

One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter.

OUTLINE:

1- Introduction.

Thesis statement: Due to subjective interpretation of the term 'terrorist' and diverse socio-political context, terrorist for one appears freedom fighter for another. Legitimacy of the cause differentiate among both and there are certain ethical considerations that distinguish a terrorist from a freedom fighter.

2- Understanding the context of the Marxism.

3- Historical context of the Marxism.

a- Socrates and the Athens.

b- Bolshevik Revolution 1917.

c- Radical Feminists of the 20th century.

4- Case studies of Contemporary Era:

a- Hamas Versus West/Israel.

b- TTP Versus Pakistan

c- Hizbul Mujahideen And Kashmir.

d- Taliban versus Afghanistan (1996)

e- Syrian Civil war.

5- Critical Ethical consideration.

a- Targeting of civilians and National Infrastructure.

b- Legitimacy of the cause.

c- Violence Vs Political resistance.

d- Proportionality and State over reach.

e- Role of media.

6- Conclusion:

ESSAY:

Nelson Mandela was an influential figure that shifted the geopolitical grid of power in South Africa. His struggle redefined the social status of Africans but was labelled as a terrorist by the government but a freedom fighter by his followers. History and contemporary eras are replete with the such instances. The term 'terrorist' is subjectively defined and interpreted differently across different socio-political context. That's why a person upsetting the social order and bringing change is labelled as a terrorist by some and a revolutionist by others. It is the legitimacy of the cause that creates a thin distinction among both constructs. Another consideration is of ethical principles that differentiates a freedom fighter from a terrorist. This maxim is held true through out the history. Starting from Socrates, where he was seen as a 'deviant' to the Athens to the Red Indians or natives seen as terrorist by American colonialist power. Even women striving for their basic rights and suffrage rights in the twentieth century were seen as terrorist by their governments and patriarchal elements of

the society. There are numerous case studies in contemporary era which fit the maxim well. These case studies include Hamas versus West, TTP (Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan) versus Pakistan, Hizbul Mujahideen versus Kashmir, Taliban versus Afghanistan, Syrian opposition groups versus ^{previous} Syrian government and Houthis vs Yemen government.

There are certain ethical considerations taken into account that make a bleak distinction among a freedom fighter and a terrorist. These include the targeted sector of society, legitimacy of cause, response proportionality, violence or political resistance and role of media. Hence, both terms are used interchangeably depending on the context and affiliation of the group viewing their activities.

The saying, "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter" shows how one's social understanding of a same incident is viewed differently. One group of the society will view the activities of a sect as terrorist as they are disrupting social peace, violating the law and order of the country and targeting humans to achieve their political aims. While same group will be viewed as a freedom fighter based on the struggle and trouble they went through just to achieve their goal and a proper social status for their group in the society. Usually means are overshadowed by the cause for struggle against oppression or relishing a social change. Also, the rise of non-state actors

CNSA) after globalization has further merged the distinction between both concepts and has made the resistance to be a global one in essence.

Hence, being a terrorist or being a freedom fighter is not defined by some well-defined definition but how one views the struggle.

History is replete with the instances when a mass revolution or a reformist was also seen as a terrorist organization or a terrorist respectively. Socrates, a renowned philosopher, has ideologies that were at sharp distinction with the Athens and their governments. He was seen as a dangerous social and moral subvert. Socrates was considered an enemy of the state due to his incessant questioning about the competence and moral authority of the Athenian democracy. His actions were considered a threat to the stability of the Athenian society and order. His actions fit well in the contextual framework of the aforementioned maxim. So, he was tried and convicted of being a danger to society. His death sentence showed how Athens viewed his philosophical activities as a fundamental threat while his followers like Plato and his other students viewed his philosophy bringing about a much needed change in the democratic setup of Athens.

Another example that fits the saying well is of Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. The World War I had incurred a great loss on

Russian Federation which had led to a dissent at home. This political dissent at home fueled with economic downturn led to a domestic revolution with socialist agenda. The elements of revolution were seen as terrorists by the then government and were opposed and repressed vehemently. But for the public, the peasants and the farmers, Bolsheviks were fighting for their rights, for their own cause. Hence, this significant event of history that completely redefined the Russian political system was viewed both as a terrorist campaign and a revolutionary cause simultaneously ~~by~~ but by different sections of ~~society~~ society. Same was seen when women stood up for their rights against suppression and patriarchal dominance in the twentieth century. Famously known as radical feminism, this wave used militant ways to achieve suffrage rights in United Kingdom. This faction deliberately turned to vandalism, property damage, chaining themselves to railings, slashing paintings, ransom etc. They were labelled as criminals and enemies of the state for their methods of domestic terrorism, usually by British government and media critics. However, feminist activists viewed their act as a necessary, last resort against a violent resistant government and a valid struggle for their fundamental rights. They were seen ~~for~~ fighting for freedom of to vote and political struggle.

Contemporary ~~area~~ ^{boundaries between} era is not devoid of the case studies where a resistance and terrorism are blurred. One such case study is the most controversial of struggle between Hamas and West plus Israel. Hamas is viewed as terrorist by the United States of America, some states of European Union and Israel because of the group's method. Hamas use suicide bombing and rocket attack to target Israelis. On the other hand, the most of Muslim states, Iran and Palestinian population view Hamas as a resistance group based on their goal, that is, to resist Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and blockade of Gaza. For one group, because of their violent ways Hamas is a terrorist organization & while for another because of its goal, it is just an armed resistance group.

If one bring attention to South Asia, the case study of Tehreek-e-Taliban-e-Pakistan, known as TTP, and Pakistan also stands true to the maxim. TTP is an armed militant outfit of Afghan Taliban that has posed a war on the state. By some some regional elements and local tribes of PATA (which follow conservative ideology) view TTP's actions as a necessary defence to their traditional autonomy against the PATA merger and a way to

preserve their cultural and tribal identity. However, from point of view of Pakistan, the USA and international law, TTP is a terrorist faction that has bombed civilians (APS attack) and is targeting the security apparatus of Pakistan since 2021. Those who have ideological congruencies with TTP support its beliefs and actions, while those whose security is at risk because of acts of TTP see it as a threat, a terrorist organization.

Kashmir crisis is a testament to the dual perception of terrorism and freedom struggle from the lens of India and Pakistan respectively. One of the largest armed group operating in Indian administered Kashmir named Hizbul Mujahideen, is seen as a terrorist organization by India, the US and the European Union. It is because of armed violence of the group against Indian security forces and civilians. The aim of organization is to overthrow the legitimate administration of Indian state. But for separatist leaders in Kashmir, the group is a freedom-fighter group whose ultimate goal is to put an end to India's illegitimate occupation and fighting for right of self-determination for Kashmiri people. These mutually exclusive interpretations of the group a deadlock in Kashmir which is further aggravating the situation of the people living

in that area.

Syrian civil war is another such case study. Syrian civil lasted from 2011-2024 and is a modern example where 'terrorist or freedom-fighter' label is applied to multiple groups. ~~Terr~~ Legitimate opposition was viewed as terrorist and militant by Russia and government of Bashar-al-Asad. The Syrian government has consistently designated all armed groups fighting against government as terrorist. However, the rebels were supported by Turkey, western allies, and Gulf states as freedom fighters who were fighting for democracy and against regime brutality and oppression. The classic sectarian clash was successfully manipulated in Syrian civil war only where the maxim held true in essence.

Nevertheless, there are certain critical and ethical considerations that can help understand the difference between a terrorist and freedom-fighter. The first distinction is the target. A terrorist will target civilians and unarmed persons to achieve its political agenda. But a freedom fighter is more concerned with cause and will try to avoid destruction of property and civilian life in its cause. This was seen in recent Nepal a Gen-Z movement where the people after ousting their ruler took the

job of ~~restoring~~ restoring the men created during the struggle.

Alongwith this, legitimacy of the cause is another litmus test. Legitimacy of the cause means what is the purpose of the struggle? Is it for self determination or it is for an illegitimate cause? The end of Syrian civil war shows the reconstruction efforts of the new government aims at self-determination and having an international standing. But in case of TTP, supporting a small fraction of state and try to gain autonomy control over that territory which already part of a given state is an illegitimate cause.

Conclusion

Hence, there is a thin boundary distinguishing a terrorist from a freedom fighter. Usually, this comprehension is based on the social and ideological lens through which the group is seen. A terrorist group for one sect will be seen as a reformist organization by another part of society. The ways adopted for the struggle of right cause usually led to the labelling of that particular group under the umbrella of terrorism. While it is the ideological cause that the group enthusiastically protect that point it as a freedom struggle. Still, be it a

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~~free-do~~ freedom struggle, few considerations must be kept in mind. The civilians' lives must not be endangered and vandalization of public property be limited. The radical ways of air strikes, vandalism, arson and suicide bombs must be excluded from struggle as at the end every conflict, every resistance is ended at negotiating table. Moreover, the legitimacy of the cause be about protection of certain faction of population, not the destruction of another. Thus, ~~one~~ ~~man~~ one man's terrorist can be another man's freedom fighter but that not a law!

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