TERRORISM REVISITED:
who are the real terrorists?

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Abstract:

The present paper discusses critically not only the different studies revolving around terrorism, but the controversy revolving around the idea the culture of terror by the same government, which should protect the citizens. Although a whole portion of scholarship sustain that terrorism is a global and major threat for Occident, others hold the thesis the nation-state fabricates a climate of fear for some liberal economic policies to be widely accepted.

Key Words: Terrorism, Consumption, Terror, Capitalism

Introduction

Over the recent years, terrorism not only posed as the main threat of West, changing the geopolitics as well as the international relations but established a specific political agenda in the most consolidated democracies (Murray 2005; Skoll, 2011; 2016; Korstanje 2017; 2018; Kepel & Ghazaleh, 2004). As David Altheide puts it, terrorism opened the doors for the inauguration of a new climate in the US, which echoed not only radicalized discourses but places the democracy in jeopardy (Altheide 2017). Here two assumptions should be done. On one hand, 9/11 introduced a new logic of terrorism, moving the classic targets as Chief Police officers, celebrities or politicians, to lay-people, tourists, journalists who are enjoyed their holidays at a paradisiacal island, resorts or top-level tourist destinations. Today`s terrorism targets leisure-spots, tourist destinations, and spaces of mass consumption to instill panic in the society (Korstanje 2017). In this respect, Enders & Sandler (2011) coin the term, political economy of terrorism to describe the complex intersection of terrorism and tourism. They hold the thesis that terrorists, far from being irrational psychopaths, seek the maximizations of their gains at the lower costs. Attacking public spaces, instead of selected objectives, opens a great anxiety in the global audiences simply because anyone may be the victim

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at a later day. Paradoxically, these relaxing spaces keep weak controls in order not to worry their guests. On another hand, as Luke Howie (2012) brilliantly observed, nation-states devoted considerable efforts and resources to protect the foreign tourists in view of the potential diplomatic issues, they face once others citizens are killed just upon a terrorist attack. As the case of Bali bombing, where almost 88 Australian tourists were assassinated, Australia took a formal complaint about the lack of security in Indonesia that protects the integrity of its citizens. After all, as Howie asserts, terrorists achieved their goals, they do not need a lot of people dying, they need a lot of people watching. This means that through the assassination of tourists and lay-people, terrorists undermine the credibility of governments. This short commentary essay centers on the needs of discussing terrorism as a political phenomenon which is inextricably intertwined to tourism. The specialized literature shows some interesting discrepancies and problems at time of grasping terrorism, at the least, because its illegal nature, which impedes ethnographers to narrow a biographical position respecting to a suspected of terrorism, as well as the lack of consensus among scholars (Weinberg, Pedahzur & Hirsch-Hoeller, 2004; Skoll 2016; Howie 2012; Stampnitzky 2013; Korstanje 2018). As never before, despite the governmental funding and material resources terrorism research is facing a point of stagnation generated by the scarcity of applied research as well as the proliferation of countless divergent definitions on what terrorism is (Sageman, 2014; Schmid 2014). What is even worse, after decades of military interventions, mounting public debt divested to the struggle against terrorism, and new realignment in the international politics, the US should reconsider the relations with neighboring and allied nations. the concept of sustainable security exhibits the needs of optimizing financial resources after the stock and market crisis happened in 2008. Though the implications of the crisis seem not to be clear, this event surely inspired a fundamental change in the national security strategy (Suri & Valentino, 2016). This begs a more than an interesting question, why terrorists target tourists or leisure-spots for their attacks?

The current piece discusses critically the nature of terrorism with a strong focus on the industrial division of labor, occurred in the mid of nineteen century. While terrorism -through the action of anarchists- jeopardized the capitalist system, their ideological core was adopted and recycled as the touchstone of Western capitalism: modern tourism. We sustain the polemic thesis that tourism is terrorism by other means.

Initial Discussion

Doubtless, one of the most difficult aspects of terrorism seems to be its abhorrent nature, which leads social scientists to avoid any direct contact with terrorists. Methodologically speaking, the atmosphere of fear, which adjoined to a demonization process legitimates a witch-hunt, entails a serious problem for terrorism-related researchers, who are often pressed to give key information on police and security forces in case of approaching a terrorist cell (Howie 2012). This point is in consonance with the climate of anomie, which today characterized the applied research. While some voices see in terrorism one of the major dangers democracies go through (Chalk, 1998; Kagan 2002; Dershowitz, 2002; Posen 2002), others think terrorism as an ideological discourse fabricated and disseminated by ruling elite in order to impose economic policies otherwise would be widely rejected (Bauman, 2006; Achcar, 2015; Chomsky, 2015; Skoll 2016; Altheide 2017). To some extent, neo-pragmatists who commonly depart from Walzer´s perspective, coincide in lamenting the failed role of the US as a global watchdog, which helps incipient democracies to struggle against terrorism (Revel, 1989), whereas a bunch of left-wing social scientists focuses on the effects of terrorism and the War on Terror in the day-to-day life. Needless to say, both positions are irreconcilable. In some way, terrorism altered and traversed all fields of politics.

As this backdrop, Michael Brown (2007) calls the attention on the needs to revisit the concept of international relations, just after the end of the century. Although analysts believed that the fall of Soviet Union was the epicenter of a new more peaceful age, new global dangers as terrorism, civil war, and ethnic cleansing were notably increased. The challenges given to policymakers consisted in predicting the interstate conflicts in an ever-changing World. As Brown puts it, the international Multilateralism, which is constructed by different allies and consensus, is always preferable to unilateral decisions. The twenty-one-century witnesses the end of the international war, which sets the pace to the rise of more radicalized but limited forms of violence. Terrorism, doubtless, is one of them. Equally important, as Geoffrey Kemp (2007) alerts, the 9/11 not only altered the international relations but also the ways of conceiving wars. Terrorism, in a micro-sociological scale, operated to crash three civil airplanes towards the military and financial centers of the US. This event left a difficult message for the audiences, which astonished by the cruelties of terrorists, understood that the historic relations between arm acquisition and warfare have been changed. In the next section, we shall carefully scrutinize in the intersection of terrorism and tourism laying the foundations to a new fresh perspective that helps to expand the current understanding of this much deep-seated issue.

Terrorism, Tourism and Leisure spots

It is important not to lose the sight of the fact that 9/11 was a founding event, where three civil airplanes were weaponized against Pentagon and World Trade Center. The classic means of transport, which cemented the authority of nation-state and represented one of the pride of Western civilization, were used as simple weapons that posited a new message, no matter the technological development, the nation-state is hand-tied to protect its citizens, anyone and anytime may be a victim of terrorism (Korstanje 2017). From that moment onwards, terrorism changed the classic tactics towards tourist destinations, luxury hotels, airports and spaces of relax and consumption as shopping malls and tourist resorts. Of course, 9/11 not only wake West from the slumber it was but as S. Zizek (2014) puts it, in his book *The universal Exemption,* mass-consumerism and the culture of media created the condition of a virtual world, where citizens are sedated, alienated and controlled. In the Matrix Saga, Zizek adds, Morpheus said Neo "welcome to the desert of the real", which symbolizes the passage from the state of numbness the modern capitalism -like the matrix- places the people, towards a new real but grim present. Neo enters in shock when he realizes his life was a complete fake, in the same way, after 9/11 Americans did. By this token, experts and policymakers of all stripes developed the idea that tourism was a fertile ground to terrorism, in view of the fact that behind any attack not only many jobs loses but also it affected the political stability of the involving government. Experts considered that tourism industry would adopt new security protocols that strengthen its resilient capacity to recover at the short-run (Somnez, Apostolopoulos & Tarlow, 1999; Pizam & Smith 2000). The surveillance technologies associated to the tactics of counterterrorism should be accompanied with programs of poverty alleviation, financial aid, and an active role of the US to consolidate democracy as a form of organization immune to terrorism. The psychological resentment, as well as the rise of totalitarian regimes (failed states or rogue states), played a leading role for the configuration of more radicalized cells (Fisher, 2003; Singh 2013). However, these assumptions showed to rest on shaky foundations in the threshold of time. Piazza toys with the idea that some democracies dotted of weak political parties have succumbed to terrorism. In the moment whenever a party is pressed to operate outside the democratic system, it adopts a radicalized form of violence. Neither the explanation of democracy nor the poverty are enough to explain terrorism (Piazza 2008; 2011). Many terrorists do not come from pouring families, they even are educated in the best western universities (Korstanje 2017). While James Piazza (2007) demonstrated that the belief democracy is a shelter against terrorism not only is incorrect, but also sometimes it is indirect proportional, others scholars presented conclusive

evidence that tourist destinations not only recover in post-terrorism contexts but also increase notably the volume of visitors in months (Korstanje & Clayton, 2012; Saha & Gap, 2014).

Although theorists understand that a counter-terrorism policy conceived in panic is far too likely to invade lives and erode public freedom and trust (Skoll 2016; Lyon & Bauman, 2013), no less true is that many sites like Ground Zero offers a dark spectacle which is visited by thousands of tourists daily (Sather-Wagstaff, 2016). This indicates that (dark)heritage is often commoditized in order for offering a new spectacle to the spectatorship, a morbid spectacle based on the Other`s suffering (Korstanje 2016). A new emerging subfield, dark tourism denotes the possibility that after these tragic events, tourism may be used as a resilient instrument to accelerate the recovery facets (Stone & Sharpley 2008; Stone 2012; Tumarkin 2013; Tzanelli 2016). Given the problem in these terms, one might speculate on the ambiguous role of morbid consumption, which in one direction, makes from terrorism an spectacle to be packaged and disseminated to a global audience eager in gazing "the Other´s pain", whereas on the other, the oxygen terrorism needs (Baudrillard 2001; Eid, 2014; Howie & Campbell 2017; Korstanje 2016; 2018).

This above-commented dilemma raises some pungent questions which merit to be discussed, is tourism part of the problem or the solution? or what is the connection between tourism and terrorism?

To respond and address efficiently these questions, we need to take a particular attention to the book of professor James Joll (1980), entitled *The Anarchist.*

As a political and cultural project, anarchism confronted not only with the status quo, but also denounced the material asymmetries provoked by capitalism, as well as the derived social injustices European workers faced during the mid of nineteen century. Based on a rational structure, which stipulated that a compact democracy only hides a dormant totalitarianism, anarchists were in quest of organizing the disposed and oppressed masses from the outset. The poverty was a direct result of the capital owner greed, as well as the precaritization of the workforce, as Joll adheres. Anarchists were historically traced, jailed even killed in Europe by the different regimes and political governments, which oscillate from Marxism, Fascism to Capitalism. Their radical ideology accompanied with their utopian conception of politics paved the ways for a strict prohibitions of anarchist leaders in Europe. However, the history of anarchism reveals that sooner the conditions would change for these youth dreamers. The US, Argentina, and Australia required from mass-migration to yield their productive systems. Millions of Europeans left the Old Continent in quest of

a better future in Americas. Not only the US received the arrival of anarchists camouflaged within a desesperate working migrants, but also its oppressive conditions of labour was a breeding ground for the anarchist mind. Promptly they perpetrated violent attacks against politicians, chief police officers, even killing an American president W. McKinley (who dies in 1901 stabbed by an anarchist militant). As a result of this, the circles of anarchists were subject to a violent retaliation by the side of the government, which jailed, trialed, and even exiled many of them. Anarchism was defeated but its ideology was continued by a soft wave of militants who sought in the organization of worker unions a great opportunity to mitigate the oppressive effects of capitalism. Anarchism played a crucial role administering and educating worker unions to the extent this led towards many social benefits as the right to strike, less working hours and paid holidays (Joll 1980). Starting from the premise that anarcho-syndicalism exercised the right of self-representation showing an inoculated ideology which was incorporated as the core of modern industrialism. In a nutshell, the system not only expulsed terrorists (violent anarchists) but -at the same time- used successfully their ideology in a new organization of labour. Hence, workers not only received countless benefits, which legitimated the creation of modern tourism as paid holidays and the reduction of working timeframe, but also gained a new powerful right, the faculty to declare strikes.

At a closer look, Michel Foucault (2003) has fleshed out an interesting model to understand the relation between the principle of scarcity, economy and risk. He accepts that the principle of sovereignty as the articulator of economy as well as the values assigned to commodities. In the same way, the risk corresponds with a sublimated external threat. To understand this, Foucault puts the metaphor of the vaccine, as he says, which is a inoculated virus, disposed of its negative and destructive effects. The risk serves as anthropological dispositive to domesticate the virulence of threats in the same line, vaccine did with lethal viruses. The same logic exposed by Foucault applies for the relation between tourism and terrorism. The strike remains some resemblances to the terrorist attack. Far from the extreme violence, both keep similar commonalities as the surprise factor, the indifference for the Other´s suffering, and the instrumentalization of the Other to achieve the own goals. To put this in bluntly, strikes are only success when they are suddenly declared, undermining the possibilities of capital-owners to negotiate. In so doing, strikers and unions look to cause further damage taking citizens as hostages. When thousands of tourists are stranded at an important airport just upon the declaration of a strike, or within few days of a media event inauguration, the public transport remains fully paralyzed, strikers are exercising their right but at the same evincing that tourism is terrorism by other means. The capitalist system incorporated the ideological core of anarchism, and sublimating it in form of leisure and tourist consumption, which

suggests that tourism and terrorism are two sides of the same coin, as stated in the introductory section of this paper. This does not mean that workers and unions are terrorists, but at the bottom, it explores the instrumentalized nature of terrorism, not as something externally-generated to capitalist system, but as the symbolic touchstone of capitalist production. After all Mohamed Atta and his minions who perpetrated the attack to WTC were educated in Western universities, while modern terrorists are natives of the societies they really hate.

Conclusion

Derrida defined terrorism as an autoimmune illness (Borradori, 2013), but he did not precise why this happens. Rather, we have highlighted the socio-economic backgrounds that facilitated the rise of anarcho-syndicalism, which paradoxically cemented many of the material benefits for workers. The capitalist system adopted the ideology of anarchists but (as terrorists) emptied their physical bodies, trialing or executing them. Paragraphing Foucault, once the virus was destroyed, the vaccine appeared. The work-force was benefited by the adoption of further free time, purchasing power that led to modern tourism. For some reason, the process of globalization liberated the logic of terrorism from its cage, where it was historically encapsulated. The act of killing tourists evinces something else than "a threat for Occident", as part of the specialized literature contends, but it evinces the "degradation of western civilization", the end of an old industrial logic which is gradually replaced by a "morbid culture" we dubbed "Thana-Capitalism" (Korstanje 2016). As an spectacle, terrorism offers a wide range of landscapes to create a more imaginative industry of cultural entertainment, while at the same time, the audience keeps captivated by the atrocities committed in the name of God. As Bruno Etienne puts it, one of the most frightful aspects of terrorism, is that they believe and of course scarify their own lives to kill others, while we lost our spirit because we trapped in the philosophical gridlock of existence. We do not belief in a life after-here, and therefore, are afraid to die. Last but not least, in the society of Thana Capitalism, the Other´s death reconfirms my own status -as part of chosen people- because after all I am still alive, in the trace. This creates a vicious circle because on one hand, terrorism-led news are highly consumed to remind how special we are, but at the same time, we were appalled. Despite its cruelty which is cyclically reinvented, terrorism interrogates our existence, as a society that had developed a pathological position before death. All we are shocked at time of watching the mutilated parts of victims, the details of explosions or the successive beheadings of John Jihadi, but paradoxically we cannot stop watching them!.

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