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The 11 September Attacks and the Fourth Wave 2.0 of International Terrorism

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Abstract

The 11 September attacks in 2001 were one of the most shocking incidents within the post-Cold War era. Moreover, its location which happened in the United States can also be translated as a symbolic warning for the liberal world order, signifying that security remains a salient topic even after the “End of History” postulated by Fukuyama. This article examines whether the 11 September attacks has changed the course of international relations. In so doing, I attempt to use “the waves of terrorism” as a framework to understand the development of different stages of terrorism. The method that I used was desk research based on sources such as official reports, previous studies on terrorism, and classic literature on international security. This article finds that the 11 September attack serves as a game-changer in international relations as it unveils the new face of the religious wave of. First, the attacks ignited a refined version of the religious wave by employing information technology, making it even more sporadic and unpredictable. Second, it reshapes international security by shifting away from the state-centric narrative, putting the terrorists as new international actors. Third, it has altered the security relations of the United States with other countries, creating new global polarisations.

Abstrak

Serangan 11 September 2001 adalah salah satu insiden yang paling mengagetkan selama era perang dingin terjadi. Terlebih lagi, lokasi terjadinya berada di Amerika Serikat bisa disimbolisasikan sebagai peringatan untuk tatanan dunia yang liberal, menandakan bahwa keamanan tetap menjadi topik yang menonjol bahkan setelah “End of History” yang didalilkan oleh Fukuyama. Artikel ini melihat apakah serangan 11 September mengubah hubungan internasional. Tulisan ini bertujuan untuk menggunakan “the waves of terrorism” sebagai suatu kerangka untuk memahami perkembangan dari perbedaan wilayah terorisme. Metode yang digunakan adalah literatur dengan dasar sumber berita, kajian terdahulu, dan sumber klasik tentang keamanan internasional. Artikel ini menemukan bahwa serangan 11 September menjadikan perubahan dalam hubungan internasional seperti membuka wajah

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baru tentang gelombang agama. Pertama, serangan-serangan itu menyulut versi halus dari gelombang agama dengan menggunakan teknologi informasi, menjadikannya lebih sporadis dan tidak dapat diprediksi. Kedua, ia membentuk kembali keamanan internasional dengan beralih dari narasi yang berpusat pada negara, menempatkan para teroris sebagai aktor internasional baru. Ketiga, telah mengubah hubungan keamanan Amerika Serikat dengan negara-negara lain, menciptakan polarisasi global baru.

Keywords: terrorism; the waves of terrorism; international relations

DOI: 10.22515/shahih.v4i1.1546

Introduction

The 11 September 2001 attacks were considerably one of the most devastating incidents in the contemporary world. The incident had caused as many as 3,000 people died as casualties, and it has also caused a significant material loss of approximately \$80 billion (Kunreuther & Michel-Kerjan 2004). As an act of terror, the attacks were deemed as highly effective in spreading fear toward the people, as they were targeting highly symbolic targets, namely the World Trade Center and the Pentagon (Kay 2006, p.229). In order to do such actions, the terrorists, who were affiliated with terrorist group Al-Qaeda, hijacked four commercial planes: American 11, United 175, American 77, and United 93 (Keat and Hamilton 2004, pp.1-10). To date, the attacks have been currently recorded as the worst terror attack since 1970 (Institute of Economics and Peace 2015).

In her article, Dudziak (2011) illustrated how big the impact was for the people. She stated that ‘the history was being unfolded’ and ‘the world was bifurcated, cut in a half, a time before and a time after (p.1). In another piece of article, John Ikenberry (2001) compared the attacks to Pearl Harbor incident, ‘exposing America’s vulnerabilities to the outside world and triggering a fundamental reorientation of foreign policy’ (p.1). Those assumptions are justified, as the United States has always been regarded as the only superpower remaining following the end of the Cold War. A series of unpredicted and unprecedented attacks, especially against a superpower state, is a major blow which might have left a deep scar of insecurity into the hearts of global citizens. On the other hand, Fukuyama (1989) chooses not to equate the end of Cold War with the absence of terrorism as an important agenda. In his famous paper “*The End of History*”, while he argues that liberalism will prevail as the leading ideology after the “death” of communism, he correctly warns his readers that terrorism would remain a salient issue even after the Cold War (p.18).

The intersection between those different angles in viewing the 11 September 2011 have led us to a conclusion that the attacks were an international phenomenon that cannot simply be disregarded when discussing international relations, especially in regards to international security. However, to what extent has it changed international relations as we are witnessing

today? Were the 11 September 2001 attacks a game changer in international relations, especially in the discourse on terrorism?

This article mainly argues that 11 September 2001 attacks were a game changer in international relations. To demonstrate which changes have been brought by the incident, this article will be divided into three sub-arguments. First, I argue that the 11 September attacks unfolds a new era of terrorism. Secondly, I assert the attacks have redefined the concept of international security. Third, I offer an argument that the attacks has altered the security relations of the United States with other countries. In the last section of the essay, I will underline the conclusion and the lesson that we can learn from the phenomenon.

There have been a handful of literature dedicated to discussing the religious wave of terrorism. Mainly, those literatures start with a premise assuming that currently we are experiencing crossroads between the “old” and “new” stages of terrorism. Giddens (2003) claims that the 11 September attacks have marked a “significant development in patterns of confrontation and violence in the current world order”. He argues that we can no longer have a conventional, state-centric approach to terrorism as its scope has been widening. He suggests that terrorism should be “combated through world-wide collaboration, both among nations, and between nations and other agencies” (p.11). Weinberg and Eubank (2010), on the other hand, argue that the current trend of terrorism has been the most lethal out of all its predecessors. Yet, they tend to suggest that religious terrorism is in a downtrend. Cerria (2017), in a slightly different focus, predicts that the religiously-inspired terrorism, “with Islam in its heart” will continue to dominate future discourse on terrorism. This article attempts to find the middle ground between those perspectives by offering that the religious wave has not ended yet, but it transforms into a more complex pattern. Thus, it is not to dichotomise that religiously-motivated terrorism is a new trend nor it is will meet its decisive end within a foreseeable future. This first section of the essay will assert that 11 September attacks served as a milestone of the emergence of a new wave of terrorism. In his article, *Four Waves of Modern Terrorism*, David Rapoport (2004) offered that terrorism is not a monolithic term, as it has evolved into different forms during our history as well. In the next sections, I will also explain how the 11 September attacks have affected the global approaches on international security.

In so doing, this research uses a qualitative method by collecting secondary sources ranging from official reports, previous studies, and relevant books regarding terrorism. This study is intended to obtain a description about the current trend of terrorism, and mapping its dynamic since the 11 September attack, and comparing it to previous trends of global terrorism in order to get a clearer vision on how do we perceive security today.

The waves of terrorism and the fourth wave 2.0

A popular saying states that “one man’s freedom fighter is another man’s terrorist”. This short phrase captured a common problem when defining what really constitutes terrorism. As a kind of asymmetric warfare which positions itself outside the state-to-state combat, the clear definition of terrorism is ever-contested and scholars have tried to come up with their best formulations. One widely accepted definition comes from the United States Department of State through the Title 22 of the United States Code, Section 2656f(d). The definition states that “terrorism” is a “premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents” (State, 2005). Cooper (2001) also tries to offer an eloquent definition by saying that *terrorism* is an “*intentional generation of massive fear by human beings for the purpose of securing or maintaining control over other human beings*” (p.883). A more detailed points are given by Ganor (2002), drawing from the survey done by Schmidt and Jongman (1988), summarising that there are eight key features in examining whether or not an act can be classified as terrorism: (1) the use of violence, (2) the existence of underlying political motives, (3) the emphasis on spreading terror; (4) the use of threats; (5) the intended psychological effects and anticipated reactions; (6) the discrepancy between the targets and the victims; and (7) the intentional, planned, systematic, and organised action; and (8) the use of it as a method of combat, strategy, and tactics (p.290).

The above definitions are useful in the sense that they have enabled us to understand that terrorism should always be differentiated from the ordinary warfare. However, the aforementioned definitions do not necessarily give us a highlight on how terrorism evolve across the history. Therefore, I utilise the concept proposed by Rapoport (2004) which states that there have been four waves of terrorism which the world have experienced.

The first wave of modern terrorism, as argued by Rapoport, was occupied by the anarchist groups. This wave represents the timeframe of 1880 until 1920 and was mainly marked by revolutionists that moved across international borders to assassinate monarchs, presidents, and prime ministers. Therefore, this wave was also called as the ‘Golden Age of Assassinations’ (Rapoport 2004, p.52). In this era too, the term ‘terrorist’ was introduced. It was when Vera Vazulich, an anarchist, designated herself as such, rather than a ‘killer’, after she wounded a Russian police (p.50).

The second wave was predominantly done by anti-colonialists and happened during 1920 until 1960. This wave was triggered by the Versailles peace treaty, a monumental event which ended the World War I. As the result of the treaty, a great wave of self-determination appeared. Thus, many European countries lost their colonies, resulting in many states born into the international world. In this second wave of terrorism, most actions were domestic ones, meaning that they occurred within the problematic areas where secession was a less desirable option. Such areas include Ireland, Palestine, and Cyprus. In this era, the term

‘terrorist’ started to be seen derogatorily, and the actors began to define themselves as ‘freedom fighter’ instead (p.54).

The third wave was occupied by the groups that Rapoport labeled as ‘new left wings’ in response to Vietnam War and Palestinian Liberation Movement. This third wave refers to a timeframe from 1960 until 1990, where revolutionists upraised against the assumed governmental oppression in their respective countries.

The fourth wave, and also the ongoing one, is the era that Rapoport classified as ‘the religious wave.’ Religion, according to him, provides a justification and possesses a power to unite (p.61). To narrow the discussion, I will only discuss the Islamic-motivated terrorism as it was the background of 11 September attacks. The Islamic wave of terrorism was started by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, as well as the Iranian Revolution which occurred both in 1979.

At this point, one question may appear: if Rapoport considered the 11 September attacks as a segment of the fourth wave, then how can we say that it was a milestone of the new era of terrorism? Answering that question, I argue that while Rapoport’s eloquent conception is still relevant in examining the ongoing religious wave, I propose that we are living in the religious wave of terror which is widening in terms of magnitude and methods. To make it simpler, I am going to label this era as ‘the fourth wave 2.0,’ combining the ‘fourth wave’ of Rapoport, and ‘terrorism 2.0,’ a term that is used by Ishengoma (2013) and Avriel (2016) to describe the extensive use of information in terrorism networks—which I am going to discuss shortly.

How can we say that terrorism is widening, after 11 September 2001, in terms of magnitude? According to Global Index Report, as cited by MacAskill (2014), the number of terrorism has increased fivefold in terms of fatality within the last 15 years. According to the index figures, the number of fatalities has steadily grown over the last 14 years, from 3,361 in 2000 to 11,133 in 2012 and 17,958 in 2013. Four most prominent groups which were responsible were Al-Qaeda, Boko Haram, Taliban, and recently, Daesh. This indicates that the 11 September attacks have opened a new window toward a more widening wave of terror. Thus, what factors trigger it to happen in a post-11 September 2001 world?

I observe that there are two distinguishing characters which make 11 September 2001 a milestone of a new era. First, was the power of information. 11 September 2001 attacks remain the worst terror attack in the information age, and according to Ronald Dick, the assistant director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the hijackers in the attacks had used the internet, and ‘used it well.’ (Weiman 2004, p.11). The advent of internet contributed to the widening scope of this fourth wave. Ranstorp (2007), said that the fusion with globalization is what makes terrorism in the twenty-first century more adaptable and complex (p.31). Al-Qaeda, for instance, has been known as using videos, CD-ROMs, and

DVDs to deliver their messages as well as to recruit youngsters (Weimann 2004, p.5). Coll and Glasser (2005), as cited by Ranstorp (2007), argued that al-Qaeda has become the ‘first guerrilla movement in history to migrate from physical space to cyberspace’. In his report, Weimann (2004) later added that there are eight roles that the internet has been playing in fourth wave 2.0 of terrorism: (1) psychological warfare; (2) publicity; (3) data mining; (4) fundraising; (5) recruitment; (6) networking; (7) information sharing; and (8) planning and coordination. It shows that terror groups are more sophisticated than they used to be.

Second, I argue that the 11 September attacks were a ‘wake-up call’ for the global jihad movements. This proposition is connected with Rapoport’s explanation regarding the origin of the fourth wave terrorism. The fourth wave, especially the Islam-driven, was triggered by two issues, namely Iranian Revolution and Soviet invasion, both occurred in 1979. The former example was a symbol that the *ummah* (Islamic community) had finally gained the momentum to seize power, reviving the hope of Islamists to attain world dominance (Rapoport 2004, pp.61-62). However, the latter illustration showed that the *ummah* had also been threatened under the Western-led world. The combination of both thus created a sentiment of unity, hence constituting the fourth wave of terrorism. Moreover, in this fourth wave 2.0, the sentiment found a new episode when the attacks on the United States, the symbol of Western hegemony, were successfully conducted. The sense of animosity toward Western hegemony then reinforced by the ‘Bush Doctrine’, which called the international society to conduct a War on Terror. It was also the event which led to the United States invasion of Iraq in 2003. Through this doctrine, the United States—represented by Bush—drew a clear line by creating a divide between ‘us’ and ‘against us’. This rhetoric, in more or less extent, shaped also the wave of terrorism in this era. This view is endorsed by Ranstorp, citing the work of Fouad Hussein in *Al Zarqawi – al-jil al-jadid lil-Qa’idah* (Qaeda’s Second Generation):

“The aim of the attacks was multifaceted. First and foremost the attacks were designed to provoke the US into declaring war on the Islamic world in order to ‘awaken’ Muslims everywhere. The radical Salafist jihadi message would reverberate across the globe, creating the conditions for mobilizing a new generation of radicals.” (Ranstorp 2007, p.34)

Hussein even predicted furtherly, that the 11 September 2001 attacks were merely a stage of a long-term terror which is going to be undertaken by radical Islamist movements. According to his article, 11 September 2001 was the first stage of the intended seven stages of global jihadism. This fourth wave 2.0 will last approximately until 2020, with ‘definitive victory’ as the aim of those groups (Hall 2005 and Musharbash 2005a in Ranstorp 2007, p.35). While it is still too early to make such conclusion, it shows that 11 September 2001 did mark something new in terrorism.

Buzan and Hansen (2009) stated as well: even though during the Cold War until the 1990s terrorism had occupied its position as an issue, it was perceived as a marginal issue

back then. It was the 11 September attacks that elevated its status into a salient international issue (p.231). Thus, it is fair to say that although the 11 September attacks were still within the fourth wave, it have been widened into a new chapter of global terrorism.

International security post-11 September 2011

Not only did 11 September attacks provide a milestone toward a more refined version of the 'terrorism fourth wave', it has also provided a new debate regarding how we address international security in the era where terrorism has been growing even more multifaceted. In his famous article, Francis Fukuyama (1989) postulated 'the end of history' or a post-Cold War era where liberal values prevail as the remaining ideology in the world. As the result, as he argued in the beginning of his essay, peace can be attained—a position that aligns with democratic peace proponents like Keohane (1984) and Ikenberry (2001). However, according to Cox (2008), such assumption was disturbed by the occurrence of 11 September attacks, a moment which 'effectively brought the post-Cold War era to an end' (p.85). Dinh (2002) also suggested that the 11 September attacks have created a new dichotomy for Americans. Since the incident, they have been torn between protecting national defense or securing civil liberties (p.1). In another article, Buzan and Hansen (2009) stated that the incident has shocked the traditionalist approach on security, as it could not 'envisage attacks on US soil using box cutters and civilian airliners – nor had they any premonitions that these events would engender two major US-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq' (p.229). To deepen the analysis, I am going to refer to the work of Buzan and Hansen (2009) regarding what changes have been brought into the contemporary international security issue in the wake of 11 September attacks.

First, it moved our concentration from a traditional state-centric security. This is not to say that state-centrism has been obsolete, but there is now a widening scope on how security should be perceived. Currently, security provides more agenda for non-state actors. Barkawi (2004) underlined two ways that change our perspective in security studies after 11 September 2011.

“The first is the ways in which the new threats have arisen from, and develop in and through, long histories of interaction between the West and other parts of the world. The second is how these threats interact with the societies and politics of the West, not least by fostering a self-perception that prevents a full understanding of the situation.” (p.2)

In another article, Stubbs (2002) believed that 'the definition of security has once again been narrowed' and 'issues such as the promotion of democratization, respect for human

rights, and problems with environmental degradation appear, at least for the moment, to have been put on the back-burner' (pp.178-179).

Terrorism and the US-led global regime

Next, it altered the grand security strategy of the United States, which resulted in the change of its relations with other world powers. I examine that we can see this through two lenses, namely conflict and cooperation. First, we can examine the facet of conflict. As I have underlined beforehand, the War on Terror has created a clear distinction between 'us' and 'them'. In the 'Bush Doctrine, this was manifested through a development of pre-emptive military actions against the declared 'axis of evil': Iraq, Iran, and North Korea. Iraq, being the first target, was invaded in 2003 to oust the regime of Saddam Hussein (Rogers 2013, p.229). However, this military actions created new problems, such as domestic insurgencies and issues with refugees who tried to flee Iraq.

The next lens is regarding how the United States cooperate after the 11 September attacks. For instance, I am going to use two cases as illustration: (1) the United States' relations with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and (2) the United States' approach to terrorism in Central Asia. Those two cases can be used to elaborate how 11 September attacks have reshaped the relations of the United States with its allies. Ikenberry (2001) asserted that the 11 September 2001 marked a new introduction of a new international security strategy that is led by the United States. Defining the post-incident as 'the age of terror'. Thus, in the post-Cold War era where the United States prevails as a hegemon, Ikenberry believes that the phenomenon opens a new opportunity for the United States to work together with its international counterparts.

NATO, as the trans-Atlantic ally of the United States, was affected immediately in the wake of the 11 September attacks. Before the attacks, core political issues like strategic cooperation was pushed aside by other peripheral issues like environment and health. However, the attacks have put the strategic alliance into relevance, as it 'demolished the myth that the alliance between Europe and America was no longer necessary or possible' (Gordon 2001, p.90). As a response, NATO, redefined its Article 5 regarding its alliance with the United States to make it more relevant to the United States' War on Terror agenda. Initially, the Article 5 merely stated that 'attack on one ally would be treated as an attack on all', never expecting that such attack could appear from non-state actors like terror groups (Gordon 2001, p.89). Thus, by request of the Unites States, NATO added eight agendas into the Article 5 of NATO. All those agendas were aligned with the War on Terror, namely: (1) enhanced intelligence sharing, both bilaterally and within NATO; (2) blanket overflight clearances for the US and other NATO aircraft; (3) assistance to allies and other states that might be subject

to terrorist threats as a result of their cooperation with the United States; (4) measures to provide increased security for US facilities in Europe; (5) backfilling certain allied assets in the NATO area that might be required elsewhere for the campaign against terrorism; (6) access for the United States and other allies to ports and airfields on NATO territory; (7) the deployment of standing NATO naval forces to the Eastern Mediterranean; and (8) the deployment of NATO airborne early warning-and-control systems (AWACS) to US airspace so that American AWACS could be used abroad (Gordon 2001, p.93). Those two dimensions of the United States security strategy have illustrated that the game of international relations, to some extent, has been reshaped after the 11 September 2001 attacks.

Next, another case from which we can see the shifting approach toward terrorism by the United States is in the Central Asian region. Prior to the end of the Cold War, this region was regarded as a political backwater due to its inclusion in the Soviet Union region with Moscow was regarded as its centrum. Currently, this region comprising independent states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan has been viewed as the new contested region by the United States to advance its security agendas. Moreover, the region is proximate to Afghanistan, a territory which was regarded as the birthplace of the terrorism fourth wave due to the existence of Taliban and, obviously, as the base of Osama bin Laden who was deemed as the mastermind behind the 11 September attacks.

MacFarlane (2004) describes that the relations between the United States and the Central Asian region can be viewed in three stages. First was right after the Soviet Union had dissolved. The Washington's agenda in this era was mainly to transfer its liberal values including "democracy, human rights, and economic liberalism" by injecting foreign aids in the region. However, this stage did not have a further military or security-related agenda as the region remained of peripheral interest for the United States (p.450). Second, the United States' interests changed in the mid 1990's when it had viewed the region as a potential alternative source of energy besides the Middle Eastern countries. Therefore, the second stage was more busied with the creation of export routes, particularly in the Caspian Basin area. Lastly, the third and probably the latest stage of United States' interest in Central Asia emerged following the 11 September attacks. In this stage, the primary interest of the United States has been to contain the influence of terrorism by enhancing cooperations with Central Asian countries. The transnational nature of the current wave of terrorism has made it even more complex for the United States to just concentrate on one particular state only. The United States have then reacted to this issue by installing military facilities in Kyrgyzstan (Manas) and Uzbekistan (Khanabad).

“...Central Asia was seen not merely as a platform for operations in neighbouring

countries, but as significant in its own right as a potential breeding ground for terrorism, a perception that was enhanced by the close ties between Al-Qaeda and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), and by the latter's incursions from Afghanistan and Tajikistan into Kyrgyzstan in 1999 and 2000. The deepening of US strategic engagement in Central Asia was accompanied by sizeable increases in assistance to the region." (MacFarlane 2004, p.454).

In her commentary, Hill (2001) highlights the important of Central Asia in the "war on terror campaign" propagated by the United States. She cites the domestic instability of the states following the demise of the Soviet Union, leaving the members within the region as weak states with "their own problem of terrorism". During the late 1990's, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan were troubled by the existence of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, an Islamist terror group which were affiliated to Taliban. Now, the problem is more rooted with the terrors being linked to Daesh. A research by Lemon (2018) indicates that there have been a considerable number of foreign fighters from Central Asian states taking part in Syria. Developing his own dataset, he estimates that there are approximately 2,500 to 4,000 foreign fighters from Central Asia fleeing to Syria as the part of Daesh. This indicates that Central Asia is extremely important for the United States in its program to curb terrorism in the region, perceived as spillovering from Afghanistan to the neighboring member states, worsen by the existence of Daesh in the western part of the region. Therefore, the priorities in this region has shifted from promoting market economy an liberal values from consolidating security with the Central Asian states, building state institutions and cooperations which are more resilient to terror threats.

Conclusion

Concluding this essay, I am going to reassert my argument that 11 September 2001 were a game changer in international relations. Firstly, is because the attacks have marked a more widening version of the religious wave of terror. Secondly, is because the concept of security has been altered in the wake of the attacks, where non-state actors like terrorists cannot be marginalized anymore. Last but not least, is because the United States, the victim as well as the remaining superpower, has adapted its course of international relations in the wake of 11 September attacks. It intensified its cooperation with its allies in terms of security, and at the same time, it drew a clear line with the so-called 'axis of evil' in the War on Terror. While the debate can still occur regarding the significance of 11 September 2001 attacks, one thing that we can to agree upon is that we should not take globalization for granted. A more open world does not only mean a more opportunity, but it also means that security is getting more complex to ensure.

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