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International Terrorism

Written Assignment

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1. **Over the past several years there appears to have been a resurgence in right-wing inspired terrorism. What type of terrorism do you believe represents the greatest danger moving forward, and why?**

Terrorism happens to be a major security threat to both national and international security all over the world. It has certainly evolved over time taking different forms, but it still exists. However, the question is which form of terrorism is likely to pose the greatest danger in the future and if this danger will come from an already existing wave of terror or from the resurgence of a previous wave or from a new wave of terrorism which is unprecedented? This essay argues that right wing terrorism is the biggest threat currently and this coupled with lone wolf terrorism will pose the biggest danger moving forward. This is mainly because of three reasons: one, the factors behind right-wing extremism are stronger than ever and the current political context favors the right-wing sentiment. Two, the effects of this form of terrorism in terms of numbers of casualties indicates the magnitude and intensity of the threat and finally, the lack of a robust policy and legal mechanism to counter a threat domestic in nature make it a complex issue. This essay will unfold in three sections: first, it will define the term terrorism and briefly discuss its types followed by a detailed discussion of the three reasons enlisted above that make right wing terrorism a potent threat including the case studies of right-wing terrorism in US and Australia while ultimately uncovering the counter arguments and challenging them.

Terrorism can be defined as an act of violence, mostly politically motivated and aimed at having far-reaching psychological impact beyond the immediate target, conducted either by an organization, with an identifiable command hierarchy or network, or by individuals who are inspired by leaders or have been radicalized (Hoffman 2017). Traditionally, there have been four main waves of terrorism since around 1880s, namely: Anarchist, Anti-colonialist, New Left and Religious (Rapoport 2002). However, lone-wolf terrorism is another recent wave (Post 2015). While the Anarchist Wave was inspired by Marx and the Communist Manifesto and is related to labor violence, in the Anti-Colonialist Wave, minorities sought to separate from the majority in a state under colonial rule and hence, was also called the nationalist-separatist wave. The New Left was the social revolutionary wave predominantly carrying anti-fascist and anti-capitalist ideology. In the late twentieth century came the Religious Extremist Wave, where terrorism was inspired by religion more than any social or political cause. (Post 2015) Interestingly, all of these waves have lasted for at least 30 to 40

years (Rapoport 2002). This leads us to the question: what next? Since religious terrorism has been around for 40 years already (1979- now), is there a new form of terrorism emerging next?

The resurgence of Right-Wing inspired terrorism might be a plausible answer. As the name suggests, right wing terrorism refers to "violence in support of the belief that personal and/or national way of life is under attack and is either already lost or that the threat is imminent. Characterized by anti-globalism, racial, or ethnic supremacy or nationalism, suspicion of centralized federal authority, reverence for individual liberty, and/or belief in conspiracy theories that involve grave threat to national sovereignty and/or personal liberty" (Desimone 2019). This form of terrorism has begun to emerge once again in the last few years after it first developed in North America in the Reconstruction Era of 1863- 1877.

The factors that lead to such extremism are becoming visible again and the current political context is further favouring the extremist sentiment. With anti-immigration, anti-minorities, white nationalism thoughts spreading and leaders like President Trump of the United States (US) reflecting such views, the contemporary political and social setting is further adding weight to the right-wing extremist ideology. Therefore when Trump talks about building a wall against Mexico to stop immigration, bans people from eight countries from entering the US most of them being Muslim-majority states, portrays immigrants and refugees as a threat and blames them for snatching away jobs, for "bringing drugs; they're bringing crime; they're rapists" (Serwer 2019) and so on, his words infuse hatred among the white local population and contribute to an extremist sentiment. (Pierce and Selee 2017) Apart from that, particularly in the case of the US, increase in women participation in labour force and women empowerment in general, increase in abortion rate and the control of the White House by a Democratic President, all motivate right-wing extremism. (Piazza 2017) Therefore, as the movement of people across borders eases and grows, the feeling of insecurity and nationalism strengthen. This reveals that globalisation, rise of fascist leaders, and the current social environment particularly with the migration only growing, these factors are only here to stay and would further favour the growth of right-wing extremism, hence making it a continuing and complex issue.

As the causes of this extremism are very much alive, its effects in terms of number of deaths and number of attacks make the next area of concern. I utilise the data on extremist attacks in

the US in 2018 to make my point. As per the report from the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) Centre of Extremism report of 2019, 50 people were killed from domestic extremist attacks in the US in 2018 compared to 37 in the year before. 2014- 2018 have been the five deadliest years for domestic extremist killings since 1970 with 72 deaths in 2016. (adl.org) All 50 deaths in 2018 were from right-wing extremism but one. White supremacists conduct the majority of these attacks every year, be it the attack on the Pittsburgh's Tree of Life Synagogue, or the Parkland High School shootings in Florida, both targeted at Jews or the mass shooting at a yoga studio. (Serwer 2019) The recent El Paso shootings in Texas that left 22 dead was reportedly "anti- Hispanic invasion of Texas". Even in the case of Australia, the annual report from the Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) highlighted how "extreme right-wing groups in Australia are more cohesive and organised than they have been in previous years" (Karp 2019). It said attacks similar to those in Christchurch remain "probable". Australia has also seen many extreme right groups formed in the last decade such as Proud Boys, Identity Australia, Australian Traditional, to name a few. (Campion 2019)

With the causes and effects of right-wing inspired terrorism being visible, conspicuously, it is a major peril. However, due to the lack of a robust counter-extremism mechanism, both in policy sphere and in law, this form of terrorism is complex and more dangerous than other forms. Since the recent wave has been that of religious terrorism dominated especially by Islamist terrorism, the policy and legal framework of the states generally are more concentrated towards 'international terrorism' than towards domestic extremism. (Rasmussen and Carroll 2019) In this case, al Qaeda and ISIS are seen as sources of threat while homegrown terrorists are neglected. The required response to this issue is to involve Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in addressing the extremist ideologies (Desimone 2019), develop 'exit programs' for extremists, appropriate judicial response, and allocate greater resources and research into right-wing ideology and extremism. (Koehler 2019) Apart from that, white extremist should also be given the same benefit of doubt as a non-white and should be responded to as per the intensity of the attack (Serwer 2019). The recent case of Christchurch shootings on a mosque in New Zealand clearly indicates the rise of right-wing extremist sentiment in the population of Australia. With campaigns like 'Stop the Boats' and the entire chaos around refugees and asylum seekers in Australia, a sense of threat to Australian whiteness arises (Neyland) and this takes the shape of vertical or paternalistic and horizontal or threatened racism. However, major part of policy is directed towards countering religious terrorism than the "homegrown terrorism".

However, on the other hand, it can be argued that religious terrorism is still a much greater threat than right wing terrorism, particularly given its global reach. Religious terrorism, especially Islamic terrorism has targeted almost every continent in this world, from Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, Al Shabaab, Boko Haraam in Africa, Taliban, Lashkar-e-Taiba in Asia, to al Qaeda and ISIS in North America, Europe and so on. Nonetheless, drawing from history, each wave of rebel terror has lasted for not many decades and since religious wave has been here only since 1979, it is already been overtaken by more rampant right-wing terrorism. Besides that, since the major leaders like Osama bin Laden, his son Hamza bin Laden, recently, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, all have been killed and Islamic State being attacked and failing to meet its objectives, clearly some of the biggest religious terrorist outfits have weakened. Apart from that, statistics reveal how between the year 2009 and 2018, 73 per cent of the total killings from terrorism were caused by right-wing extremists while religious extremist deaths accounted for only 23 per cent. (Serwer 2019)

Another criticism of the thesis could be that more than conventional terrorism, with the communications revolution, modern challenges like cyberterrorism are emerging. For instance, with the drone attacks like the ones recently in Saudi Arabia, claimed to be by the Houthi rebel group of Yemen pose a much bigger and complex threat since the states are not well-equipped and ready to face this modern problem and lack a defense mechanism against them. However, when cyberterrorism is seen as a threat, it is perceived to be some hyped hacking of the offline platforms or a digital terrorist attack, nevertheless, simple activities like recruiting, organizing and communicating are oftentimes ignored. (Kohlmann 2006) And it is the exploitation of internet that is also fueling and easing the spread of right-wing ideology across the globe.

So, while right-wing terrorism is supported by a variety of factors, internet and revolution in communications technology is a vital one which shall further propel it to remain one of the most imminent threats going forward. The advancement of information technology has made it easier for individuals to function on their own, without a support group and work from any corner of the world with diverse backgrounds and technological abilities. In addition, as Post mentions, isolated and lonely individuals with fractured family relations find a sense of belonging to the virtual community of hatred. (Post 2015) In psychological terms, right-wing terrorism is to a great extent a matter of insecurities within individuals or a group, and so

internet community provides them with a sense of assurance. Moreover, the potential likelihood of terrorist and rebel groups acquiring nuclear arms shall make maximum casualties with minimum presence possible and concomitantly, hard to counter. This also implies that it shall take only one person to have a global impact now. Hence, right-wing ideologies combined with access to information technology shall make for a deadly threat to human lives and to security of states and regions.

Therefore, in sum, the current social context in terms of increased migration and political contexts as in the rise of fascist leaders like Trump besides the spread of technology and internet fuel the right-wing extremist sentiment. This clearly shows in the statistics as right-wing terrorism claimed more lives than religious terrorism in the US last year. Finally, the absence of a sufficient attention and vigorous policy and legal framework makes it hard to counter the threat. The resurgence of right-wing inspired terrorism coupled with traits of lone-wolf terrorism might be a massive danger in the future. "Ubiquitous firearms, political polarization, images of the extensive apocalyptic violence tearing apart societies across the Middle East and North Africa, racism, and the rise of populism have combined with the power of online communications to drive up violence across the political spectrum." (Bergen and Sterman 2018)

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