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Topic 1: What is Terrorism?

- **Main Idea:** Terrorism is a subjective concept and has different definitions depending on social, cultural and political context. There is debate as to how we can define terrorism, and whether we should even attempt to have a shared definition

Concept: Difficulty of Defining 'Terrorism'

- Lack of consensus because definitions tend to require making a judgement on when use of violence is or is not legitimate in different circumstances
- Highly subjective and political → what makes violence 'terrorism' is ultimately a social construct
 - E.g. Nelson Mandela was considered a terrorist before winning peace prize
- Common characteristics of definition:
 1. **Targeting Civilians:** Most agree that terrorism is 'extranormal' violence that deliberately targets civilians in peaceful environments
 2. **Non-State:** Where States target civilians, this is considered 'war crimes'. Thus suggest that terrorism is distinctly violence by non-state actors
 3. **Intent:** Essence of terrorism is the intent to generate a wider psychological impact beyond the immediate victims. Intent of violence is psychological and symbolic rather than material. Attempt to create 'terror' or 'fear'.

Debate: Should we try to Define Terrorism?

- **YES (Richards):**

"The failure to craft an agreed-on definition of terrorism has left a vacuum for actors, whether they be state or non-state, to define terrorism in ways that serve their own perceived political and strategic interests, and, in the case of state responses, remits of "counterterrorism" are often determined accordingly."

 - **Counter Terrorism Responses:**
 - Need a definition to allow for international cooperation → need a clear and agreed scope of what is terrorism before actors can work together to counter it
 - Domestic policy also fails to be effective without a defined scope of what type of behaviour it is aimed at addressing
 - **Arbitrary Application/Abuse**
 - Without an agreed definition, state and non-state actors use the concept as a type of agenda setting, and define terrorism in ways that serve their political interests
 - Can be used by states to justify extreme restrictions on civil liberties, and possibly left open to use to denounce or delegitimise political opposition
 - Need a definition for legal clarity

Topic 2: Why do People Become Terrorists?

- **Main Idea:** There is debate as to how we can identify why people become terrorists. While there are common contributing factors, it is difficult to determine a definitive causal relationship due to lack of consistency. However, propaganda and indoctrination seem to play a common role.

Causes of Terrorism

Debate: How should we understand the causes of terrorism?

1. Root Causes Approach (Newman)

- **What is the Root Causes Approach?**
 - 'Root Cause' approach involves identifying common factors that lead to terrorist activity
 - Based on assumption that certain social, economic, political and demographic conditions increase the likelihood of terrorist activity
 - These issues will shape the future patterns of terrorism. Understanding them helps counter-terrorist policies identify the underlying causes that they need to address to pro-actively address rising terrorism.
- **Common Root Causes:**
 - Many different causes combine to create a loss of sovereignty, disenfranchisement and social/economic disruption for states/social groups
 - Structural factors lead to direct causes, which cause terrorism to become more appealing

Structural Factors	Direct Root Causes
<u>Poverty:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Breeds resentment and desperation, and therefore political extremism aimed at attacking existing systems/structures○ Poor states often have weak governments, which do not have the capacity to prevent terrorist activity or to educate population to be aware of propaganda, indoctrination etc	<u>Alienation/Social Inequality:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Terrorists are often motivated by sense of injustice and dispossession○ Groups who feel that the current political or social order deny their rights are more likely to turn to terrorism○ Terrorist organisations take advantage of this
<u>Demographic:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Demographic shifts have caused an increase of young, unemployed men○ Migration and shifts in ethnic and religious makeup of society has also been a factor	<u>Clash of Values</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Globalisation has caused tension between different belief systems and values○ Often difficulty with reconciling traditional values with growing modernity
<u>Urbanisation:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Urbanisation generates disaffected populations through increased income inequality and class segregation○ Exposes individuals to more crime, disease, violence and family disruption	

Concept: Critical Approaches to Modern Slavery

- Critical approaches argue that ‘modern slavery’ should not be defined for key reasons:
 - Suggests that slavery is its own distinct issue, separate from other forms of exploitation and indecent working/living conditions
 - Use of ‘slavery’ as an umbrella term including a diverse range of circumstances leads to confusion re policy making and enforcement

- **Key Criticisms of Definition:**

1. Oversimplification & Depoliticization

- Narratives of slavery often discussed in terms of helpless victims vs evil perpetrators (highly emotionalised).
- Neglects structural factors: Ignores the cultural and economic conditions in which modern slavery arises. Oversimplifies multifaceted issues of labour exploitation and poverty into simple narratives.
- Criminal rather than Political: Sees slavery as a criminal issue perpetuated by individuals. This takes focus away from the role that the state plays in perpetuating unfair working conditions (e.g. through labour laws, reduced welfare). Dismisses focus on political reform.

2. Ambiguity leads to repressive responses

- Unclear definitions of what falls into ‘slavery’ leads to discourse of modern slavery being co-opted to justify restrictive policies
- Notably manifests in anti-immigration policy, or legislation banning sex work
- Increases the vulnerability of these people

3. Cultural Imperialism?

- Attempting to globalise Western perceptions of ‘work’ and ‘labour’ rights, while failing to acknowledge how global systems of capitalism perpetuate insecure working conditions in global South

- **Example: UK Drug Dealing Response (*Lee Koch*)**

- Issue re county line drug offending – children used to move drugs across area codes
- Government sees children involved as victims of trafficking and adopts victimhood narratives/ discourse
 - Criminalises modern slavery and creates a complete defence for ‘victims’ who have committed offences during enslavement
- This neglects the structural factors that initiate children to get involved in this type of exploitation, and thus neglects states role/responsibility
 - E.g. state pulled back welfare and services during Brexit, lead to increase
 - Divorces vulnerability of certain people (especially ethnic minorities) from states production of class and racial domination

Van Uhm, D. P., & Grigore, A. G.

Indigenous people, organized crime and natural resources: Borders, incentives and relations.

- Organised crime groups often operate heavily in remote areas with less state presence (less law enforcement, institutions etc). They thus come into regular contact with the Indigenous populations of these regions.
- Various aspects of involvement: Indigenous peoples can be both victims and perpetrators of drug trafficking
- **Artificiality of Borders**
 - Inter-state borders are social constructs, and often cut through a single Indigenous land/territory
 - Indigenous peoples historically move across these areas freely - mean that they have superior knowledge of routes across borders. Especially importance due to often harsh nature of border terrain
 - Indigenous people thus significant resource for drug trafficking groups
- **Economic incentives:**
 - Indigenous land is often co-opted by drug groups (for both cultivation and trade), dispossessing them
 - Furthers poverty for these groups - Indigenous people become more likely to be involved with illicit activity due to lack of access to legitimate job markets or education
- **Violence and Coercion**
 - These communities are often socially, economically and physically isolated
 - More vulnerable to violence and coercion from crime groups in areas with low law enforcement - e.g. Indigenous peoples often forced to pay the groups to use the land that they have control over
 - Social control asserted by crime groups over indigenous people thus mirrors a new form of colonial practice, further exploiting and marginalising these groups
- **Examples of such dynamics:**
 - Indigenous people in Darien (Central America)
 - History of colonial violence in the region - Spain established colonies, asserting Christianity in the area, use of force and slavery to control local populations
 - Indigenous people in Golden Triangle (south-east Asia)
 - Border area where Laos, Myanmar and Burma meet - French and British colonisers supported drug economies in these areas to fund their ongoing imperial efforts