

Choose two case studies and explain why the first one is a good example of terrorism committed by the State and why the second one represents terrorism committed by dissidents. Discuss, in both scenarios, what should be the role of the international community (UN, NGOs or single state), and under which conditions they should intervene, or not, in countries where terror acts are committed.

State terrorism can be defined as the “official government support for policies of violence, repression, and intimidation” (Martin, p.71). As such, I believe the authoritarian regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria fits the description of a terrorist state. The Assad regime in Syria engages in domestic terrorism in a very open manner. This was the case when the Syrian government crushed a rebellion by the Muslim Brotherhood in 1982 (Martin, p.75). The crushing of this revolt involved the deployment of army troops accompanied by tanks and artillery (Martin, p.75). Many civilians were killed in the fighting which saw the rebel forces crushed (Martin, p.75). A similar process was repeated during the Arab spring uprisings of 2011. Again, the Syrian government “deployed the army and other security forces to violently attack centers of protest nationwide” (Martin, p.75). These are very clear example of a state using the institutions at its disposal against a perceived internal threat. This use of force as a part of a state’s domestic policy classifies it as a terrorist state (Martin, p.84). The Syrian government has deployed tremendous force of arms against its own people in an effort to “preserve [the] existing order and to maintain state authority” (Martin, p.88).

I would like to note that there is also the possibility that the Assad regime, either already has, or is currently engaging in other forms of state terrorism. These other forms include, among others, the funding and supporting of terrorist groups at home and abroad. In other words, to act as a patron of terrorist activities.

I believe that there are a number of acceptable ways for the international community to respond when faced with a terrorist state. First and foremost, the international community must have proof before it begins any type of intervention against a foreign state. Accusations or suspicion of wrongdoing can not be the basis for intervention lest foreign states start fabricating accusations to destabilize, weaken or topple rival states. Second of all, I firmly believe that, once indisputable proof of terrorist activities on the part of a state have been presented, it is the responsibility and the duty of the free world to take action and defend the victims of state terrorism. To do nothing sends a message that such actions are acceptable when they very clearly are not and would represent, in my opinion, the failure of both the international community as a whole and individual countries which claim to support freedom, liberty and human rights. As such, I believe that an intervention against state terrorism should be undertaken by a broad international coalition. This can also help avoid the accusations of intervention for imperialist gain. It also allows the international community to observe the intervention and hold each other accountable. However, if the international community fails to come to the defense of victims of state terrorism, I believe it falls to individual nations to coordinate the intervention in a coalition. This responsibility is highlighted by the 'Responsibility to Protect Concept' whereby it is the responsibility of the international community to defend those who can not defend themselves (3.3.3 State Terrorism Part 1, slide 12).

The purpose and goal of any intervention should be to prevent harm to victims of state terrorism. As such, it might be beneficial to try and avoid the escalation of armed conflict. This likely puts more pressure on the local civilian population, not to mention endangering the lives of soldiers should they be deployed to crush the terrorist state. If armed conflict can be avoided by

solving the problem through other means then those other means should be given priority. These can take the forms of mediated negotiations between the state and its opponents. Should negotiations be unsuccessful in stopping the use of terrorist violence, various sanctions against the state and its leaders can be put in place. It is worth noting that these sanctions can be circumvented with the help of other nations who do not comply with the sanctions. In which case, the international community must be careful that the situation does not escalate further. Should diplomatic, economic and any other sanctions fail to stop the terrorist state, more direct military intervention might be needed. Once again, this type of intervention should always be centered on stopping the state from further harming its own innocent population.

NGOs and other non-state actors can participate in the intervention in a more limited way because they usually do not have the same influence on the world stage as nations do. However, they have a part to play as well. They can bring attention to and raise awareness about a government which is engaging in terrorist acts against its people. Some groups provide aid to victims. This aid can be in the form of health services or providing food and water where infrastructure does not. They can also help if reconstruction is needed in the aftermath of an intervention.

It is worth noting that there are some cases where an intervention might need to be restrained. For example, some states and their governments are so powerful that, even if there is evidence of state terrorism, to attempt to intervene might lead to an armed conflict. In such cases, unless the rest of the international community agrees to confront the state in question, the intervention might have to be limited to sanctions. It is important to remember that the purpose of the intervention is to solve a problem. If, by intervening, the international community creates a bigger problem, then the intervention has failed.

Dissident terrorists are individuals or groups who believe that they are fighting a necessary campaign against an established authority in the name of a higher cause (Martin, p.101). In the Palestinian territories, the Palestinian Liberation Organization, or PLO, wages its campaigns in an effort to “establish an independent Palestinian state” (Martin, p.110). The PLO, through its actions, fits the definition of a dissident terrorist organization. The PLO and its subsidiaries have engaged in attacks which took the form of hijackings, bombing and shootings, to name just a few (Martin, p.110). Due to the nature of the conflict, Israel is frequently the target of these attacks, though the PLO has conducted attacks abroad as well (Martin, p.110).

As discussed above, I believe that an intervention by the international community against a dissident terrorist group is necessary if the targeted country is unable to adequately respond to the terrorist threat. In the case of dissident terrorist groups, the international community must intervene differently than when dealing with independent countries because they can not apply the same type of pressure. For example, economic sanctions are unlikely to be effective in stopping a dissident terrorist group because they have no national economy. I believe it is also likely that the international community can be more forceful and aggressive when intervening against dissident terrorist groups because they do not carry the same weight and influence in the international community as a sovereign state does. Once again, any intervention on the part of the international community should try to minimize further harm to innocent civilians.

Interventions against dissident terrorist groups should also be carried out in collaboration with the country these terrorists are operating in. After all, it is their territory that operations are being conducted in. This can be problematic if a country refuses access to foreign nations or does not cooperate in removing the terrorist threat. I believe that every country should be given the chance to manage its own internal affairs. However, if they fail to put an end to the terrorist

threat and the suffering of innocent victims, the international community is responsible for intervening.