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#### Points of Discussion Around 09/11: Terrorism and Tourism revisited

This essay argues that tourists are not just coincidental victims of terrorism. Instead tourists and terrorists articulate and interpret a dialectical relationship between states and global capital. In this respect, tourists and terrorists are inextricably intertwined. Moreover, tourists are labeled as worthy victims because of their class and status, with status largely related to nationality so tourists from some countries are more worthy victims than those from others, and nationality status varies with nearness to the centers of capital.

Keywords: Globalization, Capitalism, Fear, Terrorism, Tourism

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### Introduction

In recent decades, specialized literature has focused on the impacts of terrorism in some industries, such as tourism and hospitality. We propose in this essay to take a different viewpoint, and argue that tourism and terrorism are inextricably intertwined. The dialectic of terrorism involves not only rebels but also the state in an atmosphere of hate. What is important to discuss here is the message of terrorism and how it impacts the targeted victims. Moreover, under capitalism people hold diverse worth depending on their productive-power in the context of broader, inter-class asymmetry. This difference undoubtedly seems to be determined by the proximity of victims to capital. Terrorism is prone to create victims according to a hierarchal logic. Our main thesis in this essay is that terrorism-related effects depend on the targeted victims and not by the means employed. Tourism plays a fertile ground for terrorism. Contrasting the classical belief that tourism brings peace and prosperity, this essay not only explores the root of terrorism and the pervasive nature of tourism, but the message it tries to create in public opinion. In this vein, tourism, as many other service or leisure-related industries, represents a fertile platform for potential attacks. The logic of tourism is based on hedonism (as the expression of all pleasures) and entertainment. This seems to be exactly what concerns terrorist cells (no matter the culture or historical period). Taking advantage of the decline of disciplinary power of states in context of tourism and leisure, terrorism creates a discourse, which will be examined here. Understanding how this discourse is nourished we may study the connection between tourism and terrorism. We argue that terrorist attacks prosper in conjunction with tourism.

# **Understanding modern Terrorism**

The events of 9/11 prompted many countries to adopt policies to reinforce security especially at their borders. Terrorism affected many industrial activities in the United States and beyond. Some specialists focused on the connection between terrorism and international



trade (Barro, 1991; Pollins, 1989; Abadie and Gardeazabal, 2003; Phillips, 2008). Those countries which had previous problems with terrorism, such as England or Spain, aligned immediately with the US in a global war against what they called "the axis of evil" (Altheide, 2009; Bassi, 2010). The governments posed terrorism as the great challenge of the next millennium. Terrorism became a buzz word that inspired movie makers, editorials, journalists, and the culture industries. A clear definition of 'terrorism' seems in order, but it turns out that it is not so easy to formulate one. Robertson (2002) defined terrorism as the primary security threat for the West in the 21st century. Upon review, Pedahzur et al. (2003) found 22 different definitions used by the US government alone. Schmid (1983) found 109 scholarly definitions in his study. Certain common aspects among most definitions include violence, force, politics, fear, terror, threat, psychological effects, victims, and extortion.

Moreover, causes for terrorism are even more diverse. Some neo-conservative scholars point to the weak role of the United States as a superpower in the world. For them, a solution would be to conduct top-down preemptive policies by the United States in other countries. They point to hate against the West encouraged by Muslims.(Fukuyama, 1989; Huntington, 1993, 1997; Kristol and Kagan, 1996; Vargas-Llosa, 2002; Rashid, 2002; Kepel, 2002; Keohane and Zeckhauser, 2003; Susstein, 2005; Pojman, 2006). Other scholars argue 9/11 presented the opportunity for some privileged groups to manipulate the citizenry's fear to create a new kind of internal indoctrination (Altheide, 2006; 2009; Sontag, 2002; Said, 2001; Holloway and Pelaez, 2002; Zizek, 2009; Bernstein, 2006; Baudrillard, 1995a; 1995b; 2006; Kellner, 2005; Gray, 2007; Smaw, 2008; Fluri, 2009; Corey, 2009; Wolin, 2010; Skoll & Korstanje, 2013).

At a first glance, Goldblatt and Hu (2005) define terrorism as the illegal use of force or violence against persons or their properties in order to intimidate their government, the citizenry, or any other segment of society. However, this modest definition has many



problems. Some privileged groups in democracies exert similar or greater violence against others with downright impunity. Furthermore, Bernstein (2006) argues that democracy is more than a ritual accomplished every four years but a style of life. Existent Power paves the way towards voluntary domination epitomized in a vertical stratification; it relies on necessary abilities of human beings to transform jointly their own environment. In this vein, Skoll (2007) agrees with Zizek that terrorism works as a virus going from one to other hosts in so far as it is predisposed to infect an unprepared victim and so forth. Scholars should make the pertinent endeavors to prevent this virus from continuing to propagate. Schmid contends that "the terrorist victimization is often perceived by the terrorist as a sacrifice. The sacrifice can consist of attaching innocent people from the adversary's camp or of a terrorist blowing himself or herself up in the midst of a group of guilty enemies. In that case, he sees himself as a martyr. The dimension of martyrdom links it to the activity that some scholars see as the most fundamental form of religiosity: the sacrifice" (Schmid, 2004, p. 210).

Moten (2010) explains that terrorism is a very difficult concept to grasp. Even, over years different meanings of terrorism have competed in the social sciences.

It is useful to distinguish between the object of terrorist acts and their target. The target refers to those whom terrorism is designed to influence, whereas the object is composed of its victims. In the case of asymmetric warfare, the terrorist actors usually want to influence organizational actors by victimizing members of the general populace (Skoll 2008). Therefore, terrorism should be understood as psychological warfare that relies on fear and intimidation.

Black (2004) said that terrorism is a highly moralistic act intended to exert social influence. Terrorist attacks express grievances by aggression. Handelman (2013) complements this view, explaining that terrorists often defend themselves from a much broader violence, rooted in a supra-structure preceding their acts. As Ghandi said, "Poverty is



the worst kind of violence." The self-destruction is at least an act of sacrifice, self-sacrifice for others. For Handelman (2013), terrorism is a result of late modernity, and consists in civilians killing other civilians beyond state control. In this context, travelers are vulnerable simply because they are caught unwary when they fly from one point to another. The technology that characterized the West has been directed against it. If the previous form of violence went from a state to another state, terrorism seems to be at the opposite pole. It appeals to the fight of civilians with decentralized organization against other civilians.

# Tourism and terrorism in perspective

One might speculate that tourists encourage peace, because they only want to know more of other cultures. They are not conquerors. Moved by curiosity, they provide fertile sources for international understanding. Terrorism and other forms of violence represent a serious threat to the hospitality and tourism industries. Several studies focused on the relationship of terrorism and tourism as well as the perceived risks of travelers regarding certain foreign destinations (Somnez, 1998; Weber, 1998; Domínguez, Burguette and Bernard, 2003; Aziz, 1995; Floyd and Pennington-Gray, 2004; Gibson, Pennington-Gray and Thapa, 2003; Kuto and Groves, 2004; Essner, 2003; Araña & León, 2008; Bhattarai, Conway and Shrestha, 2005; Goldblatt and Hu, 2005; Tarlow, 2003; Prideaux, 2005; Yuan, 2005). Clearly, tourism has been one of the industries most affected by terrorist acts. Terrorism determines the way travelers garner information and draw images of their destinations (Peattie, Clarke and Peattie, 2005). Because of their unfamiliarity with the visited destination, travelers and tourists are often targets of diverse crimes. Some terrorist cells attack tourists with a double-message. On one hand, they inflict a sentiment of panic in the public opinion of the victims' countries of origin. On the other, they undermine the citizenry's trust in the state. Of course, any destination combines risk aversion with risk



attraction factors. As Lepp and Gibson (2008) put it, this industry seems to be circumscribed by two contrasting tendencies, sensation or novelty seeking and risk aversion. The type of psychological personality of tourists plays a crucial role at time of determining the perception of risk. West (2008) considers the terrorist attacks in 2003 to Western tourists in Bali. They have been memorialized by the Australian Press as the archetype of terrorism, comparing this event with 9/11. This means that collective memory and crises are inextricably intertwined in the national discourse. Postmodern nationalisms legitimize travel as a universal benefit to human kind which should be defended at any cost. Similarly, the narrative of terrorism emphasizes that enemies of democracy utilize foreign tourists precisely because of their vulnerability, as acts of cowardice.

Bianchi (2007) argued that tourism revolves around risk perception, which acts as conducive to the interests of some industrialized nations and to the detriment of the periphery. The ongoing state of insecurity created by the so-called "terrorism" corresponds with a political logic of exclusion and discrimination against otherness. The bridge between white (tourists) and non-white (migrant) travelers has been enlarged. Paradoxically, studies in risk perception themselves threaten the goal of security they encourage.

To what extent does terrorism affect the tourism industry? Castaño (2005) presents the arrival statistics from 2000 to 2003 in some cities that had been targets of terrorist attacks. Questioning the hypothesis that terrorism threatens tourism, he points out that cities like Mombasa, New York, Madrid, London, Bali, and Cairo have experienced notable declines in tourism, but they recovered in few months. Terrorism may potentate tourism by means of dark tourism—i.e. terrorism tourism. Castaño argues that terrorism as a process is reversible. No matter the original impact on public opinion, given some unspecified time frame, what today generates fear, tomorrow will entice thousands of tourists.



Vukonic (2010) explores the importance of tourism in the Middle East. The Muslim World has suffered many changes caused by the advance of modernity and tourism. Although some countries keep a friendly relationship of cooperation and diplomacy with the West, others, like Iran, keep an atmosphere of rivalry and conflict. What remains clear for Vukonic and the extant literature, seems to be that Western travelers are sometimes attacked not only taking advantage of their lack of familiarity about the environs they visit, but also the cultural values they represent.

Throughout the Middle East and beyond, developing countries adopted tourism as a primary industry to adjust some economic asymmetries resulting from problems of governability, corruption, and bad administration. Although in the short run, tourism brings fresh investments to host economies, states can develop a dependency on the tourism industry. Terrorists and insurgents may take advantage of this situation to affect the destination image. This way, they not only attack the state but also jeopardize its economy.

Grosspietsch (2005) says that under some conditions the acceptance of tourism in host countries is troublesome. As a global industry, tourism not only creates a serious economic dependency between centre and its periphery, but also paves the ways for political instability. Terrorism may flourish in these types of landscapes. As in Aziz's (1995) argument, he says that tourism triggers terrorism, combining a bundle of negative effects on the socioeconomic fabric.

### **The Tourism Terrorism Nexus**

What are the similarities between terrorism and tourism? Wars arouse a sentiment of nationalism. (Young-Sook, 2006). The sacralization of certain sites after a terrorist attack or certain battles can be commoditized as a sacred place. This aspect might be studied under the name of dark tourism (Strange and Kempa, 2003; Miles, 2002; Stone and Sharpley, 2008;



Smith, 2010). If to some degree, tourism tends to mitigate the effects of wars by converting the employed artifacts into sacred-objects to be exposed daily in a showcase, in recent years sites related to horror, torture, tragedy, battles, and concentration camps have emerged as prime tourist destinations.

Starting from this premise, Korstanje & Clayton (2012) enumerate some commonalities between tourism and terrorism, ignored by the specialized literature up to date, such as a) the insensibility for the suffering of others, b) the curiosity for places of mass-death, and c) employment of mobile technology and tourist means of transport to perpetrate the attacks. Although terrorism and tourism may be framed in two opposite construes, the same logic persists: the exploitation of others. What tourism facilitates is the commoditization of people, cultures by means of consumption. Rather terrorism recurs to the employment of violence to exploit others. If tourism leads human beings to poverty and pauperization, terrorism channels that situation of vulnerability into human-bombs.

Terrorists have damaged tourism for many reasons. First and foremost, tourists represent the values of their respective societies. In the terrorist-view, First World tourists are deemed responsible for the situation of poverty their people face. Secondly and most importantly, damage to tourism engenders serious psychological impacts on states. Rebels are sometimes forced to be terrorists when they are excluded from the voting system. Without public representation in politics, terrorists rely on violence as the only dissuasive mechanism. Whenever their goals are less important than the life of others, the attacks are beneficial. Subhumanization or demonization are two aspects that converge in the terrorist mind to trivialize their acts. Thinking that a tourist is an evil-doer (a takfir which means traitor) or the representative of the Anglo-Empire is a subtle way not to be judged as a criminal. Targets of terrorism are carefully selected to send a political message that has nothing to do with religion. The mobile world, for better or worse, represents the pride of Europe and the United



States. Coulter (2012) acknowledges that terrorists do not want the obligation of a community or the mass-destruction of a city; they seek to humiliate their enemies. Humiliation corresponds with one of the most effective tactics. The attack on the World Trade Center, 9/11, exhibits the success of the individual. Suicide represents the individual effort of self-annihilation to destabilize the world dominating political system. One of the most troubling aspects of modern terrorism is the introduction of an atmosphere of panic, which proclaims that nobody is safe at anytime. Political life since the Cold War showed not only the authority of state, but also its capacity to forecast threats. With the advent of postmodernity, this atmosphere of eternal tension between two super-powers has set the pace to a new climate where citizens are exposed to threats from diverse groups. The state can no longer protect its citizens. What is important to discuss here, is why tourists are selected as live targets of terrorism in the Middle East and beyond. Secondly, what are the different psychological effects of terrorism? Terrorism opens a paradox, it signals to what Baudrillard called the theory of reversibility. Any attempt to fight against terrorists engenders the opposite effect, creating further fear which destabilizes the system.

The following model provides a fresh alternative to understanding how the terrorist message impacts the political system according to the vulnerability of the victims. Tourists are privileged actors of capitalist societies. They not only are holders of capital, or at least relative wealth, but ambassadors of their respective cultures. Damaging a visitor seems to be a blow with deep-seated consequences in popular imaginaries against the tourist-sending country. This raises an interesting dilemma. While some tourists avoid dangerous destinations, others feel attracted to them. Four variables are combined to create risk-perception in a terrorist-context.

- a) Residency to the proximity of the attack.
- b) Felt cultural bonds underlie which destinations are perceived as safer than others.



- c) Nationality is self-negotiated to enable some fears.
- d) Individual personality determines to what extent the terrorist-attack entices or repels tourists.

# **Perception and Reality**

The following explores the connection between the perception of danger and real risks of damage. Although terrorist attacks affect, unlike other risks, the integrity of tourists, the message has more impact. There are two relevant aspects: the probability of real damage and the impact on the social imaginary. While the former measures the real danger, the latter one evaluates only the psychological effects on the audience. This idea suggests that terrorism has depends on the media.

The psychological impact of terrorism in the media and on the audience is based on three points: a) control threshold, b) probability of repetition, and c) the status of the victims (Table 1). The control threshold refers to the ability of the system to predict the time and place of the attack. The probability of repetition measures the mobilization of resources to prevent traumatic events. The probability of repetition is proportionate to the effects of events that cannot be avoided. Finally, whenever victims are valorized by their high social status, the impact on the social imaginary is greater than cases where low status people are affected. This explains, for example, why some Western tourists are of greater value to terrorists than thousands of Palestinians.



Table 1 – Psychological impact of terrorism

<b>Control Threshold</b>		Probability of Repetition	<b>Targeted victims</b>
	Impact		
Low		High	Tourist
	High		
High		Low	Tourist
	Low		
Low		Low	Tourist
	High		
High		High	Tourist
	Low		

Nationality is a variable that correlates with the amount of fear. If tourists are American or British, representing the Anglo alliance, the impact is greater than if victims are Argentines or Brazilians. Also it matters whether the victims are tourists or local residents. For example, when the control threshold is high as well as its probability of repetition, the impact is paradoxically low simply through a process of normalization. For those events that are constantly repeated, the audience becomes inured to the event and its original impact is undermined. Therefore, natural disasters are more fearful than terrorist attacks. However, terrorist cells attempt to improve and innovate on their tactics to expand the attention of public opinion.

#### **Conclusions**

Tourists are intertwined with terrorism because they are part and parcel of world capitalism and Western imperialism. Sometimes tourists are attacked by dissident groups as a means to affect national policies. More often, tourists and the tourism industries act as logistical agents in deploying capital exploitation and imperial control. Tourists and terrorists are the human actors in a dialectic between capital and the state.



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15



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