

INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES: THEIR ROLE IN COMBATTING TODAY'S TERRORISM

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Overcoming the huge definition problems about them, today's terrorists are, unquestionably, one facet of our society's enemies. Their efficiency varies, but it is included in the duties of society's defence mechanisms to evaluate it proactively and decisively.

At the moment, as the generally accepted agreement about the growth of this "industry" (to use one of the most provocative –but for sure most labelling- approaches about terrorism) shows, the aforementioned society's mechanisms have been at fault in not a few cases.

In other words, the decades existing and declared goal that "there is a long race which has to be run before it can be said that the phenomenon of terrorism has been contained" not only continues to have effect, but in today's world is more intense than ever.

Intelligence agencies are the first and the last line in our society's defence mechanisms. Within a democratic society these agencies is expected to be efficient enough to protect society's interests. This necessarily, leads to the acceptance of the assumption that the society knows its interests; furthermore this means that the society not only knows its "interests" but is willing to protect them.

Hence, there is a need society to record its enemies. Meaning people or groups of people whose "policy" [reasons are to be examined] is to destroy society's structure. As enemy policies vary, society's response should also variform, miscellaneous and –in most cases- multifarious. The Intelligence "apparatus" plays a key role in such efforts.

Timely, incisive intelligence analysis is difficult and will always be so. The "errors" on the intelligence agencies are unavoidable and –when they are guileless or unintentional- should confront society's tolerance and understanding, due to the nature of the intelligence task.

The answer to such "errors" should be a re-examination of the existing principles of governing the intelligence agencies leading to the establishment, within intelligence agencies, of a carefully defined standard of organization.

The "effective intelligence" should, always, be the aim of these efforts. Today's "terrorism" is not an aberration that quickly pass. Therefore, the answer to the Intelligence' community

errors should not be, in any case, the abolition of the existing intelligence agencies and the underestimation of their role in the decision making process. In addition, assertions such as the argument that Intelligence agencies violate constitutional liberties rather than serving society's efforts at combating terrorism are fruitless. It is worth nothing to ask if proceedings such as the "secret activities", propaganda, and psychological warfare are useful or useless, good or bad.

In a semi-"anarchical" global political system where "differences" among countries (although, the term "governments" seems more accurate..) often require threats and use of armed violence to be resolved.., the existence of propaganda and Intelligence activities becomes inevitable. They are considered as different kinds of "weapons" in the hands of governments which are used to struggling for progress, development, or simply their survival. Indecision and confusion only play into terrorist hands.

On the other hand, someone trying to hide or underestimate the fact that in their effort to combating -especially- the last years' trends of transnational terrorism, the Intelligence agencies use clandestine-collection methods. These methods, in a democratic society are closely controlled and regulated by severe and specific laws and regulations provided both by constitutional and criminal common law. We should not hesitate to accept and understand that these methods should be used sparingly but not excluded.

However, clandestine-collection methods, even when properly managed, are politically sensitive, hazardous and expensive. For each one and for all of these reasons governments used to adapt a "multifaceted" program for their intelligence gathering and analysis needs. The existing experience selected from the most important Intelligence agencies' apparatus give us the additional information that these agencies not only follow a "multifaceted" approach but also operate their activities under an "interdepartmental board" as the principal tool of succeeding in their role.

Although theoretically sound, the above mentioned participatory concepts design fails to recognize the intricacies of real-world agency distrust and parochialism. The reluctance to share information, to coordinate efforts and to guard individual jurisdictions has provided an environment where agencies conduct independent and overlapping effort. This is due, partly, to the association of internal security with law enforcement which links the collection of information to prosecution rather than to evaluating trends in long-term planning of resources and responses.

After the last months' experience of the concatenated bloody episodes it seems more obvious that a non-interdisciplinary and non-coordinating effort runs directly counter to effective security. Academics, researchers, practitioners, experts, have identified glaring organizational weaknesses in the leading levels of intelligence policy making. Even worse, the establishment of an effective response to terrorism using intelligence sources poses difficult issues for free nations of the world.

Contrary to the assertions of those who argue that intelligence agencies serving a democratic government cannot fight terrorism without violating constitutional rights there are some "safeguards" that assure responsible intelligence actions. Apart from the most evident and constitutional ones (President of Democracy or Prime Minister, Parliament etc.), a timeless "safeguard" remain the rigorous selection - training and supervising of intelligence personnel,

which limits possible abuses of authority. In addition, the threat of severe punishment for those within the intelligence community who would violate the law will always constitute another “safeguard”.

However, the last point is very controversial and as such cannot be a generally acceptable rule. Unfortunately, in the operational world of intelligence, there may, and probably will, be times when the balance tilts against democratic principles. But no Intelligence agency wishes to be accused of harassment in the present climate of affairs.

The question about what our society might be prepared to permit as response terrorism is a crucial problem; there is no simple answer to this question.

Society has to find a means to preserve itself without harm its own principles. But above all, society has to free the hands of those who has been entrusted the use of tactical countermeasures against the today's' terrorists.

Therefore, it seems as necessity a number of very specific areas require review and proper regulation. If Carlos Marighella was right saying among other that “...each person should know only what relates to his work...”, then may Sun Tzu's opinion “...any war is based upon cunning...” could be the cornerstone for a proper “answer”.

Let us hope.... Till then we should work harder for both a more socially sensitive society but more decisive to its reply when needed.