



Is Terrorism a Drawback of Globalization?

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Is terrorism a drawback of globalization?

To understand whether the global terror is a shortcoming of globalization or not first of all the two terms in the question i.e. terrorism and globalization have to be defined. Arjun Appadurai a leading international theorist defines terrorism as a "violent action against public spaces and civilian populations in the name of antistate politics". (Appadurai, 2011) The definition shows two important characteristics of terrorism; firstly, that it involves the use of violence against public spaces and civilian population and secondly, the acts of violence are done in the name of anti state politics. Though terrorism is a very complex notion to explain simply because terrorists engage in terrorism for variety of reasons, ideologies and motivations but still majority of the theorists and subject experts are of the opinion that terrorism is about spreading fear. In other words the main characteristic of terrorism that majority of the theorists believe and agree upon is spreading of terror is the main attribute of terrorism.

The concept of globalization is again something that is intricate and is prone to change with regards to different theorists. Over the period of time on one hand it has been defined in connotations with growth, integration, stability and development and on the other hand it has been defined in connotations with colonialism, instability and unequal distribution of wealth. So it is clear that the definition of globalization varies with the political beliefs, economic understanding and social culture of the respective theorists. However, the definition that will be used here is by Dr. Nayef who defines globalization as a "process that encompasses the causes, course, and consequences of transnational and transcultural integration of human and non-human activities." (Nayef, 2006) This definition clearly talks about the concept of globalization at large without going in the advantages and shortcomings of the same.

Before moving further it's imperative to talk about the benefits and drawbacks of globalization so that the picture can be seen in totality and also it could be understood how the two aspects of globalization lead to terrorism. There are numerous benefits of globalization that are propounded by its supporters. Firstly, it has made the world a global village, the boundaries and the restriction on the movement of labour, resources and ideas have been removed by globalization up to a large extent. Secondly, due to globalization of production the companies around the world have been able to manufacture their products at a cheaper rate while generating employment in the manufacturing countries. Thirdly, as more and more multinationals have started providing a standard product in various economies they are operating in; this has created a global market. Fourthly, it has removed the sense of separation among the less developed or the underdeveloped countries as now people in the third world countries and the underdeveloped countries have the access to the knowledge and the products/services that the people of the developed countries have.

Now let's have a look at some of the disadvantages. It is mostly said the globalization has led to exploitation of the economically weaker nations and numerous examples are available as well. Secondly it is propounded that globalization has also facilitated the gap between the people among different countries and within a country, thus increasing unequal distribution of wealth. Thirdly, globalization is often criticized for the loss of jobs that it has created in developed countries as more and more jobs have been outsourced. For example by 2005 more than 5 lakh jobs were moved from U.S. and this number is expected to reach 33 lakh by 2015. (Aswathappa, 2010) Fourthly, it is also claimed that globalization has led to imposition of the western

culture on developing and the less developed countries. In France in 1999 a McDonald's restaurant was vandalized as a mark of protest against the impoverishment of French culture by the American culture.

Now the questions that arise are, has the globalization facilitated terrorism or not? And if yes, then in what way has it done so?

The world has seen an unprecedented shift towards globalization from 1970's and more so after 1990's. Since 1970-1990 there were 44,893 terrorist attacks around the globe. But from 1990-2012 there were 72,108 terrorist incidents. (Global Terrorism Database, 2014) There is little doubt that early economists like Adam Smith have spoken about the integration of countries which is the concept of globalization though he never used the term as such. But the practice of globalization had increased after 1970's like never before which was triggered by the technological innovations that had taken place; this made the interaction between people from across the globe a lot easier. The rapidity of the process of globalization increased more so with advent of internet bringing more countries in its realm since 1990's.

The answer lies in first of all understanding the features of globalization. One of the underlying features of globalization is that it aids the free movement of people, finances and ideas. This had made the boundaries of nations somewhat porous, which have been used effectively by the terrorist organizations. The attacks of 9/11 at the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon were a startling reminder of the same. The roots of attacks are gnarled together from various nations and perpetrators from across the globe came together to execute the most heinous terrorist attacks known in the history of mankind. The coming together of people of so many nationalities to execute something as big and as complicated as 9/11 attacks was only possible because of the free movement of the resources.

Internet is undoubtedly one of the main facilitators of globalization and has made the possible the interaction of people from various parts of the planets easier. It has become an integral part of the business environment. Also there are numerous technological innovations that are associated with globalization. Firstly it has made coming together of radical organizations easier. Secondly, the type of psychological warfare has also undergone a tremendous change. Until 1998 as per the U.S. Department of State out of 30 foreign terrorist groups, there were less than half of the terrorist organizations that had websites but after 1999 all of them had a website in place. (RAND Corporation, 2006) This has made their interaction with the people easier. Also, it has given a kind of safety to their ideologies of the terrorist organizations because the terrorists can be eliminated but their beliefs will continue even if they are not alive. Thus the websites of the terrorist organizations has given some kind of immortality to their respective ideologies.

Due to the benefits of globalization of production, the companies have been able to produce their products at a much cheaper rate. The terrorist organizations have many a times used these inexpensive cameras, softwares and web spaces to carry out attacks, record them and then upload them on their websites and on the social media websites so spread terror. Thus, the application of the technology is widely in use to terrorize the global population. The murder of Daniel Pearl, an American journalist substantiates this point. He was kidnapped by the radicals in Pakistan by deceiving him through the use of internet. The video of his murder was recorded and was circulated on the internet. The same kind of attack was made on the western

hostages in Iraq and the video was circulated on the internet to induce fear. These examples validate the fact that the terrorist organizations have been using internet, the instrument of globalization to spread terror and also make them look more powerful than they actually are. They have been able to induce the fear of the next attacks in minds of the general population. Arjun Appudurai a leading theorists says that "terror is first of all the terror of the next attack" and his point is true at least in context of today's global scenario where there are apprehensions and fear of the terror attacks.

As the globalization is expanding and is taking more and more countries under its dominion some argue that the interaction of two set of cultures i.e. the western and the non-western, could lead to a conflict of ideologies and thus lead to clash of civilizations. This could further act as a fodder to spread the terrorism.

In conclusion it can be said that the globalization has had an impact on the spread of terrorism. But mere acceptance of this fact will leave us nowhere. The need of the hour is to accept this reality and have such systems in place that can prevent terrorism from becoming the "dark side" of globalization and also to make it an instrument for an inclusive growth across the planet.

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