

Brute Force Will Cure Terrorism

Ryan Kohl

The problem of terrorism is very much like the problem of children using guns. Immature in both their reasoning and their emotions, some children decide that the best way to get what they want is to shoot some people and scare a lot more. It's short-sighted intimidation to the mature observer, but to the child it's a virtuous act of reprisal and moral instruction.

To solve the problem of children using guns, a mixture of punishment and education is applied. If a child is found plotting to shoot his classmates, the child is severely punished and the action is publicly condemned. The action is shown to be ill-thought out and narrow-minded via media coverage. The result is that children who may be thinking about violent acts of their own may be convinced that their own plans are misguided or that the punishment is not worth the risk.

Terrorism is a social disease very similar to children using guns. Terrorism is not confined to any single society or nation. It can pop up anywhere at any time, requiring only that someone is convinced that terror is a useful and justified means to their goal.

Unfortunately, terrorism is not as widely condemned as violence by armed children. Local populations repeatedly cheer their terrorists to further acts, in many cases celebrating their deaths as deeds of martyrdom. Local authorities may not always punish convicted terrorists in a manner which deters future acts, either by giving the convicts a light sentence or by blaming a harsh sentence on foreign influence. This is not a path towards ending terrorist acts.

To put an end to terrorism, it is imperative that terrorist acts are always severely punished. Convicted plotters of terrorist bombings must be punished to the fullest extent of the law. Furthermore, terrorism must never be seen as achieving its goals. One of the reasons that Israel is winning its war against terror lies in the fact that every terrorist attack leads to a military response. Terrorists in the region have learned that their actions will only lead to the future suffering of the people they claim to represent.

The mistake that terrorists make is that they believe their actions will scare the opposition into complicity. While this may be true of some of the public, it is demonstrably not true of public that can respond. Terrorism often evokes a desire for vengeance that is felt most strongly in police and military forces as well as politicians. When the decision makers and the decision enforcers fail to be frightened into complicity, the terrorist has not only failed but has made his and his organization's situation much grimmer.

More and more people who supported terrorism in the past are beginning to realize the futility of terrorism. These people have begun to see past their own neighborhood, and what they see is the rest of the world with disdain in their eyes. They see that a movement supported by many in the world loses legitimacy once terrorist actions are used to further the movement's ambitions.

Terrorism must never be rewarded, and must be understood as a failed method of change. More and more people understand this fact, and more and more terrorist groups are losing their popularity and relevance. Weak diplomacy that bargains with terrorists is obviously ineffective. Strong diplomacy with a healthy dose of brute force is the only cure to the social disease of terrorism.