# Strengths And Weaknesses Of Conventional And Critical Approaches To Terrorism

## Introduction

Terrorism is a major source of concern for the political world against the backdrop that, it encompasses the use of unlawful and indiscriminate violence intentionally meant to create terror and fear for governments as well as to inflict harm and pain against civilians and non-combatants in the interest of achieving a political aim. This is true to the extent that several reported cases of terrorism have targeted and indeed subjected civilians into various degrees of pain and anxiety by terrorists for the pursuit of political, religious or ideological objective.The 9/11 attacks on the United States exemplifies a clear case of terrorism where the world witnessed a brutal attack on civilians causing several loss of lives and properties. It underscores a power struggle activity where terrorists violence to cause mayhem particularly to register a displeasure of the political structures of a country. But there are some basic approaches terrorism including conventional and critical and this paper is pivotal to addressing the strengths and weaknesses of the two approaches. The paper will explore the ideologies and key assumptions associated with both the conventional and critical approaches.

## Ideologies and key assumptions associated with the conventional and critical approaches to terrorism

According to Dixit and Jacob conventional approach to terrorism are founded on philosophical ideas and norms critical to facilitating the process of combating terrorism. This approach therefore takes into account the substance of asking critical questions about terrorism seeks to answer the questions through generally accepted notions. The answers to these questions provide sufficient clues as to how to fight against terrorism but they may not necessarily based on concrete facts and proofs. For example the question of what exactly are the demands of terrorists remains a critical question which can be probed into detail to settle on what exactly motivates terrorists to do what they actually do. Finding a proper answer to this and other relevant questions may be used to strategize and do things right in the interest of combating terrorism.

Conventional approach to terrorism expresses a problem solving approach in a manner that relates to finding a common ground to end terrorism through exploring variety of strategies believed to curtail the activities of terrorist movements. But critical approach to terrorism refers to embarking on a fact finding mission to ascertain the real issues underpinning terrorism which go beyond mere assumptions and norms. It must be established that while conventional approach to terrorism border on ideologies concerning norms and conventions, critical approach is primarily based on facts and accuracies to help devise strategies meant to provide security for civilians and non-combatants. But both approaches have a common mandate of helping to safeguard the security of humans and end any acts of terrorism.

## Strengths of the conventional approach to terrorism

The conventional approach to terrorism has a number of strengths regarding probing and finding lasting solution to the incidence of terrorism around the world. One of the strengths of the conventional approach is the processes to arrive at conclusive decisions are swift.This is to state that the conventions and traditions behind the acts of terrorism are known on the surface of it and there is no need to waste time into conducting investigation to ascertain any fact. Therefore it facilitates the processes to design strategies meant to help combat terrorism. The conventions and the assumptions made reflect what has been communicated and accepted by the general public and these common notions form the basis for the decisions that are taken for the purpose of fighting terrorism.

The situation as described above makes the processes easy and fast and key decisions are arrived at without delay. For example if the substance of fighting terrorism is founded on the question of power struggle on the part of the terrorists by consensus, then the issue may be dealt with on the face of it without further recourse to finding out the authenticity of the information. This actually makes the processes swift and instantaneous. Furthermore the conventional approach does not really need any special expertise in respect of the people with the mandate to fighting terrorism. This is on the basis of the fact that no special investigations is needed but rather every information needed is based on the norms, traditions and believes of the people. It makes the processes inexpensive and anybody can be called upon to help in the fight against the acts of terrorism. No special training is involved in the conventional approach and that also makes the tactic quite cheap and efficient.

## When the conventional approach may not be suitable

There are certain situations which make the conventional approach unsuitable for the benefit of tackling issues on terrorism. Lynch and Javier stated that the conventional approach to terrorism may be ineffective under conditions where the information being used to address the issue is wrong. It is easy to get the information wrong since it is normally based on conventions and public opinions but not on facts and truths necessarily. Such situations pose problems in the approach because all the key decisions and strategies that will be arrived at may be wrong and end up not solving the issues at stake. Conventional approaches to terrorism are founded on public opinions which could reflect a deviation of the real situation on the ground. This makes the approach weak and unsuitable to help bring the incidence of terrorism under control.

## Strengths of critical approach to terrorism

The critical approach goes beyond the widely held views to substantiate the facts presented to the issues in order to ascertain truths. Walder pointed out that the critical approach to terrorism makes use of concrete facts to arrive at decisions relating to the providing security for people and hence get the results right more often. This is to say that the approach does not entertain hearsays or gossips but it takes time to conduct proper investigations into events. This helps to furnish officials with first-hand information on the situation and reactions to the issues as identified actually yield results. Furthermore the critical approach to terrorism is said to be more efficient and effective approach in terms of making no room for errors and mistakes. The information that motivates the taking of a particular decision is accurate.

From the above, it would be appreciated that there becomes little or no room for errors on the account of the strategies that are put in place to ensure people are protected from falling victims of terrorists. This makes the entire approach a lot efficient and effective. The critical approach also leave no stones unturned towards probing the issues to find lasting solution to what causes terrorism and what measures ought to be taken to fight against the menace. This means it takes into account all the angles to the problem which facilitates the action of dealing with every little detail of terrorism. It helps to solve the problems once and for all to the extent all the aspects of it are dealt with. Critical approach therefore tries to bring some sense of accuracies in dealing decisively with terrorist attacks and help end the incidence of terrorism.

## When the critical approach is not suitable

Critical approach may not be suitable under conditions that demand urgent attention and a rapid response to an act of terrorism. The nature of the critical approach to terrorism demands for careful investigations into the issues to get the real facts. This takes quite some time to take the decisions that may be needed for the task ahead. Therefore it may not be the best option for a situation where there is emergency and action needs to be taken at once. In addition, critical approach demands hiring of competent and professionals to do proper investigations to unravel the truth. Under circumstances where there is the absence of the capacity to get professionals on board, the whole method may be bound to fail. The critical approach may not be useful when there is limited space and time to deal with issues as well as the lack of expertise on people working to bring terrorism under control.

## Implications of the two approaches on issues or practices related to terrorism

There is no denying the fact that the two approaches as explained above deal with issues of terrorism and works at bringing the incidence of terrorism to a complete halt. The conventional approach to terrorism uses most especially the information that are gathered in the public domain and act on it fight against terrorism. The implication is that the approach actually seems to trust the opinions of the general public as it may be enough to unravel all the mysteries surrounding the cases and people must ensure to volunteer vital information which may help deal with the menace decisively. This is valid to the extent that the general public seems to be greatly concerned about the harm and the pain they experienced when subjected to terrorism. They however hesitate not to volunteer all the information needed for officials to act upon them. The approach also uses the populations to devise strategies that are critical to helping to solve the problems. On the other hand the critical approach seems to do away with public opinions and go further to apply scientific methods to get relevant information and act upon them.It may be costly and time wasting but the results can always be trusted since it may reflect the true picture of the state of affairs. The implication is that officials who embark on the investigation in respect of the fact finding mission must be resourced adequately with all the tools and equipment needed in place with support and cooperation from the general public. This is critical to aiding their work in order to get the accurate information to trigger relevant solutions.

## Conclusion

Terrorism is rampant in modern times as there several reported cases of terrorist attacks in different parts of the world. It is a global problem as perpetrators are indiscriminate of their attacks. Subsequently certain approaches such as the conventional and critical are employed by anti-terrorism officials to help deal with the situation. But certain ideologies and principles as well as assumption draw a line between the two approaches. It is established that the conventional approach is supported by conventions and expectations to combating terrorism and it is an easy and simple method tackling issues regarding terrorism. The critical approach is concerned with finding solutions to terrorism through fact finding investigations and it ensures accuracy and efficiency of the process. The two approaches are founded on different principles and each may be used depending on the situation.

## References

Bahgat, Karim, and Richard M. Medina. "An overview of geographical perspectives and approaches in terrorism research." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 7, no. 1 (2013).

Beckman, James. *Comparative legal approaches to homeland security and anti-terrorism*. Routledge, 2016.

Dixit, Priya, and Jacob L. Stump. *Critical methods in terrorism studies*. Routledge, 2015.

El-Said, Hamed. *New approaches to countering terrorism: designing and evaluating counter radicalization and de-radicalization programs*. Springer, 2015.

Gunning, Jeroen. A Case for Critical Terrorism Studies? Government and Opposition, 42 no. 3 (2007): 363-393.

Halliday, Fred. *Terrorism in historical perspective.* Abingdon: Routledge. 2011

Jarvis, Lee, and Michael Lister. "State terrorism research and critical terrorism studies: an assessment." *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 7, no. 1 (2014): 43-61.

Lutz, Brenda; Lutz, James M. *Terrorism*. In: Alan Collins (Ed.): Contemporary Security Studies. (3rd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2013.

Lynch, Orla, and Javier Argomaniz, eds. *Victims of terrorism: A comparative and interdisciplinary study*. Routledge, 2014.

Newman, Graeme R. "Situational approaches to terrorism." In *Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice*, pp. 4853-4864. Springer New York, 2014.

Richards, Anthony. "Conceptualizing terrorism." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 37, no. 3 (2014): 213-236.

Stump, Jacob L.; Dixit, Priya. *Critical Terrorism Studies: An Introduction to Research Methods*. Abingdon: Routledge. 2013.

Walder, Alexander. "Surveillance on the Internet: A Comparison of the United States and the European Approaches to Protection and Privacy on the Internet in the Face of Increased Government Monitoring in an Effort to Combat Domestic Terrorism." (2015).

White, Jonathan R. *Terrorism and homeland security*. Cengage Learning, 2016.

Wilkinson, Paul. *Research into Terrorism Studies: Achievements and Failures.* In: Magnus Ranstorp (Ed.): Mapping Terrorism Research: State of the Art, Gaps and Future Direction. (Political Violence). Abingdon: Routledge. 2013.