

## Is Terrorism Effective?

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### **Abstract**

Terrorism is one of the greatest challenges of the present world. Scholars are divided on the measurement of the effectiveness of terrorism. Consequently, the study is arguing that the effectiveness of terrorism-as a great security matter- should not be investigated from any specific objective but should be analysed from every potential angle to measure its success. For this purpose, the study has used secondary data from various sources like renowned journals, articles, books, newspaper etc. By reviewing various literatures, this study revealed that terrorist campaigns for regime or political change (which is known as strategic objective) is a conventional idea. Terrorist activities have many objectives like organizational, individual, media attention, creating panic to the civilian and so on. As a result, not only the strategic objective but also all kinds of objectives should be taken into the consideration to measure the effectiveness of terrorism. In future, deeper and comprehensive study is required to address the multi-layered objectives of terrorism to identify the better understanding of the effectiveness of terrorist activities.

**Key words:** strategic objective, tactical, organizational purpose, counterterrorism measures.

### **Introduction:**

Terrorism has been a widespread tension and security concern explicitly for many countries and implicitly for the world, however, political science literature has two opposing views over the issue of whether terrorism “works” or “does not work” (Gould & Klor, 2010: 1459-1460). The first view which argued for ineffectiveness of terrorism, have only taken into consideration the terrorists’ success on strategic objectives or political effectiveness (Abrahms, 2006, 2011, 2012; Jones & Libicki, 2008; Cronin, 2009). On the contrary other view which

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claimed for the effectiveness of terrorism has taken into consideration the all potential objectives of terrorism along with the strategic one (Dershowitz, 2002; Pape, 2003, 2005; Krause, 2013). But it is interesting to notify that all the scholars are agreed upon the historical outcome of the terrorist campaigns which may differ from their measurement of success rate or objective achievement.

As the threats of terrorism are increasing continuously, therefore it will never be a wise decision to depend only on the strategic objectives of terrorism. That's why this study will examine the potential objectives of terrorism to measure its effectiveness. As a result, the paper is arguing that terrorism's effectiveness should not only confine on any objective, rather, there are also many existing and potential objectives which reflects terrorism's effectiveness. The study consists of four sections. The next section discusses the definition of terrorism and explains which measurement of effectiveness is considered in this study. The second section reviews the scholarly debate on different views of effectiveness of terrorism with substantial evidence and revealed that result is varied due to some measurement issue. The third section presents the arguments in favour of terrorism's effectiveness. Firstly, it provides examples of terrorism's effectiveness from strategic and organizational purpose and the example of strategic objective finds some different ideas which are not similar to the conventional perceptions of terrorism's political effectiveness. Then identifies some other objectives of terrorism such as future recruitment, media attention which again affirms terrorism's effectiveness. Finally, in response to terrorism, counterterrorism measures threaten human rights and civil liberties which further illustrate the effectiveness of terrorism. The concluding section summarizes the major findings and suggests further research for better understanding of terrorism's effectiveness.

For the purpose of the study, the secondary data sources have been used to attain the goal. Secondary data are derived from both published and electronic sources. The published data are accumulated from various books of eminent scholars, scholarly journals, peer-reviewed journals and newspapers. The electronic source gathered from multiple online journals, conference papers, report of different human rights groups. The major finding of the study suggest that the effectiveness of terrorism is not only confined in the strategic objective or political achievement, rather multi-layered objectives have been traced which affirm the effectiveness of terrorism and moreover, counterterrorism measures also reflect the effectiveness of terrorism.

### **Conceptual Framework:**

It is really difficult to define terrorism in single manner because there is no agreed definition of terrorism across the academia, law, policy and politics (Hoffman, 2004). This paper is based on the working definition of terrorism

that “is relatively neutral and recognizes the basic fact that terrorism is a tactic used by many different kinds of group” (Lutz and Lutz, 2016:313).

Many scholars commonly defined terrorism as politically motivated violence by non-state actors (Lake, 2002; Kydd and Walter, 2006; Jones and Libicke, 2008). This definition emphasized the political motivation of the terrorist which may exclude other aspects of terrorism. This study intended to incorporate another aspect of terrorism in the definition:

“the act is committed in order to create a fearful state of mind in an audience different from the victims. Whether or not an act is considered terrorism also depends on whether a legal, moral, or behavioural perspective is used to interpret the act. If a legal or moral perspective is used, the values of the interpreter are the focus rather than the act itself” (Ruby, 2002: 9).

It is really difficult to understand the motivation of the terrorist. If we only consider the political motivation then it excludes those who intended to attack civilians for creating fear, media attention, ransom, sometimes for their organizational purpose and so on (Lutz & Lutz; 2016). May be their attack on innocent civilian is a primary step for creating multilayer program of terrorism (Dershowitz, 2002). Therefore, it is really tough to understand their actual intention. That is why this study considers terrorism as a technique of different groups whatever the motivation of those groups.

Does terrorism work? How could we measure this? We can measure this through the effectiveness of terrorism. What is the effectiveness of terrorism? The effectiveness of studies must first find out the pivotal sources, fundamental causes and consequences of terrorist attack from the viewpoint of those executing it and “these causes, effects and perceptions are found within and across three levels of analysis-tactical, organizational, and strategic-which corresponds to three unite of analysis: the individual, group, and social movement, respectively” (Krause, 2013: 271). The objectives of tactical level are to murder soldiers or innocent civilians, demolish infrastructure etc. more accurately successfully launching an attack thus tactical effectiveness usually drop into the military effectiveness category not the category of political effectiveness (Krause, 2013). At the organizational level we can argue that the fundamental purpose of any kind of organization is to maximize its strength and safeguard its existence (Crenshaw, 2001). Sometimes terrorist activities helped the terrorist organization to pursue resources and mobilize support base for their endurance (Dershowitz, 2002). The motive of strategic level is concentrated with political motivation such as policy concession, regime change etc. (Abrahms, 2011). Then to understand the effectiveness of terrorism tactical, organizational, and strategic level of analysis are important and the study is concentrated on these all aspects.

### **Scholarly Debate on Terrorism does work or does not work:**

Scholars are hugely divided over whether terrorist activities are effective or ineffective based on their analysis of many case studies of terrorism. The debate is varying from selection of cases and the outcome of these violent attacks but everyone is agreed on the historical effect of these cases.

Max Abrahams is one of the eminent scholars of the campaign who argues that terrorism does not work. In 2006 he published an article titled "Why Terrorism Does Not Work" where he noted two types of terrorist attack, one is strategic terrorism which compelled the target government to change their policies and other is redemptive terrorism which denotes for specific sanctions (Abrahms, 2006: 46). He argues that terrorism helped the terrorist group to achieve their strategic goals and for the examination of his assumption he analysed the political pledges of twenty eight Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) which were entitled by the U.S. State Department (Abrahms, 2006). Abrahms proposed two findings: first one, claimed that the FTOs were rarely succeeded in their mission as their success rate is below ten percent and secondly, FTOs which got the political objectives had used hybrid tactics as their violent terrorist activities were against the military personnel, therefore, he argues that the FTOs who attack the military campaigns achieved political goals and FTOs who targeted the civilian tend to achieve nothing politically (Abrahms, 2006). Abrahms (2012), in another study, revealed that guerrilla campaigns (military target) are relatively more successful to achieve political goals than terrorist campaign on civilians. The same voice coined from the Jones and Libicki (2008) and the authors dealt with a big number of sample of known terrorist groups between 1968 and 2006, therefore, the finding of the study also stated the poor success rate of the (only 10 percent) terrorist campaigns. Jones and Libicki (2008:33) argue, "Terrorism had little or nothing to do with the outcome." Cronin (2009) also examined the success rate of the terrorist groups and she founds the ineffectiveness of terrorism whereas their success rate is below 5%. These scholars have received unanimous support from other studies by Moghadam (2006), Fortna (2011) etc. who have again confirmed the ineffectiveness of terrorism. Additionally, some other scholars such as Goodwin (2006), Gaibullov and Sandler (2009) etc. have argued that continuous attack on civilians had negative impact on government's conciliatory.

On contrary, there is another scholarly campaign who emphasized the effectiveness of terrorism. Robert Pape's (2003, 2005) empirical studies on suicide terrorism have revealed the effectiveness of terrorism. As Pape (2003: 343) argued, "Over the past two decades, suicide terrorism has been rising largely because terrorists have learned that it pays." In his study (2003), he

showed that suicide terrorisms from 1980 to 2003 have gained political concessions to the target government and the success rate was 50 percent (six out of eleven). His another study (2005) also reports that suicide terrorism is highly effective and seven out of thirteen campaigns were achieved policy objectives (success rate 50 percent). David Lake (2002) adopted model of rationalist bargaining to argue that terrorism is an effective strategy as it enabled the terrorist to have bargaining power over the target state. The imbalance of power between the terrorist and the target state makes the option of extreme method rational as it is easy to understand that terrorists tried to achieve their goals by violent means, not non-violent means (Lake, 2002; Pape, 2005). Recently Peter Krause (2013) has presented an alternative approach of political effectiveness of non-state violence based on a two-level theoretical framework and he re-examined the eight campaigns of non-state violence through two-level framework which were common in previous studies and analysed by single-level framework (Krause, 2013). He argues that previous single-level analysis usually interprets the common outcome of terrorist campaigns such as strategic outcome, but organizational success was irrelevant to the researcher (2013). The two-level framework addresses the reality that terrorist campaigns are not unitary, but instead are pointed by armed troupes that explore strategic objectives that satisfy their larger social movements, for example throwing down a regime, policy concessions or withdrawal of opponent troops, while at a time attain organizational objectives that aid the group themselves, such as increasing potential membership, media attention, cohesion or funding (Krause, 2013). These scholars' arguments of effectiveness of terrorism is further accelerated by the study of Dershowitz (2002), Kydd and Walter (2006) among others.

From the above discussion, it can be summarized that the scholars of two campaigns agreed on one common issue that the achievement of the terrorist may vary from success rate, case selection, sample size, measurement of success and so on. Pape argues (2005: 64), "Perhaps the most striking aspect of recent suicide terrorist campaign is that they are associated with gains for the terrorists' political cause about half the time." For Abrahams (2006: 48), "Terrorism's effectiveness is measured by comparing their stated objectives to policy outcomes." Both of the scholars used different standards of success measurement. For example, a terrorist attack which compelled the authority to release a prisoner that would be an attainment for Pape as a newish exemption, but for Abrahams, it would never be a success because it did not bring any important advancement for the group to achieve their political goal or a new state (Krause, 2013). It is observed that these different standards of success lead the scholars to have opposite view. Now, only to consider the percentage of the success rate of the different thought of the effectiveness of terrorism, it

is found that one thought which is claiming for effectiveness have 50% of success whereas the other group which is opposing that have maximum 10% of success (Krause, 2013:265). Again this is happening because of their different measurement scale but one fact is that both group never disagreed on the historical outcome of these terrorist campaigns and this is the substance of the effectiveness of terrorism.

### **Terrorism Works-The Effectiveness of Terrorism:**

The root of Terrorism can be traced by long ago around for a millennia. This technique has been used by many different groups for various purposes. There are quantitative historical examples of terrorism such as Zealots in Judea in the first and second centuries CE, the Assassinations in the twelfth and thirteen centuries, the Sons of Liberty in colonial America, and Fascists and Nazis after World War I etc. (Lutz and Lutz, 2016). Over its long history, terrorism has had a record of both attractive success and dark failures but recently, the track record of terrorism has shown more success than its failure and it is evident after the attack of 9/11 on World Trade Centre and Pentagon (Dershowitz, 2002). These terrorist attacks have multi-layered effectiveness in the globe and these are discussed below.

Now, the study is going to discuss the examples of terrorisms' effectiveness. First one is the Madrid train attack in 2004 often referenced to as a case for political effectiveness. This attack has revealed some different notions about the conventional wisdom of political effectiveness, since an attack on civilian never attain political objectives and only ruling authority can accommodate policy concessions (Rose, Murphy, and Abrahms, 2007). The terrorist attack sought the withdrawal of Spanish troops from Iraq and Afghanistan and the group attains partial success as Spain withdrew its troop from Iraq (Chari, 2004).

On March 11, 2004 three days prior to the general election, Spain experienced devastating terrorist attack of ten bombs which exploded on three commuter trains full of passengers and which caused 191 deaths and wounded 1500 hundred (Chari, 2004). The blame was primarily given on the only activist group of Spain Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) but soon the evidence revealed that there was an Islamist terrorist group which was responsible for the attack. Later Spanish scholar and journalist referred that group as 11-M network (Rose, Murphy and Abrahms, 2007). This attack had dramatic impact on mass people because people voted out the ruling Popular Party who supported Spanish invasion on Iraq and surprisingly Socialist Party won the election who pledged during the campaign time for the removal of Spanish troop from Iraq (Rose, Murphy & Abrahms, 2007). The different outcome of this attack was that it

never compelled the government for policy concessions; rather it mobilized the mass people to elect a political party which was benevolent to their demand (Rosy, Murphy & Abrahams, 2007).

Therefore, the two campaigns of Palestinian national movement such as Fatah's attack on Israel within neighbouring Arab states (1965-1987) and the Second Intifada within the West Bank and Gaza (2000-2006) did not achieve the strategic goals. Rather it attained organizational goal which made omnipresent the terrorism's effectiveness (Krause, 2013).

In the Palestinian national movement the dominant groups were- Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM). Fatah was a relatively weak and small organization compared to the dominant groups but it continued to attack Israel in the mid to late 1960s (Krause, 2013). Fatah's activities were highly criticized by the PLO and ANM as they claimed that Fatah would destroy the common political goal. However, Fatah continued its attack, for on the one hand, PLO and ANM were losing their support base and resources, and on the other, Fatah was gaining support and organizational strength for its visible campaigns against Israel (Krause, 2013). The strikes of these armed groups were unsuccessful to Israeli withdrawal, but through violence, Fatah became the primary actor of the nationalist movement. However, this violent activities later positioned Fatah to lead the movement. Finally, Fatah became the Palestinian authority to negotiate with Israel and dominate Palestinian politics for four decades (Krause, 2013). This power shift was due to Fatah's usage of violence and subsequent increase in strength (Krause, 2013).

In the case of Second Intifada, Palestine again experienced the usage of violence by the groups which led to another shift in power politics. The Second Intifada disrupted the negotiation with Israel which was driven to the destruction of Palestinian Authority institutions (Krause, 2013). This disruption elevated in West Bank and an increase of removal from the Gaza Strip and these campaigns subsequently rose Hamas's organizational strength and position in Palestinian politics this culminated Hamas's electoral victory in 2006 (Krause, 2013). From the analysis it can be argued that terrorist group perspective on the effectiveness of terrorism is not always confined to strategic objectives rather the groups prioritize the organizational outcome such as strength, power and position which led to the future action (Krause, 2013).

Tactical analysis which correspondent to the individual unit is necessary for the understanding of terrorisms' effectiveness. Religious militant leaders usually motivated young people to have their faith and support on terrorism as that is the only option to save and serve the religion (Dershoitz, 2002). The

young people are joining the terrorist group not only for the ideological motivation but also psychological approaches. (Victoroff 2005) Victoroff also mention that the potential terrorists are prone to social isolation and identity crisis (Victoroff, 2005) which may inspire them to find out their solidarity and identity. Furthermore, terrorist attacks provide potential terrorists an evidence that they are directly serving for their ideology thus affirms their solidarity and righteous identity. Apart from this tactical objective, it is often categorized with military effectiveness. Then it focuses on the individual's expertise to successfully operate an attack. Therefore, the tactical or individual objective of terrorism may not equal to the strategic objectives but it is one of the necessary conditions for terrorisms effectiveness (Krause, 2013).

Terrorism's effectiveness can be traced to changing pattern of their objectives over time, one of the important objective to terrorism may include attracting new members (Dershowitz, 2002). Former Al-Qaeda's leader Osama bin Laden in one of his famous tape recordings proudly announced that the 9/11 attack brought many members to his campaign (Dershowitz, 2002). Palestinian suicide bombing are also attracting and encouraging young people to join the fight. The Hamas leader boasted that the more massacre in Palestine the more recruitment for Hamas (Dershowitz, 2002).

It can be argued that one of the important objectives of terrorism is to get media attention because media coverage is important to reach target audience more quickly because a terrorist attack can never be limited on the immediate victims rather it has some far reaching goals and in this aspect media is playing a vital role (Lutz and Lutz, 2016). Through the media coverage, they can easily get access to the mind of national and foreign mass, government officials, policy makers, their family, friends and foes to publicize their motives, demand, and explain their rationale for choosing terrorism (Nacos, 1996). In addition, terrorists can also create an aura of fear and suspicion, transmit their messages, and attain recognition, and legitimacy through media attention. The same opinion shared by Nacos (1996), "It has been suggested that terrorists commit violence in quest of three universal goals- to get attention, recognition and even a degree of respectability and legitimacy." Furthermore, Technological advancement has changed the mass media of communication in a dramatic way as digital media is much quicker and easier than print media and terrorists are taking the full advantage of it. Internet clearly indeed increased the scope and opportunities for terrorists to circulate their messages, propaganda, ideology, operational goal to the greater audience more quickly with less expense and risk (Nacos, 2016).



For instance, the terrorists achievements from 9/11 attack through the media coverage may be discuss here. The attack hugely attracted by the media and the way media conveyed the message that even U.S. was vulnerable to the terror attack, then terrorists can destroy or damage anything across the world (Nacos, 2016). Terrorists have easily created the atmosphere of fear to the daily life of global audience, attained global attention and recognition of grievances, garner support, respect and legitimacy in the eyes of sympathizers, supporters and potential recruits through the media attention. Osama bin Laden had written a letter to Taliban leader Mullah Muhammad Omar and said that media war is one of the strongest methods in this century and the ratio may reach 90 percent of the total preparation for the battle (Nacos, 2016).

Finally, it can be argued that many countries in response to terrorism, in the name of counterterrorism, are taking many measures that threaten the human rights and bringing the civil liberties in peril (Hoffman, 2004) and here again the effectiveness of terrorism can be traced. The value of Democracies never allow routine use of torture, threat to the families of suspects, guarantee convictions, maintain intrusive surveillance of individual, extrajudicial killing or political imprisonment, while authoritarian states do not worry about human rights and civil liberties (Lutz & Lutz, 2016). For instance, in the U.S. the Patriot Act has permitted long time detention only on the suspicion of terrorism for foreigners, for nationals limited access to lawyers, more intensive surveillance techniques, deportation of non-citizens, with little opportunity to defend them (Lutz and Lutz, 2016). Additionally, persons who have been captured from outside of the U.S. are placed in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba where all basic human rights are denied. "In the United Kingdom, the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005 (c. 2) allows government ministries to issue control orders restricting the liberty, movement, and activities of people purportedly suspected of terrorism related activities (Dreher, Gassebner and Siemers, 2010: 66)." In the post 9/11, Australia, Germany and France have enacted new legislation which provided enormous power to the law enforcing officials for interrogation and detention for suspicion of terrorism(Lutz and Lutz, 2016). Not only the Western States but non-Western states have also adopted some counterterrorism laws such as The Prevention of Terrorism Act, 2002 by India, (Kalhan et al., 2006) Internal Security Act (ISA) of Malaysia (Falk, 2005), Anti-terrorism Act, 2009 of Bangladesh, The Anti-terrorism Bill, 2006 of Kenya (Mogire and Agade, 2011) and so on.

Furthermore, many countries have imposed restrictions on immigration especially particular part of the globe, controlled information about terrorist activities, increased security checks in every potential areas of terrorism even in the roads, markets, common gathering places and, increased frequent

searching in restaurants, hotels, theatres etc. (Dershowitz, 2002). Thus this is the effectiveness of terrorism which frightens the citizens into surrendering their human rights and civil liberties, and therefore turned the democratic and welfare states into police state (Dershowitz, 2002).

### **Conclusion:**

Terrorism is posing a great threat for the world and the effectiveness of terrorism should be measured from various angles. The analysis of the study demonstrated that firstly, though there is an opposing view over the effectiveness of terrorism but surprisingly scholars are not divided on the issue of effectiveness of terrorism. However they are not agreed over the methods of measurement of success rate and objective outcome. Secondly, terrorists have changed their objectives and strategies along with the time and it is really an almost impossible job to code out their actual intentions. Many evidences suggest that terrorists' intention not always actually need to have any political concession rather might be to show up their presence and power, creating psychological fear among civilians, media attention and many more. Thus, these campaigns might not have any strategic objective, but the other objectives and the aftermath of these terrorist attacks confirms the effectiveness of terrorism. Therefore, the idea of measuring terrorisms effectiveness through strategic objectives or political effectiveness is not adequate to address the issue because terrorists' perception of effectiveness is not confined on the strategic objective only rather they measure their success from every possible aspect of organization objectives which define their ultimate goals (Krause, 2013). Finally, what is the objective of counterterrorism if terrorism is not effective? Many democratic countries have taken many counterterrorism measures, making security and immigration policy more strict day by day which further threaten human rights and civil liberties and welcome police state.

"We know little about the links between terrorism and major political change" (Crenshaw, 1995: 22). It is literally impossible to code all the objectives of terrorism and therefore scholars should expand their idea of effectiveness. This study claimed that multi-layered objective of terrorism should be addressed for better understanding of terrorisms' effectiveness. A comprehensive and deeper examination is required to identify the different types of goals of terrorism across time and space and create a theoretical framework that offers a comprehensive understanding of terrorisms' effectiveness (Krause, 2013).

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