ideological trend of Islamic extremism, contrarily, the greatest threat in Islamic world is the religious extremism which opposes to the westernized government after the defeat of colonists and invaders. Terrorist attackers are indeed competing with the westernized government for the popular will, and intent to subvert those pro-US and secular governments. However, manipulate the religious extremism to revenge and connive terrorist attacks are no different from drawing fire against itself. As a highly dangerous ideological trend, the religious extremism shows great power of brainwashing and would only go to extremalization. When Taliban came to power in 2021, a serious explosion occurred on Kandahar Masjid (It is mosque of Shiah school) in Afghanistan, which indicated the outcome of “terrorists” being in power.(Salem & Popalzai, 2021)^{viii} Meanwhile, the ISIS reflected by a more radical religious extremism and terrorist behaviour attacking the populace including Islamic groups. Subsequently, the essence of the act alternated as an anti-government irrespective of religion, ethnicity, and nation. From this point, the definition and cognition on terrorism are a game course with multi-standards, and the definition could, with different standpoint, go the opposite way.

In the meantime, such phenomenon sounded a note of caution on several countries with continual domestic regime changes and groups that radically worship a unitary democracy. For instance, Myanmar and Thailand.

III. The Motivation and Failure of the US Counterterrorism War

The US counterterrorism is mainly in the consideration of geopolitics and hegemonies over energy and democracy. The targets can be sorted into the following three genres:

- 1) Control the Eurasian geopolitical centre, the World Island--the Middle East;
- 2) Contain Russia’s threatens of traditional security and China’s BRI developing to the west;

3) Spur the universalized democracy of the US and its theoretical practice.

Rely on the analysis of religious and historical theories, the confounded failure of the US counterterrorism could attribute to its methods. (Cordesma, 2020)^{ix} First, the US has flattered its democracy as the global universality and a historical mission of the US-Europe ever since they won the Cold War. In reality, such extension of “universal democracy” is the continuation of the thinking of the Crusades’ religious war. The only difference is its “old-wine-in-new-bottle” mode, a more deceptive “democracy” rather than Jesus. But the tactic still is preaching by force. Second, the global US-European colonization bred its condescending colonialism in psychology. Consequently, upon the arrogant racism and psychology of “advanced civilization”, the US-Europe, preaching by traditional force, virtually plays a role as an invader, a culprit who intends to annihilate Islamic civilization, and an initiator who spawns religious extremism. To counterterrorism in Islamic world, they adopt the new slogan that, “to edify barbarians and establish a heavenly democratic society,” to replace the cry of wiping out pagans. In the religious outlook of the occidental, the westerners would, if the cultural divergences are inconsistent with geographical differences, spare no effort to eliminate the divergences for reaching the consistency, even by genocide. Ultimately, this caused the black-and-white reversed discourses hegemony of the West.

After the Cold War, the contemporary international system shaped under the US-Europe dominance. The essence of which is social Darwinism, a society of jungle law, and a neoliberalism order governed by powerful capital. Thereby, whatever explanation on democracy, human rights and freedom offered by the US-Europe, it is still adhering to the exclusiveness of Christianity against other civilizations. It is an imperialism entwined with zero-sum game and monotheism, also is the real reflection of “the clash of civilizations” that Samuel P. Huntington stated.

Differ to the oriental religions (Buddhism or Taoism), there is no such tradition in Christianity as “the foreign conflicts, the literacy virtue to quell” (远人不服,则修文德以来之). Accordingly, there is no such concept as Community of Shared Destiny in the West. Though there are international organizations like European Union and North Atlantic Treaty Organization, instead of the fruit of real inter-civilizational dialogue, they are built on the multilevel interests, unitary civilization framework, and exclusive regionalism. What they pursued is only the “worship of absolute power” with the behaviour of “the strong will steal and bandit, the weak will humble and obey” (强必寇盗,弱则卑伏), or the offshore balancing strategy such as the divide and rule. Hence, the so-called universalism, as an excuse of imperialistic expansion and an approach of invasion and pillage, is exactly the same as the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere advanced

by the westernized government of Japan during the World War II. With such thought, there is no way the US-Europe would take a good look at itself as the fabricant of terrorism and even the state terrorism itself. Inevitably, the counterterrorism strategy by force is an antihuman behaviour based on persecution in religion and ideology. The crime against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of massacre committed by the US-Europe in Afghanistan are the most sufficient evidences.

IV. Islamic Identification Is Not “Terrorism”

To sum up, the present thought that connect Islam to terrorism is the product of the Western hegemony on discourses and military. In effect, the US-Europe counterterrorism failed to solve their supposed problems, but aggravates the religious cognitive confusion over the global ethnic areas and breeds more militant terrorism.

Depend on the truth, the aversion, misunderstanding and uglification towards Islamic civilization occur in the ethnic areas over the globe. (UN, 2021)^x In many Asian countries, some non-Muslim groups are influenced by the West-led consensus of “Islamic terrorism”. Then, they turn the aversion, hatred and fear of terrorist behaviour to the domestic Muslim groups, and caused the serious misunderstandings of ethnicity and religion, as well as the emergences of discrimination and irrational expression. (IHRC, 2020)^{xi} Whereas, the Muslim group, because of the “bad shocks”, would generate the thinking of estrangement from the non-Muslim groups or even the extreme thought of splitting, threatening national solidarity and security. Thus, tie Islam to terrorism is highly dangerous, and will pose tough challenges to national stability and harmony, especially for the civilizational countries, such as China and India.

Concurrently, the spread of extremist groups from the Middle East caused the growth of terrorism worldwide, severely endangering the stability and harmony among other countries and civilizations. For example, the emergence of the Seljuk Turks and ISIS, and the Muslim extreme events in Southeast Asia and Africa. Since Early Modern, before the connection betwixt Islam and terrorism, there was no large-scale sanguinary conflicts among Islamic civilization and other civilizations or religions in most regions. (Huntington, 2011)^{xii} Obviously, to destroy a civilization, confrontation is the final resort for both parties. Ultimately, in the process of the expansion and mutation of extremism, anti-US behaviour gradually evolved into radical anti-government, anti-pagan, and even the terrorist behaviour against all authority.

In addition, the West defines terrorism by ideology, absolute power, and repulsion of civilization. For instance, the US listed 7 countries as terrorist countries, among which 5 are Islamic countries (Iran, Iraq, Syria, Libya, and Sudan), while the last 2 are Cuba and North Korea. It is clear to check the definition is double-standard and duplicitous.

Conclusion

In the final conclusion, the exchanges among civilizations should be conducted with cooperation in the approaches of reciprocal. Citizens of civilizational countries should possess the awareness of justice and inclusiveness. When speculate the alleged “Islamic terrorism”, they should realize that Islamic civilization is also a component of our civilization, and our compatriots should not be involved in any “bad shock”. The security of civilizational countries should base upon the theory of Community of Shared Destiny and the pattern of diversity in unity. Harmony, understanding, inclusiveness, dialogue and cooperation are the “radical cure” to terrorism.

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