

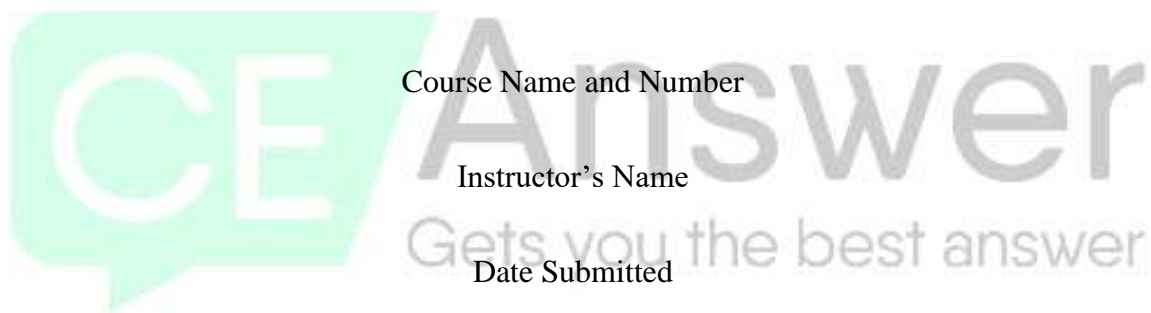
Terrorism or Criminal Act?

Student's Name

Course Name and Number

Instructor's Name

Date Submitted



### Terrorism or Crime?

Dylann S. Roof, a South Carolina man, attacked a church whose congregation was predominantly black in 2015, killing nine people. Roof, who once associated with white supremacy by wearing its symbolic patches, was charged with hate crimes, prompting outrage from the black community (Borgeson, 2018). Moments after Roof's judgment, the US Attorney General, Loretta E. Lynch, defined hate crimes as the initial form of domestic terrorism. Terrorism is a contentious issue which faces contemporary society. However, the definition of actions is more troubling as it allows a government to take action while illustrating the seriousness of the issue to the public. Though Islamic terrorism has occurred in the past, many modern acts of violence, are committed primarily by far-right extremists (Borgeson, 2018). Traditionally, it was easy to define terrorism as it did not reflect a large section of Western societies, mainly Caucasians. Recent events, nevertheless, indicate a shifting tide in terrorism with violent acts being propagated mainly by white supremacists. In this manner, governments have been forced to discern whether they are willing to overlook acts of terrorism, describing them as violent acts by loners, or label them as terrorism, integrating minorities within western culture. As earlier stated, terrorism is a belligerent term, where the essay seeks to explore the subject with regard to the US and its strategies when dealing with the racially charged term.

Max Fisher, in an article published in 2017 named *Terrorist or Disturbed Loner? The Contentious Politics of a Label*, describes terrorism as both a political and social issue. While Fisher deems it necessary to address every problem, the racially charged 'terrorism' has elicited multiple debates from scholars and the public since 2015. Various organizations and governments have developed a myriad of ways to solve terrorism, however, definitions are difficult to deal with. For instance, the best way to mitigate domestic terrorism is by using the normal police response to criminal activity. In this scenario, criminal activities would not be

labelled as terrorism as that would require a more severe reaction. Furthermore, military action is not possible in this situation, where the US would be defending its citizens against other US citizens. As such, military intervention would escalate problems, rather than eradicate them, if integrated into a domestic violence issue. Conclusively, the nation should use comprehensive socioeconomic strategies to enhance protection and curb acts of violence (Borgeson, 2018). Nonetheless, before dispatching help, governments face the challenge of labelling, where a terrorist attack would warrant increased attention and support from the public and government. Minority groups have been considered as the problem in the past, prompting widespread hate campaigns that have resulted in numerous terrorist acts against them (Doering & Davies, 2019). The government should take a pro-minority approach when dealing with terrorism as it would illustrate increased support from the government when fighting terrorism.

### **Potential Effectiveness**

#### ***Normal Police Response***

Firstly, minority groups would be outraged, as in Roof's case, when a white supremacy crime, fitting the legal definitions of a terrorist act is labelled a hate crime (MacFarquhar & Goldberg, 2020). A normal police unit would be dispatched to deal with any form of disturbance within the area, ensuring that the public is not engaging in any wrongdoing. On June 19th, 2017, a man attacked a crowd of Muslims by attempting to run them over with his van outside a mosque in London. A normal police response unit was sent to ensure that Muslims going to the mosque felt safe. However, while the British government responded to the incident by terming the driver, terrorist, many others have been excused as hate crimes (Doering & Davies, 2019). For instance, in the US, President Trump claimed that there were good people on either side of a racial demonstration involving white supremacists and minorities (MacFarquhar & Goldberg, 2020). When a government does not define issues

similarly for every race within its borders, it appears to classify some of its people as second-rate citizens, placing their wellbeing below that of whites. Terrorists win if they can cause strife between individuals of different races living in a country. The use of normal police to deal with far-right extremists cannot work in the US as the minorities view this as stratification based on race.

Normal police responses are also likely to incite more violence from far-right extremists as the government appears to take their side by using minimal force to deal with them. Fisher claims that Islamist terrorism has been dealt with differently when compared to terrorist acts conducted by white individuals. While the Muslims are defined as a collective unit and deemed the reason for isolated criminal acts, white supremacists get away with their criminal acts. Governments fail to assign crimes conducted by primarily by white people as terrorism acts, leading to mislabelling of the issue (Borgeson, 2018). In subsequent periods, more white supremacists conduct acts of terror, where minimal response by the government, by using police, dehumanizes minority groups. Such actions make people doubt if they belong in a place as they are treated differently. Governments should call terrorist acts by their name despite the issues reflecting a bad image of white societies. Despite the fear of losing elections, individuals in seats of power should call out acts of terrorism to prevent the occurrence of similar incidences in the future.

### **Socioeconomic Strategies**

#### ***Inclusivity***

The US was founded by immigrants, nonetheless, the nation's history is marred by periods of immigrant hatred and government support of far-right extremists. To begin with, most of the citizens in the United States come from nations that have been chastised in the past. For instance, the Chinese, Japanese and Irish have experienced significant pressure from the US to leave the nation. Other communities such as those with African and Native

American descent living in the US continue to be largely discriminated against by the government due to a faulty security system (Borgeson, 2018). It is important to understand that the nation's politics have been continually intertwined with its racist past, where politics is still shackled to many years of systematic degradation of some social groups. The Ku Klux Klan (KKK) will be used to illustrate the connection between government and discrimination, where far-right extremists continue to perversely perceive their actions as service to their country.

The KKK was first discovered in 1865 as it sought to incite violence against African-Americans in politics, conducting acts of terror. Introduction of federal laws to protect individuals against such acts suppressed the Klan's growth, showing the relevance of government intervention to mitigate terrorism (MacFarquhar & Goldberg, 2020). The first KKK was defeated due to relevant terms being ascribed to their actions. While they sought to 'purify' the nation, federal laws prevented their growth, protecting African-Americans from acts of terrorism. In subsequent periods, the KKK would use government dissent to wedge communities apart, where it operated from 1915 to 1944 and from 1946 to date. The United States has failed to create any new laws to make it easy for law enforcement to crack down on KKK members whose activities could be labelled as terrorism (Doering & Davies, 2019). For instance, the KKK frequently uses murder and violence to incite racial tension. It is also opposed to the Catholic church, questioning its political influence. Therefore, as it uses violence to propagate its political and social messages, the KKK could be defined as a terrorist group. However, as earlier expressed through Trump's speech about 'good people on either side of the conflict' after a far-right extremist killed protesters for minority rights in Virginia, 2018, the government's response to the KKK is mute (MacFarquhar & Goldberg, 2020). By allowing an active terrorist group to operate within the nation, there will be

continued acts of violence involving white supremacists as they get emboldened by the government's silence.

Furthermore, it is important to analyse the issue from the perspective of minorities as they are at the wrong end of the terrorism argument. White supremacists have predominantly targeted blacks and Muslims, instigating acts of violence and murder against them and their families. The United States continually describes terrorist acts conducted by white supremacists as hate crimes. In this manner, they demean the crime, an issue that has led to movements such as Black Lives Matter (BLM). It is interesting to note that far-right white supremacists harassed supporters of the BLM when they protested the seriousness of demeaning terrorist acts to hate crimes and were not arrested or charged with any offense (MacFarquhar & Goldberg, 2020). Similarly, the government is quick to deem a Muslim violent act as terrorism but is hesitant to label a white supremacist violent deed as terrorism (Fisher, 2017). The blatant dangerous double standard has caused a rift between the police and minorities, where they see themselves as being deemed second rate citizens.

Nevertheless, inclusivity could be achieved by integrating community action with government legislation against terrorism. To begin with, the US government has to develop an accurate definition of terrorism to cover everyone. Moreover, the nation, as well as other Western countries, should discern the difference between radical groups and the mainstream population. The reason that the US finds it hard to define local terrorism as such is because of the stigma associated with the term 'terrorist'. In the past, the nation, as well as other Western countries, have developed a negative and swift retribution attitude towards Muslims. While the past has elicited a vague reason for far-right extremists to spark public spite for the religious group, contemporary terrorism bears a new face, white supremacy (Doering & Davies, 2019). However, as the government and American public are quick to stigmatize every member of a terrorist's race, they find it difficult to shun terrorism while maintaining

their positive image. By accepting that far-right extremists are committing acts of terrorism, the nation would in effect be calling out white people for using hate crime to mask terrorism. Many government officials cannot afford to make such a move as it would be tantamount to political suicide. The American population would not want to be labelled as a terrorist-ridden country; therefore, the American double standard comes into play once more. By straddling Muslims and other minority groups with terrorist labels based on a few isolated cases as well as actions by radical groups, the US cannot adequately deal with terrorism without confronting its majority population (Fisher, 2017). The US government can only deal with domestic terrorism in one way, accepting white supremacy as a catalyst for terrorism and cracking down on the hate group, KKK.

Terrorist acts committed by white supremacists should be labelled as such before any substantial progress can be made to combat domestic terrorism. In this manner, US government officials should alleviate any notion of politics when addressing the issue, focusing on providing a stable community for future generations. Eradicating the effectiveness of double standards in the US should be a major concern for its administration. Rather than develop techniques to fight terrorism based on a one-sided analysis, the US should accurately label terrorist acts, enabling them to tackle domestic issues with greater ease (Piazza, 2016). Minority groups want the government to label violent acts by actors such as the KKK and other far-right extremists as they are, without applying the double standard. By developing a fair system of evaluating crime, the government would illustrate its willingness to protect every citizen equally. Denying the power of white supremacists by showcasing the government's support for their victims in violent crimes is mandatory when creating a fair law enforcement system for terrorism (Danzell, Yeh, & Pfannenstiel, 2016). Individuals are more likely to gauge their actions before conducting acts labelled as terrorism

if they would be prosecuted as terrorists. Proactive government action helps mitigate the harmful effects of allowing far-right extremists to operate unimpeded by the law.

### ***Military Action***

It is important to use military intervention when far-right extremists conduct acts of violence and terrorism. The military's role in a racial conflict would be to mitigate rising tensions between opposing forces. Moreover, as far-right extremists are likely to continue employing devastating tools to instil fear in their opponents, military action is necessary to prevent civilians from being harmed. However, military action is determinate on the situation at hand. While there are isolated incidences of terrorism, many take place as part of a larger scheme developed by terror groups such as the KKK. The group has been aptly named as such due to the violent nature of its actions, where it continues to use fear as a political tool against minority groups in the US. The KKK has been responsible for government dissent, fuelling the growing divide between democrats and republicans in the nation. Nonetheless, if the group and others of its nature used peaceful means to demonstrate their issues, they would be hate crime groups. However, since they frequently kill and torture people to advance their political and social power, the KKK fits the definition of a terrorist group (Danzell, Yeh, & Pfannenstiel, 2016). Military intervention would be helpful, in this case, as it would involve looking for KKK members and arresting them as one would al-Qaeda agents. Far-right extremists should be shown that the government will hold them accountable for their actions, using the military to round them up. When people are held accountable for their actions, others with similar ideas may deviate from implementing them as they fear that they would be prosecuted.

### **Appraisal of Necessity for Additional Federal Protective Measures**

The US legislative measures on security should be increased to deal with rising terrorist threats. Individuals have shown that the law, when applied strictly and fairly, is



followed. For instance, while white supremacy prevailed well past the 19th century, the KKK remained disbanded until 1915. Therefore, despite the overwhelming support for racial dominance, the gruesome acts of the group could not be tolerated. As such, it would be prudent to assume that contemporary KKK would respond easily as they have a smaller following of citizens than their predecessors. In this manner, rather than avoid the issue, the US would benefit from the introduction of new laws and legislation aimed at protecting any group of people from harm (Doering & Davies, 2019). Bodies such as the KKK should be declared illegal as they propagate hate crimes and terrorism while any group that intends to remain active is to be vetted in terms of its tolerance and previous activities. Nonetheless, deviation from the rules that govern domestic relations would result in strict punishments to prevent subsequent bodies of similar nature from being formed.

It would be prudent to boost the number and capacity of police officers operating in the US to curb terrorism. The US has been focused on external terrorism, building military equipment and training its troops to handle enemy combatants in other regions with ruthless efficiency. However, the nation continues to suffer from many domestic terrorist attacks, where many people lose their lives every year to terror attacks (Danzell, Yeh, & Pfannenstiel, 2016). The inaptness of America's domestic terrorism radar illustrates the low nature of its concern for such issues. However, recent events have illustrated a growing divide between left-wing and right-wing politics, necessitating government intervention to prevent civil unrest. As violent attacks against people of minority groups intensify in the US, the nation should boost its law enforcement capacity to handle the increased problems. Rather than intensify its external protection, the US should be concentrating on lowering the number of gun shootings by examining its gun acquisition laws. It should also boost the number of law enforcers as the nation's population continues to get diversified. More diversity in the nation

provides a larger target for far-right extremists, thereby necessitating greater police presence to prevent the prevalence of violence incited by terrorists.

### **Increasing Governmental Powers to Enhance Security**

There is a necessity for increased governmental power to boost security, where its increase would not erode civil liberties. Cracking down on white supremacy may sound extreme as it would, in theory, upset an individual's rights. However, a person's rights should not violate another person's liberties. Therefore, despite continuous claims by far-right extremists that their actions, aimed at degrading others, are within their constitutional rights, the government should quell this notion (Danzell, Yeh, & Pfannenstiel, 2016). Individuals cannot have liberties that overlap with those afforded to other people. In this manner, racist actions are a breach of the constitution, where extremist actions involving violence and often killing, should be considered as terrorism. Many white supremacists claim that it is within their constitutional right to conduct parades as well as other activities that showcase white supremacy. However, one should consider if another offensive group tried to conduct similar activities. Pro-Nazi groups are offensive to the Jewish community while confederate heroes offend the black community. Governments should have increased power to bar groups such as the KKK from operating smoothly. Moreover, increased scrutiny into the activities of the KKK would reveal its members as well as its primary concerns. It would be prudent to assume that the KKK has a political motive, eliminating any support for the left while propagating Nordicism, that is, white supremacy and rarity.

Increased governmental power would allow law enforcement to collect information on and monitor every group that operated within its jurisdiction. Civil liberties are impeded if the government collects and uses information derived from people without the civilians' permission. A government system that did not adhere to the double standard set in the US and other western nations would help eliminate racial bias (Danzell, Yeh, & Pfannenstiel, 2016).

Moreover, its citizens would trust it with increased information and management to enable it to operate without any issues. In this manner, a government cannot maliciously use its power. It would only happen if the far-right extremists were involved in governance. Trust in a government with integrity and fairness is easy to build as the citizens accurately perceive the government as fair and entrust it with their information. While the contemporary American government is not fair as double standards are applied in many aspects of operations, it would be prudent to afford it with more information.

In conclusion, terrorism is a complex and belligerent problem facing contemporary society. While societies in the past defined the act using vague words, modern terrorism has been elicited in different societies. The US far-right extremists test the definition of terrorism, where their actions cover every aspect of the heinous acts but are regarded as hate crimes. Some communities in the US feel like second-rate citizens as their societies have been criticized due to isolated terrorist acts as well as radical groups claiming to speak for the community. The US should provide its law enforcement agencies with increased powers to gain information and prosecute criminals as terrorists. Nonetheless, increased governmental power should be a signal for those in power to protect every American equally, rather than leaving the black community and Muslims to the wrath of white supremacists.

## References

- Borgeson, K. (2018). Right-Wing Domestic Terrorism. *Terrorism in America*, 26–35. doi: 10.4324/9781315456010-3
- Danzell, O. E., Yeh, Y.-Y., & Pfannenstiel, M. (2016). Determinants of domestic terrorism: An examination of ethnic polarization and economic development. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 31(3), 536–558. doi: 10.1080/09546553.2016.1258636
- Doering, S., & Davies, G. (2019). The Contextual Nature of Right-Wing Terrorism across Nations. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 1–23. doi: 10.1080/09546553.2019.1598390
- Fisher, M. (2017, June 19). Terrorist or Disturbed Loner? The Contentious Politics of a Label. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/19/world/europe/politics-terrorist-label.html>
- MacFarquhar, N., & Goldberg, A. (2020, January 22). A New Face of White Supremacy: Plots Expose Danger of the ‘Base.’ *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/22/us/white-supremacy-the-base.html>
- Piazza, J. A. (2016). The determinants of domestic right-wing terrorism in the USA: Economic grievance, societal change and political resentment. *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 34(1), 52–80. doi: 10.1177/0738894215570429