Terrorists and INGOs in Intra-State Conflicts

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Introduction

The aim of this essay is three-fold. First, to analyse the roles that terrorists and international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) play in intra-state conflicts, and in conflict settlement and peace-building efforts in those situations. Second, to determine whether the impact of terrorists and INGOs can be satisfactorily described as either "all good" or "all bad". Third, to explain how the beneficial contributions of these actors can be increased and the adverse contributions decreased.

The first part of the essay will focus on terrorists. The second part will focus on INGOs. At the end of the essay, the preceding content will be summarized, and contrasts and similarities will be drawn between INGOs and terrorists.

Chapter One

Defining Terrorists in Intra-State Conflicts

While some would define terrorism in such a broad way as to encompass all rebel groups in all civil wars (United States Department of State 2013) and others in such a narrow way as to exclude all rebel groups in a state of civil war (Cronin 2006, 31-32), this essay will employ Page Fortna's definition of "terrorist rebel groups as those who use symbolic and indiscriminate violence against public civilian targets" for the aim of these groups must be to coerce a government to make political concessions (Fortna 2011, 13). This definiton ensures that a clarity is maintained between terrorists and other actors in intra-state conflicts.

The Roles Terrorists Play

The defining role that terrorists play is one of furthering human suffering, often for the purpose of gaining publicity for a group or a cause. While human security is compromised in every intra-state conflict, the indiscriminate nature of terrorism as opposed to other kinds of combat is a direct and intentional threat to noncombatants. Terrorists add additional chaos to the conflicts they partake in and boost human suffering. Besides the violence they engage in, they undermine law, order and government, and diffuse criminality. Terrorists are often an unfortunate by-product of civil war. As Abraham Lincoln noted (cited in Kalyvas 2006, 57), it seems as if "every foul bird comes abroad, and every dirty reptile rises up" during times of civil war.

To the extent that terrorist organizations may play positive roles in conflict zones, those roles remain separate from the violence they inflict and the most positive thing they can do is to cease targeting civilians while continuing to make positive contributions. Terrorist organizations may make positive contributions, such as performing basic social welfare functions in failed states, as Stepanova (2003, 23-24) notes that some terrorist groups have done. As a rare source of home-grown organization and structure, a terrorist group may be in a position to deliver vital goods to people that external and other internal organizations may not be able to do.

Good Terrorists?

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A frequent debate revolves around the question of whether terrorism is justifiable and if one man's terrorist is another man's freedom-fighter. While some moral relativists may make less of the moral decrepitude of terrorism depending on the terrorists' goals and grievances, this essay shares the sentiment of traditional just war theorists that the intentional targeting of civilians can never be ethical (Nathansson 2010, 289; Walzer 1977, Ch. 12).

This paper also takes a stance consistent with recent quantitative research and newer theoretical approaches (Abrahms 2006, 2012, Cronin 2006, Fortna 2011, Jones and Libnicki 2008, 18-19; Stephan and Chenoweth 2008) that even if terrorists have a just cause for grievance, terrorism is a wildly ineffective method to accomplish their goals, at least relative to non-violence or attacks solely on military targets. If anything, terrorism tarnishes good causes, making it more difficult for non-violent movements to effectively pursue the same causes.

To whatever extent a terrorist group makes positive contributions, it is not by virtue of being a terrorist group. A group may mitigate human suffering whether it happens to be a terrorist organization or not. So while we could say that a terrorist group may take on both positive and negative roles, terrorism remains unethical, ineffective and "all bad."

The Causes of and Solutions to Terrorism

Contrary to the public perception that terrorists are irrational or crazy, psychiatric profiles of terrorists show that they are fairly normal (Richardson 2007, 14) and deterrence is seen as applicable to terrorists regardless of their intensity of motivation (Trager and Zagorcheva 2006, 96-111). So, people can be prevented from becoming terrorists and if they do become terrorists, their actions remain deterrable.

A rough way to distinguish between terrorists is by *the intensity of motivation* and the *attainability of goals*. Depending on how intensely motivated terrorists are and the nature of their demands, they can be dealt with in different ways. The most problematic terrorist groups are those that are intensely motivated (often demonstrated by a willingness to die for political goals) and those that have unattainable goals.

Provided that a terrorist organization has attainable goals and is fighting in order to reach a negotiated settlement, the international community can take steps to mitigate the commitment problems that so often prevent civil wars from concluding (Fearon 2004). Commitment problems refer to a situation where both parties (a terrorist group and government in this case) to a conflict prefer a negotiated settlement but are unwilling to settle because they fear that the other side will renege on the terms (Fearon 1995, 401-409).

The warring parties or the international community as a third-party can reduce these commitment problems through what Mattes and Savun (2009, 738) call *fear-reducing* and *cost-increasing provisions*. These provisions serve the purpose of decreasing both sides' fears about a negotiated settlement and the ensuing insecurity, as well increasing the costs of reneging on an agreement. Fear-reducing provisions may include political, territorial, military and economic power-sharing, which give both sides the means to defend themselves against each other (Mattes and Savun 2009, 741-742). Cost-increasing provisions may include "calls for the withdrawal of foreign forces, border seals, the separation of troops, and peacekeeping" (Mattes and Savun 2009, 743), as they all increase the costs of renewing hostilities (Mattes and Savun 2009, 743-744). These provisions increase the likelihood of negotiated settlements and decrease the likelihood of a renewal of violence.

Short of negotiating with strategically thinking terrorist groups, there are other ways to prevent groups from using terrorist violence. Rationalist approaches to terrorism imagine rebel groups as weighing the potential benefits with the potential costs of targeting civilians (Stanton 2013, 1011). To decrease the potential benefits of terrorism, a government must credibly signal that it will not make concessions to terrorists. The costs of terrorism are felt when a terrorist group loses domestic and external support, as well as when it encounters a violent counter-reaction by the government. If a group is strategically thinking, it should not use terrorist violence if the potential costs exceed the potential benefits.

Terrorism used to be more effective in the decolonization struggle as colonial powers could not credibly signal that they were ready to incur great costs to maintain their colonies and rebel groups did not incur significant loss of

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domestic support by using terrorist violence. This is in stark contrast to governments today that can much more convincingly signal that they will not make concessions. Whatever space was open for bargaining between a disgruntled group and a government often closes as soon as civilians become the targets of violence (Abrahms 2012, 383). When terrorists strike today, electorates tend to gravitate to parties on the right promising strong-arm actions. It has been noted in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Berrebi and Klor 2006) but also in the U.S. response to 9/11. The reverse was noted in the aftermath of the Madrid 2004 bombings in the Spanish general elections of 2004 (Rose and Murphy 2007) but some would credit the Spanish incumbents' defeat with the incompetent handling and presentation of the attacks rather than the attacks themselves (Gordon 2004).

In increasing the costs of terrorism and making it more difficult to carry out terrorist attacks, a government may use physical force. Terrorists may be killed, harmed or driven out of countries by force. One has to be careful about this counter-terrorist measure though. U.S. drone attacks illustrate both the good and the bad. While they have been successful in killing Al Qaeda leaders, disrupting the organization's capabilities and driving it out of areas (The Guardian 2012), they have also caused many civilian casualties (Columbia Human Rights Clinic 2012, 20-24), arguably radicalized the local population (Boyle 2013, 12) and may have been unethical (Brunstetter and Braun 2011, Walzer 2013).

Foreign occupation and intervention can likewise have good and bad consequences. In light of how the core of support for Islamic terrorist organizations may stem from a historic dislike of Westernization (Stepanova 2008, 75-84), foreign occupation by Western powers may encourage terrorism and make terrorism more effective (Pape 2003, 357). Pape's study has, however, been convincingly challenged on the basis of rigor (Ashworth et al. 2008), contradicted by more comprehensive quantitative research (Abrahms 2006, 2012, Cronin 2006, Fortna 2011, Jones and Libnicki 2008, 18-19; Stephan and Chenoweth 2008) and as Al-Qaeda's resurgence in Iraq since the U.S. left in 2011 shows (ISW 2013), foreign occupation may not be the terrorist magnet it was previously thought to have been.

Historically, military force has rarely ended terrorist groups. Most terrorist groups come to an end when they adopt non-violent tactics and join the political process. The work of local law enforcement has brought more terrorist groups to an end than military action (Jones and Libnicki 2008, 18-20) but may be ineffective when dealing with an insurgency (Jones and Libnicki 2008, 30). Jones and Libnicki therefore deduce that military force might be appropriate when dealing with powerful terrorist groups and that law enforcement might be more appropriate when dealing with less powerful terrorist threats. Using law enforcement therefore remains a viable tool. After all, the majority of active terrorist groups since 1968 have had fewer than 100 members (Jones and Libnicki 2008, 31).

Beyond the generic and concrete counter-terrorist actions explained above, Ekaterina Stepanova (2003, 26-28; 2008, 13) has given a summary of many additional concrete counter-terrorist measures. She notes how legislatures and judiciaries might criminalize and prosecute terrorist organizations. This might delegitimize them and increase the costs of terrorism. This may however only become feasible in a post-conflict environment where some level of order and monopoly on violence exists. To reach that point, amnesty may have to be given to terrorists to encourage them to give up violence (as they might be unlikely to commit to a peace agreement if they stand to be punished for their actions preceding it). Likewise, if the terrorists have support among the domestic population, putting "freedom fighters" on trial may be the spark to renew conflict.

Several cost-increasing provisions may be taken, such as punishing states that support terrorist groups, through sanctions, bans on direct foreign aid, trade restrictions and stopping full access to international institutions (Stepanova 2008, 31). Carrots may likewise be given in exchange for cooperation (Stepanova 2008, 33). These actions may however backfire and encourage terrorism, as states that work with the West may lose their legitimacy and as aid provided by the West may maintain the rule of illegitimate governments over people. Attempts have also been made to stop non-state funding of terrorist groups. For instance, the Kimberly Process Certification Scheme was established to prevent conflict diamonds and UNSCR 1373 aimed to suppress the financing of terrorism. International agreements, regional agreements, national measures (Clunan 2007) and global norms (Fair 2007, 174) have also made it more difficult for diasporas to fund terrorists.

CHAPTER TWO

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Defining INGOs

In defining international nongovernmental organization (INGOs), the World Bank's definition of NGOs as

"private organizations that pursue activities to relieve the suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or undertake community development" (2013)

will be used but it will be added that they must be characterized primarily by humanitarian rather than commercial objectives and that they must go beyond national borders in their work.

The Roles INGOs Play

In intra-state conflict situations, INGOs may work to prevent the on-set of such conflicts, provide human security during those conflicts, bring those conflicts to an end and prevent conflict renewal.

INGOs may prevent the on-set of conflicts with short- and long-term efforts. Long-term assistance aims to reform the areas they are in, for instance through economic development, diffusion of human rights (Kim 2013) and democratization. Long-term assistance may, on top of that, be in the form of efforts to change norms, attitudes and mindsets in the environments INGOs act in, but also in the international system at large (Keck and Sikkink 1998). Short-term conflict prevention may include giving early warnings to the international community before disputes escalate into violent conflicts (Bakker 2001).

During a conflict, INGOs may provide food, drugs, medical assistance, shelter and other necessities that the conflict has deprived locals of or caused them to need. This assistance may be the difference between life and death. The ability of INGOs to bring attention to a conflict and shame warring factions, might encourage foreign interventions (diplomatic or military) and increase the costs of violence for the warring parties. In bringing an end to a conflict, INGOs may communicate ideas for solutions (Bercovitch 2007, 33), mediate between factions (Kiel 2013, 9-11) and pressure the international community to take action (Bob 2005).

In post-conflict environments, INGOs may, as has been described above, strengthen structural factors that make conflict renewal less likely (for instance, by reducing poverty, human rights violations and political discrimination (Dixon 2009, 719-720)) but also decrease lingering grievances stemming from the conflict. INGOs may be vital in ensuring transitional justice processes (criminal prosecutions, truth commissions and reparations) that redress legacies of human rights abuses (Adhikari, Hansen and Powers 2012, 185-186, 188, 191).

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly of INGO work

The intentions of INGOs are good overall, though there may be the occasional INGO that abuses its position, exemplified by tsunami relief charities funneling donations to the Tamil Tigers (Brinkerhoff 2011, 127). The impact of INGOs is seen as mostly beneficial, as well.

With good intentions and a mostly beneficial impact, a more common problem seems to be that well-intentioned INGOs unintentionally compromise human security in conflict and post-conflict environments. When INGOs fail to consider the political implications of their work, they may exacerbate conflicts and violence. The resources that INGOs bring can be acquired and controlled by the warring parties (Anderson 1996, 344-349). Engaging in conflict is expensive and any injection of resources can translate into more violence (Gaub 2013, 2). The aid can be stolen, redirected and even directly given to the fighting parties (some INGOs may pay a "tax" to a violent group to access areas and deliver aid). INGOs may therefore fund the violence that they intend to prevent. As aid is injected into some areas, it may strengthen the position of warring factions located in those areas at the expense of other warring groups. The building of infrastructure projects can also give groups a strategic advantage (Anderson 1996, 344-349). This partly explains why groups often compete for INGO backing and attention. Clifford Bob (2005) shows how Nigeria's Ogoni movement (Ch. 3) and Mexican Zapatistas (Ch. 4) lobbied INGOs and gained significant attention and resources, while other movements and ethnicities in those countries remained ignored.

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INGOs also have to be careful about how they behave towards groups. Well-intentioned attempts at shaming groups and bringing attention to human rights violations may change the balance of a conflict, change how warring factions see NGOs and humanitarian assistance, and cripple the ability of NGOs in general to function in the area (Anderson 1996, 344-349). While some (Franklin 2008) show that human rights shaming does indeed lead to fewer human rights violations, other quantitative studies (Hafner-Burton 2008, 690-691) show that human rights shaming may lead to more human rights violations in certain situations. The shaming of governments has, for instance, been known to lead to government crackdowns. Some terrorist groups may also thrive on global publicity and use political terror to win power, territory and resources (Hafner-Burton 2008, 692).

The multitude of INGOs in a given area may have unintentional consequences. Threats of withdrawal by INGOs in protest over some grievance become less credible and less powerful when other INGOs are likely to step into the void left by another INGO (Werker and Ahmed 2008, 88-89). The degree by which distribution centres are dispersed also matters. Distribution centers attract people to them and may thus overpopulate certain areas, which can have unintentional health and security implications. The assembly of large groups may also make it easier for rebels to enlist (some times forcibly) men or attack population groups (Perrin 1998).

INGOs, in the pursuit of skilled local personnel, may unintentionally be luring away local elites that might otherwise have served in local government or business (Barber and Bowie 2008, 749), arguably leading to poorer governance and less economic growth. This "brain drain" of sorts may make it increasingly difficult for countries to overcome crises on their own or attempt to make necessary reforms to avoid future crises. Especially if they know that NGOs will step in and fill in the holes.

Some argue that INGOs "are too dispersed, pursuing too many objectives in too many countries and too many sectors with too many partners", which ultimately means that INGOs fail to follow their comparative advantage and end up providing aid that is not as cost-effective as it could be (Munro 2005, 425). Unlike with market forces or in politics, it is difficult to ensure INGO efficiency and answerability. To what extent there exists answerability, the recipients of the aid may be the last to have an input in how NGOs run things. The desire to satisfy donors and to perform well on crude estimates of NGO efficiency may therefore mean that resources may be inefficiently allocated (not going to those most in need) and that donor satisfaction may trump recipient satisfaction. An example of this may be how INGOs go to areas where they can illustrate a high degree of efficiency on a crude scale instead of areas where the situation may be more complicated and where more people may be in need (Werker and Ahmed 2008, 86-87).

Reducing the Bad, Increasing the Good

To make sure that INGOs do not put themselves in a position where they may unintentionally contribute to suffering, some insist on a "Do No Harm" principle for INGOs (Anderson 1999). However, such prescriptions may not always be viable. INGOs may, after all, be put in a position where they can attempt to alleviate massive human suffering in an unknown environment where the nuances of conflicts and disputes may not be entirely understood, or let the human suffering remain unaddressed.

Others propose that INGOs be regulated on international, national and local levels. The difficulty with legislating and regulating away the inefficiencies of INGOs though is that it may impair their efficiency. For instance, counter-terrorist laws have been shown to deter NGOs from working in areas where terrorists are prominent (Mackintosh and Duplat 2013, 111; Pantuliano et al. 2011). As it currently stands, INGOs engage in a lot of self-regulation. In an effort to develop operating standards, spread best practices and ensure accountability, the major NGOs have put forth initiatives such as the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership which verifies and certifies NGOs.

A fine line needs to be walked between measuring NGO efficiency while also allowing NGOs leeway to engage in work that would be difficult to measure. We should be vary of drawing conclusions based solely on quantitative research but the controversy surrounding Jeffrey Sachs' high-profile Millennium Village Project also illustrates the dangers of not properly verifying the precise impact of aid (Starobin 2012, Clemens and Demombynes 2013).

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Other key prescriptions for how INGOs can do less harm and more good include the following: "Educate donors about good NGO practice", so as to, at least, ensure that NGOs aim to satisfy the wishes of *informed* donors; "Form an association of NGOs" to enhance cooperation and efficient allocation of resources; "Prioritise consistency and reliability" so as to improve the long-term planning of NGOs; "Build national capacity", in effect, give local governments and organizations the means to take over INGO duties (Barber and Bowie 2008, 751-752).

Conclusion

This essay has outlined the various roles that terrorists and INGOs play in intra-state conflict situations. The terrorist violence component of terrorist groups is unethical, ineffective and "all bad", and endangers human security in a number of ways. While INGOs can hardly be described as "all good", most of the harm caused by INGOs is unintentional and it would be difficult to argue that INGOs do more harm than good. In trying to improve the actions of both types of actors, policy makers need to change the incentives driving these actors. Strategic actors who contemplate the use of terrorism can be deterred by decreasing potential benefits and increasing the potential costs of terrorism. The options available can range from remedying the underlying causes of terrorism (something that INGOs may be capable of) to killing terrorists.

Unlike terrorists, the intentions and methods of INGOs are overwhelmingly good. While international and national bodies may work to legislate and regulate away the flaws of INGOs, change for the better is more likely to occur within the INGOs themselves. The altruism of INGO workers coupled with the increased professionalization of the organizations (Werker and Ahmed 2008, 79) and research which is being done on NGO work should make INGOs well-equipped to enhance their efficiency in alleviating human suffering and improving human security.

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