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# 18<sup>th</sup> CENTURY ANARCHISM AND ITS EFFECT ON MODERN DAY DOMESTIC TERRORISM

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of Honors

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## *18<sup>th</sup> Century Anarchism and Its Effect on Modern Day Domestic Terrorism*

For centuries, terrorism has plagued nearly every nation on the planet, no matter what kind of government it falls under. The problem has not gone away, and terrorists are only growing smarter and more dangerous as more technology becomes available. A common question is why terrorists do what they do, which is commonly answered by explaining these individuals' or groups' beliefs. Terrorism is best defined by U. S. Legal Code as “premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combative targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents.” The Federal Investigations Bureau defines terrorism as “the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, a civilian population, or any segment thereof in furtherance of political or social objectives.” Terrorism can be divided into two scopes- foreign and domestic. Foreign terrorism is defined as “the unlawful use of force or violence committed by a group or individual who has some connection to a foreign power whose activities transcend national boundaries, against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives,” while domestic terrorism is described as “groups or individuals who are based and operate entirely within the U.S. and its territories without foreign direction and whose acts are directed at elements of U.S. Government or population” (White 2012).

Terrorism itself is an ever-changing, ever-evolving term as history changes and technology advances. The word as defined by someone in the 1800s versus how it would be defined now are vastly different. Terrorism itself is a social construct and therefore carries its own set of consequences when used in certain ways. The label of “terrorist” can shatter a person or group's reputation and present life-changing stigma for them and their families. In calling a group a terrorist group, governments gain power and their civilians lose some, as they are then placed in a position where they are more likely to be monitored and kept under scrutiny. A pair of prime examples of this are the way the Israeli and the Lebanese view one another. The Lebanese view Israel's flying of jets over their airspace as acts of

terrorism, believing the acts to be a show of military power over the Lebanese and to make them feel threatened (Croft and Heller 2010). Meanwhile, the Israeli believe the show of force to be necessary in keeping the Lebanese at bay.

Historically speaking, terrorism itself was not coined as a term until the late 1800s during the French Revolution. The term came about when the French government terrorized French citizens during the war. Directly influenced by the success of the American Revolution, The French Revolution began due to both the spark of the ideas of “freedom” brought about by the American Revolution as well as a large issue with inherent class differences that were starting to make themselves apparent. The power struggle between the wealthy nobles and the working class poor was becoming more and more evident as the lower classes began to starve to death while the nobles were feasting. These two factors fueled the revolution, and spurred civilians forward to march on Versailles and to overthrow the monarchy. In the wake of the overthrow, the Committee of Public Safety formed. This “committee” was nothing more than a group that committed acts of terror upon nobles and their families as those in charge of it sought to eradicate the upper-classes. From these acts of terrors and marches on noble families, the term 'terrorism' was coined. There were 17,000 legal executions at this time, and it is believed that there were at least an additional 23,000 illegal executions (Tilly 2004). This time period was the start of the term we know today as 'terrorism' and began what would lead to today's use of the word, something vastly different from its original meaning and use.

Today, terrorism focuses mainly on the definitions given from the FBI and within U.S. legal code. When the average person considers the term 'terrorism,' attacks like those on 9/11 on the World Trade Center come to mind most often. Terrorism has evolved rapidly since the start of the term during the French Revolution, but the original term can be comparable to the definition of modern day domestic terrorism. Attacks from within the nation upon the nation's own citizens and government rings true for both uses of the term. However, modern day domestic terrorism does not focus on acts of terror performed by groups in power. These groups or individuals that perform acts of terror are generally

politically or socially motivated and stem from disagreement with a group of people's social or political ideologies. Domestic terrorism began in the U.S. as early as the 1800s when large companies would use terrorist tactics to keep workers in line and to keep labor ongoing. Labor radicals lashed out in violent ways, and the entire labor movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was nothing but a violent spree among Americans. Another source from the same early time period was in the western frontier at the time. Vigilante justice became a serious issue in some places, to such an extent that it may even have been terrorist in nature (Bell and Gurr 1979).

According to Bell and Gurr's studies on early roots of domestic terrorism, it is believed that domestic terrorists took ideas from left-wing radicals in foreign nations. Terrorists in the Middle East and Asia directly influenced nationalist and political extremist groups in the U.S. However, unlike foreign terrorist groups, the violent movements never caught on in the U.S. Without this popularity, these groups remained in the minority and typically remain under the radar. In order to better explain the way domestic terrorism began to split amongst the few and far between American revolutionaries, Gurr devised a classification that divided domestic terrorism into three main groups that consist of vigilante terrorism, insurgent terrorism, and transnational terrorism. Vigilante terrorism is defined as the desire to return to older roots and statuses of earlier time periods. Perfect examples of groups of this nature are white supremacy groups who seem to strive for a time when white people were predominantly in power and there was less equality for minorities. The second category is insurgent terrorism, defined as terrorist groups that are aiming to radically change political ideals by attacking and harassing the government. Examples of this group include nationalist groups from Puerto Rico and black militants. Transnational terrorists The final category is transnational terrorism, defined as the occurrence of nonindigenous terrorists crossing national borders. This is most often demonstrated when American groups are inspired by foreign terrorist groups or when these foreign groups target the U.S. itself (Gurr 1988).

The next topic to be discussed is anarchism- what it is, how the movement began, and why it is

relevant to terrorism in the first place. Anarchism developed out of Enlightenment ideas the same as democracy did, but anarchism took more time to split off from democracy and become a movement alongside socialism. It was not until the 1800s that radical democracy began to crop up in the Western world. While France dealt with Napoleon, the United States and United Kingdom both flourished in democracy and the ideas spread across Europe. Germanic states were beginning to make their own stands for democracy and were met with violent resistance. An umbrella term labeled socialists, communists, and anarchists under radical democrats. These individuals often sought fast, incredible change in not only government freedom but in the handling of social situations such as distribution of wealth. Anarchists, at their very core, desire to greatly reduce or erase government altogether. Capitalists were seen as the enemies of democracy by the radical democrats, who found no difference between them and royalty in monarchies. Radical democrats wanted economic equality as well as government freedom, and the ideals were heavily tainted by the violence of the French Revolution and Reign of Terror. Out of these movements, the spread of democracy was rapid. By 1848, most major European nations had been shaken either by revolution or unrest. France had its government overthrown, and other countries were starting to take note and follow suit. However, power increased for middle classes, but the working class continued to suffer from little improvement. Radicals who desperately wanted to change the class structure but were unable to push past the government and achieve anything fled underground after having their efforts crushed (White 2012).

Socialists and Anarchists both had similar ideas on how to organize and handle wealth and the class structure, but anarchists had vastly different ideas when it came to how government should be handled. Greek philosophers were the ones who originally theorized about the elimination of government, but the influence of class structure discrepancies and distribution of wealth influenced the original ideas behind anarchism to form the definition of the term in the 1800s. While a few anarchists were all about a peaceful approach to their ideals, many others were not. Anarchists around 1848 held more nonviolent ideas of how demonstrate their ideals. By performing mass demonstrations, strikes,

and other group acts, they felt that they would gain more attention from the government rather than acting out as individuals (Laqueur 1999).

This demeanor of anarchist movements changed in the 1880s as anarchists began assassinations of political leaders. These violent acts were sensationalized by the media and lumped socialism and anarchism in with terrorism. This change came about by massive amounts of new followers in the anarchist movement that did not follow the original nonviolent ideals that the older anarchists held. Anarchism as a whole began to split into separate groups of beliefs, with many groups that leaned toward violent means rather than peaceful. As anarchistic ideals increased, so did police crackdowns. The repression only seemed to add fuel to the fire among the violent anarchists. Anarchists began to lobby for political killings and other violent means to destroy government systems. Violent anarchists continued to spread the idea that governments and politicians would fall to their ideals with acts and threats of violence. As bombs and dynamite became available, their rhetoric only grew stronger, and the public began to fear what anarchists had to say. The invention of the bomb and other explosive devices began a turning point in violent anarchistic acts (White 2012).

The philosophy of the bomb began to drive modern ideas of terrorism into motion. A prince of Russia, named Peter Prokoptin, who was an anarchist who heavily influenced some schools of anarchist thought, trying his best to spread the ideas of nonviolent “traditional” anarchism (Woodcock 2004). However, other big names in the anarchistic movement disagreed with any nonviolence. Mikhail Bakunin believed that bombings and assassinations were the only way to dismantle the state and to get the public's attention (Epstein 2001). Karl Heinzen, a radical German anarchist, moved to the United States in the mid 1800s and began to publish his writings in a radical newspaper entitled *Freiheit*. He called for violent action and agreed that nonviolent approaches would do nothing to change the state of the government (Grob-Fitzgibbon 2004). It is believed that these anarchists were the purveyors of modern day domestic terrorism.

Nationalists grew out of the anarchistic movements and away from them, though they, too, were

labeled as terrorists by society. Nationalists did not take on the ideals of anarchists, but did liken to their methods of using bombs as a means to an end. Nationalists instead believed that they were fighting for their countries rather than for destruction of governments. While they vary in ideals, anarchism and nationalism go hand in hand in terms of their impact on modern day terrorism. Their justifications were nearly exactly the same (Rubenstein 1987). Looking into the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and their actions can help illustrate the connections between nationalism and anarchism in terms of motives and the movements' influence on terrorism. The IRA wanted self-government in Ireland, and because they were severely disadvantaged, they resorted to terrorist tactics to achieve their ends. The IRA, like anarchists and other nationalist groups, reject ideas of socialism and relate more to one another than do anarchism and socialism. Nationalistic terrorism is a product of anarchism (Bell 1976).

Anarchism ultimately failed and nothing came of the movements, but the groundwork for terrorism was already laid by this point. The next big movement that influenced terrorism was the revolution beginning to spark in Russia in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The reason that the West held such a terrified view of Russia and communism was the way that the revolution sparked. Class differences had remained the same even after all of the revolution in France. The ever-widening gap between the nobles and the peasants grew, and the lower classes began to rise up and fight back, adapting anarchistic policies to get their point across.

The starting point was with the People's Will. The group championed violent revolution and urged its members to rise up to fight against oppression with terrorist actions. The more challenge the the group was met by, the more the group felt they needed to subdue these organizations. Bakunin and Sergey Nechaev were the speakers for the beginning of the anarchistic terrorist movements in Russia, with both proposing violence as the best means to achieving their idealistic goals. Russian anarchists varied greatly from Western anarchists in that they tended toward encouraging everyone to fight against government and wanted to spark a revolution on a grander scale (Laqueur 1999). The People's Will used Nechaev and Bakunin's words to fuel the fire, moving on to kill police officers and begin bombing



and murder sprees. They eventually met their goal and killed the Czar of Russia at the time, Alexander II. However, the succeeding Czar squashed their group and sent them underground during his reign (White 2012).

The next Czar, however, was not prepared to deal with revolutionaries and the growing economic problems in working-class Russia. Russia lost its war to Japan in 1905, and demonstrations began in St. Petersburg while a mutiny occurred within the Russian navy. While all of these uprisings were quickly put down, it did nothing to diminish the fuel adding to the soon to be fire. World War I was the additional spark needed for a wide-scale revolution in Russia, where in 1917 workers were joined by the Russian army in revolting against the Czar, where the combination formed the Workers Councils. The Germans then helped Lenin rise to power in order to remove Russia from the war, and the Bolsheviks overpowered the Mensheviks who were in power at the time and kept Russia in constant states of war (White 2012).

Lenin and a lieutenant named Leon Trotsky both believed that terrorism was necessary for their rise to power and eventual revolution. Like in the Reign of Terror, they believed that violent means to suppress the middle-class and upper-class was the best approach, and that terrorism could be used to keep them down after they were crushed. Because of this, terrorism and communism seemed to go hand in hand. Lenin's terrorist views inspired modern day terrorism as well (White 2012).

Now that the roots of anarchism and terrorism have been explained, the discussion of modern day terrorism can begin. A major portion of today's terrorism from within the United States comes from right-wing extremist groups. The first major right-wing hate group was the Ku Klux Klan, who were originally meant to uphold southern culture and traditions, but quickly moved out from under the control of the founder, Nathan Bedford Forrest. The group began to attack slaves and picked up steam after World War I furthered distrust and hatred Americans had for foreigners (Berlet and Lyons 2000). Afterward, in the 1930s, a new religious extremism began to form from Christian identity, forming Anglo-Israelism. Americans thought themselves as descendents of the lost tribes of Israel and began to

spread and preach these ideas. Two believers of this concept formed right-wing extremist groups. Potter Gale formed multiple organizations including Posse Comitatus, and Richard Butler was responsible for forming Aryan Nations. Christian Identity proved dangerous for those of non-white status, and even demonized Jews to the point of encouraging violence against them (Stanton 1991).

Modern day right-wing extremist behavior seems to center around the idea that some outside force is out to destroy the “American way of life” and that their freedoms will be taken away from them. The Jews are conspiring with the United Nations to create a new monetary system and these extremists believe they must arm themselves and prepare to fight a holy war (Barkun 1997; Berlet and Lyons 2000).

Most early disturbances caused by right-wing extremists was not labeled as terrorism but as criminal activity, most commonly in the form of hate crimes or tax evasion (Hamm 1994). Three major issues brought about the resurgence of right-wing extremism (Stern 1996). The Brady Bill, which put gun control laws into action, moved extremist views further away from Christian Identity and white supremacy and further toward conspiracies that the government was out to take their guns away and control their gun rights. The next issue was the failed attempt at arresting Randy Weaver, a white supremacist and firm believer in Christian Identity for selling illegal guns to ATF agents by U.S. Marshals. Known as the Ruby Ridge incident, Weaver failed to appear on his court date, and when U.S. Marshals went to draw him from his cabin, a shootout ensued. A U.S. Marshal and a son of Weaver's were killed, and a few days later an FBI sniper killed Weaver's wife (Walter 1995). This event was seen as an aspiration of sorts for right-wing extremists, who looked up to men like Bo Gritz, a retired special forces officer who carried a lot of weight among extremists. He drew attention to the event, calling for forces to start resisting further standoffs of the same nature as Ruby Ridge (Stern 1996). The third and final issue was the federal siege of Branch Davidian in Texas. ATF agents were serving a search warrant when they were shot at. Four ATF agents were killed in the tragedy. The siege continued for three months, ending only when the FBI used tear gas. Tragically, the extremists inside set fire to the

fortress and killed eighty-two people within the building. The Waco siege became another symbolic event for the right-wing extremist movement, despite having little to do with right-wing extremism. The compound was actually run by an exiled Seventh Day Adventist who used his ideas of religious grandeur and led his followers to stockpile weapons and fight against authority. The only thing that really matched up with extremist ideas was the firearms and compound itself, but it became an event that right-wing extremists could rally behind. These issues built up new followers and brought about a second wave of right-wing extremists that focused less on religious ideals and more on anti-Semitism and patriotism. The terrorist attacks from an outside source in the attacks of 9/11 brought about another shift in right-wing extremism. Violent persons among extremist groups began to move out of larger organizations and formed smaller groups. Coming full circle, several of today's smaller violent groups that evolved out of larger right-wing extremist groups are anarchists (White 2012).

Religious right-wing groups began as early as the 1920s with Erich Ludendorff who preached Nordic Christianity. The system moved to the United States and took root in the 1990s. Creatorism was another movement formed by Ben Klassen in 1973. The belief rejects Christianity and Judaism and believes that humanity has to fight an all out holy racial war. Creatorism is more violent and dangerous than Christian Identity. These people often align themselves with skinheads and convert them to their ranks. The free-wheeling fundamentalist movement has moved from a calmer idea into a militia movement due to their distrust in and hatred for the government as it is now. Militias tend to align themselves with the idea of the New World Order and that the U.S. government is going to be run by Jews and will take away their freedoms and dissolve the U.S. as it is now. Militias are fueled by conspiracy theories, racism, pro-life ideals, and anti-Semitism (Stern 1996). Most of the free-wheeling fundamentalists turned militias take violent bible passages out of context and use them as an excuse to commit violent acts and the militias themselves are viewed as groups that convene around a central issue by the ATF (White 2012). To put the danger of right-wing extremists into a tangible idea, outside of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, these groups have killed more police officers than any other domestic

groups in the past twenty years (Harris 2010).

Other forms of modern day domestic terrorism includes ecoterrorism and animal rights groups. The FBI lists the group the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) as an ecoterrorist group. The group has been responsible for property damage, arson, sabotage, and violent threats. ELF went so far as to grow more adept at creating bombs and posted instructions for making bombs online for the public (Denson and Long 1999). Currently, some ELF members have graduated to feeling as though they will not hesitate to resort to using a gun to uphold their beliefs (Center for Consumer Freedom 2004).

What makes these issues important stems from the fact that democracies tend to set themselves up for trouble in the form of extremist groups. Even if the groups are heavily policed and kept in check, their freedoms cannot be encroached upon and doing so only pushes other groups further toward acting out and rallying behind the policed groups in martyr-like fashion. There is a fine line between surveillance and violating privacy of a nation's citizens. It is far too easy to step over that boundary in the U.S. and thus it makes it difficult to monitor these dangerous extremist groups without provoking them further. If the government does too much to keep them in check, it can make many of the right-wing extremist groups appear as if they were right, and that the government is out to get them. In turn, this would only fire up the other groups and urge them to act, and would draw more people to these groups in resistance against the U.S. for violating rights or going too far. On the opposite side, however, it is important to keep a close eye on groups like this to ensure violent attacks do not continue and that innocents are not hurt. It is nearly impossible to keep the line balanced and expect something not to falter somewhere. This is perhaps why democratic governments are so often riddled with terrorist groups that otherwise would not exist or have the liberty to exist in a more controlled government system like in China or Russia. They still exist, but to a much lesser degree. Groups in countries like these face extreme punishments and are under constant surveillance. This is a far cry from very lenient governments like the United States' government. Here, the government must allow for individual freedoms and cannot spy on these groups beyond reasonable suspicion. If they do, then it is very likely

that a revolt against a “too powerful” or “too encroaching” government may start. The country already experienced riots and other turmoil over recent economic events. In the face of these combined with heavy control over these groups, it could trigger even an overthrow, as demonstrated by earlier revolutions. The conditions are ripe within the U.S., and pushing control on these groups could be asking for it. This delicate balance is part of the reason that understanding terrorism and its roots is so important.

While being mindful of the dangers of over-policing these extremist groups, the government can also use the past to learn and know better how to predict and prepare for attacks from these groups. Many of these people follow a pattern not unlike that of violent anarchists in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It would be unsurprising if these groups moved on to adopting similar tactics to achieve their ends. While technology has changed and many more dangerous options are available to terrorists today, it is still a similar pattern that authorities can follow. Reviewing how these people in the 19<sup>th</sup> century acted, noting how their rhetoric worked, and how they acted upon it, parallels to today's extremists can be drawn. In doing so, their actions become easier to predict, and thus attacks become easier to prevent. Terrorists, even after many years, still seem to follow the same basic ideas and the idea of terrorism, though it has changed, is still ingrained into his roots.

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