

Globalization, Terrorism, and Morality: A Critique of Jean Baudrillard

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Abstract: This paper challenges the claim, made by French sociologist and philosopher, Jean Baudrillard in *The Spirit of Terrorism*, that contemporary “Islamic” terrorism as exemplified by the 9/11 attacks in the United States is a phenomenon that defies morality. By considering alternative explanations and applying a thought experiment, we find that Baudrillard’s claim should be rejected because it is based on invalid premises and inconsistencies. The problematic premises include Baudrillard’s statements that terror is an effective strategy and the only means available to marginalized group seeking to oppose Western globalization. We argue that contemporary terrorism cannot lie beyond the limits of morality, and we suggest that the main cause of the upsurge in terrorist incidents today lies in the logic of Western globalization, or the consumption system, that has given rise to simulation.

Keywords: Morality, terrorism, consumer society, globalization, simulation

Abstrak: Artikel ini berupaya untuk membantah klaim sosiolog dan filsuf Perancis, Jean Baudrillard dalam *The Spirit of Terrorism*, bahwa terorisme “Islam” kontemporer sebagaimana yang dicontohkan dalam serangan teroris 9/11 di Amerika Serikat merupakan suatu fenomena yang menantang moralitas. Melalui metode eksplanasi alternatif dan eksperimen pemikiran, artikel ini menemukan bahwa klaim Baudrillard harus ditolak karena klaim tersebut didasarkan pada premis-premis yang tidak valid dan mengandung inkonsistensi. Premis-premis yang bermasalah adalah pernyataan Baudrillard bahwa teror merupakan strategi yang efektif dan satu-satunya alternatif yang

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tersedia bagi kelompok yang termarginalkan untuk menentang globalisasi Barat. Artikel ini menyimpulkan bahwa fenomena terorisme kontemporer tidak dapat berada di luar ruang lingkup moralitas dan sesungguhnya penyebab utama semakin meningkatnya frekuensi aksi teror akhir-akhir ini terletak pada logika yang digunakan oleh globalisasi atau sistem konsumsi di Barat yang mendukung berkembangnya berbagai bentuk simulasi.

Kata Kunci: Moralitas, terorisme, masyarakat konsumsi, globalisasi, simulasi

Introduction

Terrorism threatens virtually every country in the world today. Incidents in the United States, Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East remind us that no country is safe from attacks. As a form of political violence, terrorism has undergone a significant transformation in character; not only does it occur on a global scale, but the perpetrators purposely target innocent civilians (Nia, 2010). Attacks on public places such as markets, shopping malls, music concert venues, hotels and airports demonstrate that today's terrorists are willing to victimize anyone indiscriminately.

Terrorism is essentially a politically complex phenomenon and understanding exactly what constitutes an act of terror is not a simple matter. The earliest documented case of a terrorist movement is the Sicarii, a religious Jewish sect who fought against Roman authority in Palestine in 66-73AD (Laqueur, 2001). The word terror on the other hand came to prominence in 18th century France when the Jacobins set up the 'reign of terror' as a means to restore stability and order during the period of upheaval following the 1789 revolution (Hoffman, 2006). The history of terrorism shows how the understanding of terrorism has undergone significant changes and revaluation throughout the years from its earliest use in the 18th century to its contemporary understanding (Hoffman, 2006). We learn from history that the term terror can have either a positive or negative connotation depending on the perpetrators and their supporters' subjective view point.

In the past, terrorist acts often occurred as a response to the policies of great powers for example the terrorist acts of the Sicarii in the first century were directed against Ancient Rome, the acts of Narodnaya Volya in the 19th century against Russia, the Irish nationalists against Great Britain and the Kurdish radicals against Turkey (Wojciechowski,

2017). Although this trend has continued to the present times with groups such as Al-Qaeda, Chechen terrorists and Urghuy terrorists, the causes of terrorism have become much more diverse to include not just the main causes such as political, ideological, religious, historical, social, cultural, economic and psychological but also other causes such as globalization, migration and technological. Often terrorism occurs as a result of a mixture or a hybrid of causes, including those causes that are hidden from view as in the case with state-sponsored terrorism.

The evolution of terrorism to its current state presents a more complex challenge for scholars trying to understand the phenomenon. Western experts in political science and security studies have tried to formulate numerous definitions of terrorism, none of which have gained widespread acceptance (Held, 2008). There are more than 100 definitions of terrorism currently available. American philosopher, Virginia Held, in her book *How Terrorism Is Wrong*, described the unclarity that surrounds approaches to terrorism and lamented some governments' use of double standards in their moral analysis of a particular terrorist event (Held, 2008). These difficulties prevent experts and philosophers from assessing terrorist acts in an objective manner. The problem is further exacerbated because citizens in the modern West participate in a form of simulated reality, where all values, meanings, and events can be recreated and manipulated by particular interest groups.

In his analysis of the 9/11 attack in New York in *The Spirit of Terrorism*, Jean Baudrillard regarded acts of terrorism, particularly instances that have involved the use of Islamic symbols, as symbolic acts of people harmed by the forces of globalization. Baudrillard understood globalization as the triumph of a globalized hegemony of market capitalism, where capital creates a homogenous world culture of commercialization, commodification, administration, surveillance, and domination (Robins & Webster, 1999).

Therefore, although he viewed terrorism as immoral, Baudrillard depicted it as a natural reaction to a form of globalization that is itself immoral. On this basis, he described terror as an act that defies morality:

Terrorism is immoral. The World Trade Center event, that symbolic exchange, is immoral, and it is a response to a globalization which is in itself immoral. So, let us be immoral; and if we want to have some understanding of all this, let

us go and take a little look beyond Good and Evil. When, for once, we have an event that defies not just morality, but any form of interpretation, let us try to approach it with an understanding of Evil. (Baudrillard, 2002, pp. 12 – 13)

The present article considers whether this argument can be accepted. Research on the morality of contemporary terrorism is especially relevant, since, Baudrillard's views aptly characterize the challenge that terrorism poses today. Even though the entire world condemns terrorism and many countries have implemented counter-terror strategies to defeat it, the frequency of such acts continues to multiply in various countries. This persistence of terrorism suggests that its moral aspects may have been overlooked, and the neglect of this dimension could be the main reason why efforts to combat terrorism continue to fail.

Previous research on the morality of terrorism (Held, 2004; Rodin, 2004; Seto, 2002; Simlansky, 2004) has inadequately addressed the problem. These prior studies have several weaknesses, but the most important one is that, either consciously or unconsciously, they have failed to incorporate the concept of simulated-reality, as explained by Baudrillard, into their analysis of contemporary terrorism. They continue to apply an older, more traditional conception of reality that treats any event or occurrence as only a real-life phenomenon rather than a simulation. However, following Baudrillard, when an event is said to be a simulation, we do not mean to deny its ontological existence. A real-life event is called a simulation when the cause of the event and the event itself raises questions, invites suspicion, and seems unnatural as a result of the event being freed from its natural referents and turned into an arbitrary sign assigned with a new meaning that contradicts its original meaning.

This failure to incorporate a simulated-reality perspective could have grave consequences, misleading subsequent analysts and thereby further complicating all attempts to understand and defuse the threat of contemporary terrorism. Thus, the primary novel component of the present paper is its use of a simulated-reality perspective to criticize Baudrillard's own claims regarding the morality of contemporary terrorism, as part of a larger effort to clearly identify the root cause of contemporary terrorism and contain the threat.

Research Method

This paper employs alternative explanations and a thought experiment as its main research strategies. These methods were selected based on the unique character of the problem under scrutiny, namely Baudrillard's claims regarding the morality of terrorism. We believe that his claims contain inconsistencies that call for further analysis, which justify efforts to generate alternative explanations. The use of a thought experiment rises from our desire to imagine a situation that does not currently exist or is not taken seriously in today's world. We intend to demonstrate that even if a certain type of situation has not yet occurred in real life, it could occur today or in the future, based on an analysis of present and past trends.

Baudrillard's two main claims to be examined, as stated above, are that contemporary terror is an act that defies morality and that to understand terrorism, we need to go beyond good and evil (Baudrillard, 2002). To construct an alternative explanation, we will begin by clarifying the contradictory premises used to support these claims and then fill the gaps discovered between Baudrillard's theory and his conclusions. After that, by a thought experiment, we will imagine a situation that could happen if both of Baudrillard's claims turned out to be true.

Baudrillard's Views on Contemporary Terrorism

Baudrillard's analysis in *The Spirit of Terrorism* cannot be separated from his explanations of the system of consumption and simulation as presented in his earlier works, *The Consumer Society* and *Simulacra and Simulations*. Admittedly, in *The Spirit of Terrorism*, Baudrillard did not present a clear definition of terrorism, but his discourse focuses on the 9/11 terror attacks, which, according to Nia (2010, pp. 33–34), can be classified under the transnational or contemporary category of terrorism. For Baudrillard, terrorism is not a distinct phenomenon from globalization; rather, it arises due to the conditions created by the West's system of consumption, which gave rise to globalization:

When global power monopolizes the situation to this extent, when there is such a formidable condensation of all functions in the technocratic machinery, and when no alternative form of thinking is allowed, what other way is there but a terroristic situational transfer? It was the system itself which

created the objective conditions for this brutal retaliation.
(Baudrillard, 2002, p. 9)

In analyzing the 9/11 event, Baudrillard concluded that the terrorists had found an effective strategy to challenge Western globalization. Through their willingness to sacrifice their own lives, they could strike a blow at the heart of the global system that, as Baudrillard explained, seeks to exclude death on their side. This motivation is what Baudrillard calls the spirit of terrorism:

They have succeeded in turning their own deaths into an absolute weapon against a system that operates on the basis of exclusion of death, a system whose ideal is an ideal of zero deaths. Every zero-death system is a zero-sum-game system. And all the means of deterrence and destruction can do nothing against an enemy who has already turned his death into a counterstrike weapon. (Baudrillard, 2002, p. 16)

Hence, then, it is all about death, not only about the violent irruption of death in real time—live, so to speak—but the irruption of a death which is far more than real: a death which is symbolic and sacrificial—that is to say, the absolute, irrevocable event. This is the spirit of terrorism. (Baudrillard, 2002, pp. 16–17)

Baudrillard also regarded terrorism as successfully restoring an “irreducible singularity to the heart of the system of generalized exchange” that characterizes globalization. He continued, “All the singularities (species, individuals, and cultures) that have paid with their deaths for the installation of a global circulation governed by a single power are taking their revenge today through this terroristic situational transfer.” (Baudrillard, 2002, p. 9)

The Problem of Morality in Contemporary Western Societies

Baudrillard’s claim is not shocking when viewed in the context of the liberal Western economic system or its practice of consumption. Several philosophers in the West, such as Alasdair MacIntyre and Roberto Unger, had predicted the weakening of morality’s influence in Western societies as liberal rationality became stronger.

Unger and MacIntyre, as explained in an article by Drucilla Cornell, directly identified liberalism as the cause of the weakening of morality in

the West (Cornell, 1985, p. 304). According to them, liberalism creates a culture in which the disintegration of moral life becomes inevitable, because of the rejection of the classical philosophical perspective (Cornell, 1985, p. 305). In classical philosophy, every object, such as a stone, a plant, or even a human being, has an essence that is intelligible to man. The main task of human beings, in the Aristotelian philosophical tradition, is to understand the essence of man and construct a reality based on nature using practical wisdom (Cornell, 1985, p. 305). From this perspective, the concept of man's essence combines fact with value. However, according to Unger, the classical understanding of practical wisdom, which centers on the understanding of relations between the universal and the particular, is foreign to the liberal mentality (Cornell, 1985). Unger further demonstrated that several paradoxes that exist in the liberal mindset, such as fact/value, culture/nature, and reason/desire, all result from the separation of the universal from the particular (Cornell, 1985, p. 306).

Liberal consciousness's separation of facts from values leads to the separation of truth from normative statements (Cornell, 1985). The end purpose of human beings can then no longer be justified, since reason can assist the individual only to develop the means to a certain end, which can be evaluated only based on its strategic usefulness within the existing system of values. The reduction of reason to an instrumental rationality destroys the idea of practical rationality and with this destruction, the classical conception of ethics (Cornell, 1985). In the end, we have a pluralistic system of values, in which even those who follow or obey the devil could no longer be condemned rationally. The acceptance of this theory of reduced rationality by Western societies has led to the rise of a moral philosophy called decisionism or emotivism, according to which all moral judgments are regarded as merely expressions of preferences or feelings (Cornell, 1985, p. 307). This trend is the logical result of the disintegration of the classical view and the advancement of a modern, liberal consciousness that rejects the validity of the functional view of human nature (Cornell, 1985).

MacIntyre, in *After Virtue*, countered the liberal argument by describing the rejection of the classical philosophical tradition as a source of great loss or deprivation (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 33). The disappearance of a telos or end purpose for human life, he contended, has caused the liberal or emotivist self to lose the criteria formerly used

to evaluate human actions. In the end, the human self can no longer discern which social relations are manipulative and which are not (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 23). This is because the emotivist, self-regards all judgments as expressions of attitudes, preferences, and choices, none of which are controlled by specific criteria, principle or value. For MacIntyre, the expression of attitudes, preferences and choices characterizes something more primitive than obedience to criteria, principles or values (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 33).

As another consequence of the disappearance of a telos from human existence, the emotivist self lacks a rational history that could explain any transition from one moral position or commitment to another. To MacIntyre (2007, p. 33), this self, devoid of both social embodiments and a rational history, possesses an abstract and ghostly character, because it is plagued by the sense of loss that arises when we compare the emotivist self to the conception of the self that prevailed in previous eras. In other words, the emotivist self has no telos, no social identities comparable to those that were considered important in premodern or traditional societies, and no specific criteria by which to operate or make moral judgments.

In the absence of moral criteria, the emotivist self cannot be identified with any particular moral view or position; instead, it is free to pass judgments or criticize everything without limitation. For the emotivist self, being a moral agent means maintaining a distance from every situation in which one is involved, and from every characteristic of the self, making judgments on all things from a perspective that is purely universal and abstract, totally separated from its social characteristics (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 31). From the viewpoint of emotivism, anybody could be a moral agent, since moral agency is located within each individual and not connected with social roles and practices. However, for MacIntyre (2007, p. 32), a self that does not have any significant social identity or social contents is hollow.

Terrorism Defies Morality

As the liberal or the consumption system becomes stronger (as in present times), Unger and MacIntyre's viewpoint suggest that morality will continue to weaken, to the point at which discussions of morality become completely irrelevant or result in irresolvable deadlocks. A deadlock in morality occurs when a person knows that a particular

action is bad or immoral but is powerless to stop it. Today, immorality is hard to stop because the people themselves are living in a system or reality that is, as Baudrillard depicts it, immoral. The immoral character of such a reality derives from the fact that it is based on the logic of the manipulation of signs and the denial of natural referents, which gives rise to the creation of illusions and myths that benefit the private companies that cater to these illusions. Such a deceptive reality causes people to internalize the immoral logic, and as this logic forms a part of their character, it becomes harder for them to be critical of it. For this reason, in a simulated reality, people can no longer differentiate things because they have become disoriented. In such a climate of disorientation and confusion, all vices prosper, including terrorism. Contemporary terrorism, hence, could be regarded as a kind of behavior that aptly understands the character of simulated reality and uses it to its own advantage.

However, we must not become trapped in this logic. Using a thought experiment, we can predict that the consequences of hanging on to the liberal logic are too dire, as this logic could push a threatening phenomenon such as terrorism beyond the limits of morality. If globalization and terrorism are both immoral and neither one is willing to change so as to become more morally acceptable, the logical result is a higher degree of immorality and cruelty on both sides. This will bring massive destruction to the physical world and humanity.

Developing Baudrillard's view, we could conclude that the immoral logic of the consumption system pushes terrorism outside morality's boundaries in the first place. This could occur because the system of consumption comes with its own set of moral values. Above the surface, traditional morality appears to be functioning at full strength, as evidenced by the countless statements of government officials in various countries who have condemned terrorism as a heinous act that must be eradicated. However, behind the scenes, the moral values in charge are those of the liberal/consumption system. How often has the United States or Israel conspired with resistance or terror groups in the past by providing them with financial support or arms? These instances of legitimate governments giving covert assistance to terror groups is not something new or even a secret (Johnson, 1992, p. 285).

So, the immoral logic of the consumption system itself causes a deadlock in morality, whereby the values of traditional morality are taken hostage by the morality of the consumption system. This causes a breakdown in our ability to assess what is good or bad in a given situation, since the construction of right and wrong is now based on the interests of the consumption system. Therefore, the structure of morality in the contemporary world suffers yet another devastating blow.

Clearly, Baudrillard did not intend to provide any justification for terrorist acts. He merely wanted to present a different view of 9/11, interpreting it not as proceeding from a clash of civilizations between Islam and America but because of the globalization process:

This is not, then, a clash of civilizations or religions, and it reaches far beyond Islam and America, on which efforts are being made to focus the conflict in order to create the delusion of a visible confrontation and a solution based on force. There is, indeed, a fundamental antagonism here, but one which points past the spectre of America (which is, perhaps, the epicenter, but in no sense the sole embodiment, of globalization) and the spectre of Islam (which is not the embodiment of terrorism either), to triumphant globalization battling against itself. (Baudrillard, 2002, p. 11)

Here, Baudrillard criticized America's attitude in decisively identifying an Islamic group as the enemy or evil without reflecting on its own conduct over recent history. Baudrillard contended that if we want to gain a better understanding of modern terrorism, we must look beyond good and evil and try to understand the problem from the perspective of evil.

However, his solution is still insufficient, in terms of the gravity of the problem of terrorism. What did Baudrillard mean by the phrase "let us go and take a little look beyond good and evil"? In his writings, Baudrillard did not recommend returning to the older form of reality, since in his view, simulation has taken over the world. The implosion or dissolving of antagonistic poles, the absence of a divergence of meaning, and of dialectical polarity, which characterize simulation, also complicates any attempt to return to reality, since all interpretations and meaning are now true and people can no longer differentiate between a fact and its model (simulation) or between right and wrong (Baudrillard, 1995). From this perspective, we could understand that the next logical

step is to go beyond the scope of morality, recognizing that both of these grand opposing phenomena, globalization and terrorism, have become immoral. Nonetheless, discerning what Baudrillard means by beyond good and evil themselves is a challenge. Does he mean that we must go beyond the bounds of our own construction of morality or that we must view terrorism as an amoral phenomenon?

An understanding of good and evil is the very foundation of any system of morality. Morality constitutes an important element of human life, as it serves to regulate actions and directs people toward achieving a good life. A good act should increase a person's quality of life, whereas evil acts should have the opposite effect. Morality's ability to regulate the acts of human beings, however, makes it vulnerable to power plays. Power resides with whoever has the ability to determine which values are good or bad. It is generally accepted that the moral values found in a particular society represent the values of the ruling class of that society. In this context, morality often becomes problematic.

In *The Consumer Society and The Intelligence of Evil*, Baudrillard warns about the dangers of the logic contained in the system of consumption, which represses and destroys all principles and values known to man. Through the interplay and manipulation of signs, principles and values such as goodness, evil, truth, and justice could be endlessly reconstructed to suit the needs of the system in power (Baudrillard, 1998). Recognition of this fact should cause us to critically question every concept that comes to us from the capitalist system.

The phrase "beyond good and evil" was first popularized by the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche in his work by this title. Brian Leiter (1993), in his analysis of the phrase, found that Nietzsche sought not to promote a particular perspective on the relations between good and evil qualities but to escape a particular conception of values and agency. Going beyond good and evil is to be understood as an attempt at the revaluation of values (Leiter, 1993). Baudrillard invites us to understand contemporary terrorism and its relation to globalization in a similar fashion, seeking to revalue terrorism through his analysis of the 9/11 event. Baudrillard is trying to say indirectly that although terrorist acts are immoral, they are quite effective in challenging the dominant forces of globalization:

It is the tactic of the terrorist model to bring about an excess of reality, and have the system collapse beneath that excess of reality. The whole derisory nature of the situation, together with the violence mobilized by the system, turns around against it, for terrorist acts are both the exorbitant mirror of its own violence and the model of a symbolic violence forbidden to it, the only violence it cannot exert—that of its own death. This is why the whole of visible power can do nothing against the tiny, but symbolic, death of a few individuals. (Baudrillard, 2002, pp. 18–19)

However, by employing another thought experiment exercise, we must ask ourselves the question what kind of a world do we live in when we go beyond good and evil or when terrorism becomes “excusable”? If people live in a world where they cannot differentiate a fact from its model or a sign from its natural referent and cannot rationally evaluate why something is good or bad, can we be optimistic of such a world?

Research Findings

In the previous section, we have seen how Baudrillard sought to revalue terrorism as a phenomenon that defies morality or goes beyond good and evil (Baudrillard, 2002). Baudrillard presented two main arguments to support his claim: terror is the only means available to the marginalized groups engaging in it, and it is effective in challenging the power of globalization, represented here by America. However, both reasons are still quite weak, as they harbor illusions that work to overestimate the effectiveness of terrorism, in particular Baudrillard’s treatment of the terrorist’s death. Furthermore, Baudrillard’s failure to see the possibility that terrorism might be caused by a hybrid of factors and not just by one particular factor such as globalization also weakens his arguments.

Terror is not the only means available to fight globalization, although it may be the easiest and quickest means to exact revenge against global forces and gain an advantage. Furthermore, the effectiveness of the terrorists’ strategy is very questionable; after all, the United States’ domination as a global power has not been shaken, whereas the terrorist groups are forced to live in hiding and exile. In fact, Verene (2007) declared that acts of terror are never effective in achieving their goals. But if terror acts are never effective in achieving their goals, why did the U.S.

launch a full-blown military response in Iraq and Afghanistan to combat terrorism, when other non-military responses were still available? Here, we attempt to offer a different explanation to the generally accepted. We argue that the response the U.S. military had to countries that were accused of protecting members of Al-Qaeda, namely Iraq and Afghanistan, was not ordered because the American government had run out of options to fight Islamic terror, as Baudrillard claimed. On the contrary, this military response was launched because it was what the American government wanted in the first place. It was a politically motivated response. It is a demonstration of U.S. domination and super power status. The 9/11 terror attacks merely justified military invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan (Robinson, 2017).

Baudrillard failed to take this view seriously because he failed to recognize that the 9/11 attacks could be a form of a political “simulation” steep in deception and manipulation of signs, meanings and interests. He failed to see the possibility that the 9/11 attacks might be caused by factors other than globalization. This echoes Coggins’s criticism of many terrorism studies that ignores the importance of political context (Coggins, 2015). Baudrillard’s approach is also peculiar when the literature on the causes of terrorism suggests that the sources of terrorism can be simple or complex (Wojciechowski, 2017). The sources are said to be simple when the terrorists have a clearly defined motivation for example anti-abortion terrorism and they are called complex when the terrorists’ motives, which could be ethnic, religious, or political in nature, overlap such as in the case of radical Islamic terrorism. In fact, the literature also suggests that sometimes the causes of terrorism might be shrouded in secrecy as in the case with state-sponsored terrorism (Byman, 2005; Primoratz, 2004). The reasons why a state provides support for one or more terrorist groups might be deliberately obscured or the state might outright deny giving any support to a terrorist group when the support is construed as too abhorrent and antithetical to democracy. Here it might be useful to include the explanation from A. Cronin who

divided the reasons for terrorism into four levels: individual, organizational nature, state activities and international system (Wojciechowski, 2017). The understanding we get from Cronin helps us to expand our understanding of the common causes of terrorism that can be political, ideological, religious, economic, social, cultural, historical and psychological in nature. This means that political, ideological, religious or other aspirations and goals can inform the individual, community, the state or the international system's decision to participate in an act of terror or provide support for a terror act or group. Understanding the hybridity of causes and the way they intersect at various levels provides us with an alternative perspective to look at the problems of contemporary terrorism from a different angle (Wojciechowski, 2017).

Furthermore, Baudrillard also appears to have been inconsistent in applying his own theories. Dismissing the involvement of America's intelligence agency (CIA) in the attacks as something not worth considering, Baudrillard instead opted for a narrower and shallow view of simulation whereby he sees the attacks only as a symbolic challenge to globalization and concludes that terror is an effective strategy. This is a serious flaw on his part. He failed to highlight the role that simulation plays on a wider scale or the political implications of simulation, as 9/11 itself occurred in a society governed by the system of consumption and its immoral logic. Viewed from this position, all general claims made about the 9/11 event by the mainstream mass media must be questioned including the identity of the perpetrators and all those who supported the operation and the motives behind the attack.

The complexity of radical Islamic terrorism cannot be overstated. The causes might be motivated by genuine political, historical, religious, ideological reasons that are endemic to the Muslim world. This includes memories of injustices suffered, disputes and animosities rooted in history, demands for state-hood, rejection of the policies of great powers such as in the case of the Palestinians, Hamas, Iran, Hezbollah, Al-Qaeda, ISIS and state

involvement in terrorism exemplified by the case of Iraq, Sudan and Libya (Wojciechowski, 2017). Nonetheless, by taking into account all the possible reasons that might give rise to terrorism we must not forget the fact that all these disputes, animosities and grievances do not exist in isolation. They reside within a global-political context that concerns major players outside of their region. This means that the disputes, animosities and grievances can be used, exploited or manipulated by other parties to further their own domestic or international objectives. The fact that U.S.'s foreign policy is deeply intertwined with events in the Middle East does not offer comfort in dispelling narratives that the U.S. government has a stake in the protracted conflicts of the region. Nor can the history of America's involvement in the region be celebrated without reproach (Gendzier, 2002). By adopting a wider perspective and multi-cause approach to terrorism, we could escape Baudrillard's narrow view of terrorism as an automatic or natural reactionary response against globalization and see terrorism as a politically constructed simulated threat aimed at preserving and strengthening the dominance of globalization and the forces behind it.

The main characteristics of contemporary terrorism therefore are violence, deception (or the sophisticated manipulation of signs), and the spread of simultaneous and global fear. Contemporary terrorism is in itself a "simulation". It is a type of terror all the elements of which are the result of a deliberate construction by certain parties who have a hidden intent and motive with no connection to the natural reality. This type of terror does not originate from a particular history or pure aspirations of a marginalized group, but it appears suddenly with a fragmented purpose. The Islamic elements in contemporary terrorism therefore must not be taken at face value as the genuine representation of Islam or its teachings. They must be seen as distorted signs or 'simulated' signs that are deliberately constructed, overstated and exploited to serve the political interest of certain parties. Furthermore, contemporary terrorism not only spreads fear and stigma worldwide but also normalize terror among the people in an attempt to make them permissive of terror (or turning terrorism into an amoral phenomenon), which will occur once all principles and values have been destroyed

or as simulation becomes increasingly more powerful. Contemporary terrorism also seeks to gradually murder civilians, carrying out a bit-by-bit type of genocide against them (Nia, 2010, p. 41).

Since Baudrillard's argument is founded on questionable premises that contain aspects of illusion, contemporary terrorism cannot be placed beyond morality as he argued. It must not be placed beyond the scope of morality, since the essence of terror itself is the application of violence, deception or manipulation, and fear in non-emergency or life-threatening situations. These three elements (violence, deception, and fear) cannot be accepted in principle as a guide to a good life for anyone. In the context of international law, the use of violence is permissible only in self-defense; authorizing any other use is problematic, controversial, and even disastrous to humanity. However, proponents of violence have attempted deliberately to blur the essence of terror, and this attempt becomes easier in the context of simulation or simulated reality. Consider the US–British military invasion of Iraq in 2003, under the false pretext of preventing Iraq from acquiring weapons of mass destruction (Jervis, 2006). If a war could be started on a false pretext, the same thing could occur in the realm of terrorism, where attacks are often carried out in the name of obscure groups and abstract goals.

Another reason why contemporary terrorism should not be beyond the scope of morality is that there is nothing beyond morality except destruction. Attempts to go beyond morality have been interpreted, as discussed above, as the revaluation of existing values. An act may be deemed morally acceptable in a particular system (which we could call system 1) but viewed as immoral in another system that is currently in power (system 2). However, if we grant Baudrillard's contention that terrorism and globalization are both immoral and if system 1 is America and system 2 is a non-American entity, then before system 2 can revalue the morality of terrorism or globalization, it must first obtain power. This has not happened yet.

Implicit in Baudrillard's statements is a yearning for a new type of system that could rectify the present condition. However, his own pessimism of returning to a truer form of reality, one not tainted by simulation prevents him from arriving at a more concrete solution to the problem. In order for Baudrillard's suggestion on how to understand

terrorism—that is to go beyond good and evil or carry out a revaluation of values—people must not be in an illusionary, confused, and disoriented state. If they are still in a confused state or under the influence of simulation, the revaluation of values cannot occur. If we view both the American system and the non-American system as immoral, as Baudrillard did, a revaluation of values could not happen, since both are of the same nature or in other words both are still under the influence of simulation. The only remaining option is the total victory of immorality, which would bring massive destruction to the physical world and death to the structure of morality, goodness, and even to humanity. The deadlock in morality would eventually lead to terrorism's normalization and transformation into an amoral phenomenon. To ensure that the situation does not progress to that hopeless condition, we must find an alternative logic not identical to either globalization or terrorism.

A rejection of the logic of the consumption system needs not occur through direct confrontation. Baudrillard has warned that simulation is a robust system with the unique capability of absorbing all forms of opposition into itself. Realism, in Baudrillard's view, is not considered radical at all in a simulated world and attacking the system head-on or dragging it into an open confrontation requiring physical strength would be a mistake (Baudrillard, 2004, p. 12). Instead, to reject the system's logic, we must bypass the system itself and directly target the individuals inside the system. Every person must reject the system's logic and maintain distance from the world of simulations. All of us must also be reminded of the purpose of life and the virtues of human existence. In this context, Aristotle's ethical theory carries relevance, since Aristotle stressed the importance of man's purpose in life and the virtues of good character. Another significant feature of Aristotle's theory is his comprehensive, holistic approach to examining every problem.

Aristotle's stress on the virtuous character of human beings also serves as a crucial support in the battle against the logic of the world of simulations, which functions by weakening people's characters at the outset and then turning this weakness into a permanent state over time. This harmful logic gains its energy by feeding off individuals' character, making them weak-willed through a poisonous combination of deception, illusion, manipulation, and the satisfaction of lust and desires. Therefore, if an individual's character could be rebuilt it would

be harder for the system to manipulate that person, thus loosening the simulation logic's grip on him or her. Furthermore, one could also loosen the power of simulation logic by restoring belief in a true reality, one not made up of simulations. A belief in genuine humanity – that is, humanity not based on desire, deception, and manipulation – would also need to be restored, followed by a reorientation of the purpose of life. Life should not aim at producing as much material wealth as possible but at achieving eudaimonia or happiness of the soul, as explained in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (2009, pp. 11–12).

On the surface, it might seem that rejection of globalization's logic and the reorientation of life's purpose would be impossible, but this is not the case. On the contrary, this is in fact the most realistic approach to containing the threat of contemporary terrorism. This solution also provides a sense of optimism to the individual, indicating that the power to counteract a gruesome phenomenon in their lives ultimately rests in their own hands and not in the system. This solution does not ask individuals to attack the system directly, but it asks all people to look inside themselves and strengthen their own characters, as a defense mechanism against the temptations of globalization and the consumption system. It is a credible solution because the real battle takes place not in the physical realm that is external to the individual but within each person's self, between our desires and our reason.

Conclusion

Contemporary terrorism should be considered as a form of simulation. In today's turbulent times, this consideration must be the starting point of any analysis on terrorism, especially when we are inquiring into its moral dimension. Failure to recognize this aspect of the phenomena will lead any analysis of terrorism astray, with devastating effects. As this study has shown, Baudrillard's claim that terrorism defies morality cannot be supported since, once we have dispelled the cloud of simulation that surrounds contemporary terrorism, we find that it still falls within the scope of morality. This claim seemed to defy morality in the first place because the threat was produced under the conditions of simulation that blur the elements of terrorism, particularly the perpetrators of terror and their motivations. Therefore, the first step toward solving the problem is to expose the presence of simulation in contemporary terrorism and confront the forces or logic that created the simulation. We must

also find an alternative to the logic of consumption, simulation, and globalization that is not manipulative in nature. Perhaps this could be an area of further study in our attempt to combat terrorism globally.

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