



WRITINGS ON TERRORISM.

Ernesto López. 2005. Buenos Aires, El Prometeo. Pp. 138. ISBN 950-9217573.

REVIEWED BY

Maximiliano Korstanje *

The linkage between tourism and terrorism is not new. During the expansion of Roman Empire, riots and revolts appealed to hurt foreign Roman visitors in remote provinces such as Germany, Judea and Gallia. Travels, in ancient times, were not only symbols of social distinction but also made of travellers a vulnerable target simply because of their ignored the conditions of the territory were wandering through. For that, one might argue that tourism (in some sense) and violence has been inextricably intertwined in history. The travel, in this vein, engenders the possibility of an encounter with otherness that not always is nice and pleasant. Ethimologically speaking, hospitality and hostility share a similar root.

Writings on Terrorism seems to be more than a book; it constitutes an interesting effort to deal with a slippery matter which recently posed as a serious challenge for West

* Ph.D. Department of Economics, University of Palermo Argentina. E – mail: maxikorstanje@fibertel.com.ar.

worldwide in next years. In this valuable work, Professor Ernesto Lopez achieves to place together four well-written papers authored by Octavio Ianni, Khatchick Der Gousassian and Hector Saint-Pierre who jointly explore the connection of terrorism, religion, fear with September 11. All though these papers can be read separately, but as a whole they follow a similarly-minded argument respecting to terrorism, mobility and modernity.

The first chapter examines the roots of terrorism from a sociological perspective. Starting from the premise that the spirit of terrorism mutates from one State to other at time US exert the violence, O. Ianni suggests that terrorism should be defined as a performance of political violence wherein some or more interests are at stake. Terrorism is not an end itself but the necessary (imagined) means for the achievement of certain goals. Basically, Ianni argues that Anglo-Saxon fundamentalism that has been given origin to the war-on terror, initiated by George Bush's Administration, is a result of the pseudo-thesis of ever-expanding boundaries and the state of exceptionality. Both myths historically posed to American people in a difficult position. For one hand, unlike other countries American society remained impermeable to the most pervasive effects of terrorism until the World Trade Center's attack. Up to this tragedy, Americans were unfamiliar of the news and politic issues beyond the boundaries of their countries. In other terms, being American was a right of exclusivity often associated to a mass-form of consumption. Leisure and consumption were to key-factors that reinvigorated such a gap generating certain resentment and despair in peripheral countries. On another hand, predestination and pietism played a pivotal role in the need of material and symbolical expansion of US in the world.

In foregoing, Ianni explains that efforts to destroy the political terrorism from Middle-East have profound counter-effects for US since the current policies against terrorism replicates a similarly-minded dogmatic spirit. The main focus of Prof. Ianni to this work is the linkage between history as well as the manipulation of narratives and power-will. At a first glance, it calls for an immediate necessity to define what terrorism means. The terrorism as a conceptual connotation bespeaks not only to the behaviour of certain insurgents group but also of fear of privileged groups who recur to these terms whenever someone defies their interests. Quite aside from this, it is clear that terrorism is based not only on a wider fear but a sentiment that after all does not recognize visible boundaries. Secondly, H. Saint-Pierre delves into the meanings of terrorism that can be defined as a form of political violence surfaced when one of involving forces has not the strength enough to direct an overt attack. As the previous argument given, terrorism can be examined following a model based on three facets: a) tactic, b) strategic and c) politic. Whilst the tactic facet of terrorism refers to the fact of gaining more attention from State achieving as maximum of victims and destruction as possible, the strategic level operates in a symbolic spectrum wherein survivors and spectators experience a deeper sentiment of invulnerability because the event reminds that the State was unable to protect the citizenship from an outsider attack.

The vulnerability of potential victims is of paramount importance for terrorism because of two main reasons. The first and more important is that victims represent the impotence of nation-state to defend their own flock. Secondly, the symbolic effects of terrorism work in conjunction with fear and panic precisely of people who had not been touched by the event. The ever-increasing sentiment of discontent, despair and fright lead

to the State to accept the terrorist's claims. This is exactly what Saint Pierre means by the politic-aspect of terrorism. The vulnerability of western-tourists often is highlighted as the precondition for terrorism to shorten the axis of power to negotiate directly with the State. Most likely, the vulnerability of the citizens is the primary criteria of terrorists to select their potential victims but not the only one. Tourism, mobility and mass-consumption are considered forms of corruption characterized by the moral declination of West. This means no other thing what Western tourists represent for terrorists is associated to an undesired presence of a dominant-power in holly-land which will be repelled.

Even if Saint-La-Pierre warns that there are two types of terrorism whose interests not always are in convergence, terrorism should be considered as an attempt to call attention by the imposition of violence. Whilst systematic terrorism asks for specific demands by selecting a short range of victims for their attacks (see for example ETA or IRA), random-terrorism seeks the maximum degree of destruction of properties loss and human lives (this is a clear example that aims to Al-Qaeda and 11/9 attacks). It is important not to loose the sight that unlike random-terrorism which wants to destabilize a previous political order, the systematic-terrorism opts to fight for a territorial autonomy defined by specific interests and methodologies.

The third and fourth chapters cover how historical roots of Sunnis exerted influence on the expansion of international terrorism in the world. This does not mean that Sunni Islam promoted terrorism but indirectly it paved the pathways for the advent of the necessary sentiment of discontent that terrorism manipulated to erect its foundations. The Muslim's World is comprised by two contrasting religious tendencies, Sunnis who are interested in the communion of all believers and reject the possibility to be installed in a State (see the example of Al-Qaeda), and Shiites who are prone to be affiliated to elites and Status quo (see the example of Iraq). Whereas the latter looks for the legitimacy and the political power, more universal, as necessary vehicles for improvement, the former one has much broader and ambitious goals. One of the aspects of Shiite Muslims is the resistance before the hegemonic powers. Following this, Lopez realizes that two events encouraged the islamization of terrorism in last decades: a) the invasion of Russia to Afghanistan, and b) the religious riot and coup of 1979 in Iran. Even though one should accept before World Trade Center more than 50 attacks have been made, it was not later than 90 whenever they should be based on the apprentice of religious dogma. From a sociological perspective, Lopez explains that the Coram particularly emphasizes on the connection of religion with politics. This integral vision of life corresponds with a much profound need of integration (*tarwhid*) which gives coherence to what predicted Mohamed. This prophet, an aspect which is widely known the historians, fought repeatedly for installing the Islam in the Arabic Peninsula.

However, the term *jihad* was circumstantially misunderstood by West in the threshold of time. To some extent, jihad does not mean fight in the strict sense of the word. This term refers to an eternal spiritual quest for the excellence that characterizes the life of believers. For further details, anyway The Coram encourages the fight against betrayers, liars and unbelievers who receive often the name of *takfirs*. This mandate has been misjudged by some Western Scholars in recent years. But in some extent, this explains the

hate against tourists and practitioners in tourism and hospitality. Specialized literature have certainly emphasized on the role played by house-keepers, hoteliers and professionals of tourism as main target of suicidal attacks.

Quite aside from this, the point of entry in this more than interesting debate was linked to the fact not only this dogma was present in Islam from its own foundation but also remained up to date to give to some groups certain legitimacy to existent practices. Struggle and efforts were two of the mandates to reach the *umma* (known as a state where the community of all believers lives in harmony). From an historical perspective, let us remind readers that assumptions of this calibre were surely coined in a moment wherein the Mohamed scrambled with other neighbours to impose the Islam alongside the Arabic Peninsula. Although once Mohamed has gone these points were being subtly shifted, they exerted considerable pressure in the life of Muslim societies.

One might speculate that Islam can be deemed as a conservative response to the advance of dominant-powers. This begs an interesting question, ¿who would be such a power?. Of course, the wide range of interpretations of these beliefs is plausible to be manipulated for some groups whose private interests have nothing to do with religion. The attacks of Soviet Union to Afghanistan enabled these defensive beliefs in order to call all Muslims-warriors to the jihad in order for invaders to be repelled. Of course, the Soviet Union's invasion not only jeopardized what the Muslim world knows as *the Umma* but also emulated the need for a broader defensive strategy to be articulated. A hit of this calibre waked up the Muslim world from a longer slumber. Thousand and thousand of youth were conformed in a list at time they were recruited to be part of this holy-war. This list has been net that encompassed all these potential warriors was the ancestor of Al-Qaeda. Afterwards the collapse of Soviet Union, Al-Qaeda and Afghanistan witnessed how United States negotiated with different neighbours lucrative contracts to improve their monopoly of oil and gas in the region. A couple of decades later the financial and military assistance of US to Afghanis, Bin-Laden claimed overtly that –a former ally- United States become perverted its own heart because of pride and arrogance. This was one of the primary triggers for an outbreak of violence against American targets in Middle East.

In recognition to this, everybody is familiar in the way how Bin Laden utilized the advances in technology and commercial airplanes against civil targets in the World Trade Center attacks. The cultural issues which gave basis on Al-Qaeda's onset, is brilliantly addressed by Professor Lopez who confirms that there is a point of convergence between Muslim Terrorism and Saint Inquisition in Middle Age. Both were politic-based measures aimed to correct the behaviour of deviants in terms of faith. Nonetheless one should keep in mind whilst the Spanish inquisition has been definitely buried, the concept of Jihad is being contextually evoked ever and ever again as a doctrinal background to legitimate current political claims inside the Muslim World and beyond.

Undoubtedly, this book constitutes a valuable endeavour not only for analyzing the terrorism but also by understanding the sociological, historical and religious aspects of terrorism and fundamentalism inside and beyond Middle East. Ultimately, even though this book is not necessarily centred on the tourism as a primary object of study, it represents a good and serious academic research that should be continued in next approaches. At least,

Korstanje, M.

this work constitutes as an insight endeavour to shed light on the existent connection between tourism, mobility and terrorism.