

The immediate and gradual impact of terrorist attacks on the sports events industry

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Introduction

The Munich massacre at the Olympics of 1972, the Centennial Olympic park explosion of 1996 at Atlanta, explosion near Bernabeu stadium in Madrid in 2002, suicide bomb attack against the New Zealand cricket team in 2002 in Pakistan and gunfire attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team in 2009 in Pakistan, suicide bomber attack at a marathon in Sri Lanka in 2008, Boston Marathon bomb attack in 2013 (Galily et al, 2015), bomb attack outside Stade de France during a series of attacks in 2015 (Spaaij, 2016), series of controlled explosions on the German football club Borussia Dortmund this year (The Wire, 2017) are instances of how sports events have been continuously targeted by terrorists. Before the Munich massacre of 1972, the main threat of sports events was hooligan behaviour but the increasing attack on sports events have put counterterrorism strategies to the forefront (Toohey et al, 2003). Sporting events of the 20th & 21st century have lost their innocence due to the activities of terrorist organisations and individuals (Atkinson and Young, 2012). "There have been 168 terrorist attacks related to sport between 1972 and 2004" (Clark, Kennelly quoted 2004, 2005 in Toohey et al, 2008, p 451)

Contemporary terrorists prefer targets with dense gatherings and worldwide media coverage to spread their message and cause widespread trauma, sports events provide a perfect setting and are increasingly targeted by terrorists (Spaaij and Hamm, 2015). Sports mega events also carry a symbolic and prestigious element and are used by host nations for the concept of nation branding (Gripsurd et al, 2010). By attacking these events, terrorists can shame and damage the host nation's image.

Terror attacks at sports events create a substantial impact on the sports event industry in terms of cancellation or alterations of tournaments (Giulianotti et al, 2012), dealing with decreased attendance, demand for intense security at events as well as complex logistics (Toohey and Taylor, 2008). The need for intense security also creates another dilemma for organizers – the balancing of security measures and attendee enjoyment. In the struggle against modern terrorism, event organisers cannot risk that event security becomes too obtrusive and visible as it could affect attendee experience (Taylor and Toohey, 2007). Modern terrorism is a growing concern for sports events as it has successfully polluted the peaceful ambience of sports and generated risk perceptions among spectators and sports tourists (Taylor and Toohey, 2007). Counterterrorism measures at events have increased security costs (Spaaij, 2016) and as explained in the book of Sport Tourism (Ritchie et al, 2004), makes it questionable to certain groups of the public as to whether such mega events should be organized. Are they beneficial to the host image? Along with the event sector, terrorism also damages the tourism sector. The event and tourism sector have a symbiotic relationship, event and tourism revenues are co-dependent on each other (Ritchie et al, 2004). If individuals are afraid to travel, then this will impact their decisions to travel to destinations for social or business events and vice versa.

The interplay of terrorism and sports events is far reaching and has different effects and consequences in different areas. The following parts of the essay will bring light to different issues and concerns.

Literature Review

Terrorism

Many researchers and scholars have stated that it is difficult to lay down an appropriate definition for terrorism as it is open to personal interpretation, morals and philosophies. For instance, a liberation movement group could also be termed as a terrorist organization by some individuals. The inability to come up with a definition also impacts the international and state level counter terrorism measures and laws as the parameters of a terrorist attack is not clearly defined (Setty, 2011).

However, various authors agree that terrorism is mainly politically motivated. It is strategically orchestrated by individuals or groups who wish to express their anger against a certain government or nation. Their main aim is to harm the image and reputation of a country by creating disorder, killing innocent civilians and creating fear among a mass audience (Toohey et al, 2003).

Spaaij and Hamm (2015) identified two types of terrorist patterns – Lone wolf and Copy Cat. Lone wolf terrorism is the act carried out by an individual with no direct association to a large group (Spaaij and Hamm,2015). They have operational independence and do not act on command or instruction. A growing concern for the government and sports events organizers are the lone wolf attackers; they are particularly dangerous as they have the advantage of non-detection. The organizers of the Brazilian Olympics 2016 were worried about such attackers. The copycat phenomenon involves individuals inspired by attacks that are covered by the media and imitate them with the hope of some fame. A clear example of the copycat phenomenon was how David Copeland carried out three bombings at the Notting Hill Carnival in 1999 following the media coverage of Rudolph's attack in 1996. He was inspired by Eric Rudolph and wanted to imitate the attack and have some fame. Though the target was a festival, it emphasises the fact that events, with dense gatherings of people and media, are preferred as they can cause large scale impact and destruction.

Sport and terrorism

Sports and sports related events offer an environment of temporary relief from the stresses and fears of daily life (Hassan,2012). Thousands of fans from across the globe are exposed to sports events in the form of live events, television broadcasts, radio channels and the internet. These main elements connected to the world of sports events convince terrorists to use them as suitable targets to inflict damage and cause widespread fear (Hassan,2012). Contemporary terrorists have understood the impact of media coverage of their attacks and therefore use sports events which are globally broadcasted to cause damage and trauma to the immediate targets as well as globally (Toohey et al, 2006). Events depend on media to publicise either globally or on a small scale and it is this element which allures terrorists to stage attacks at such events. The extensive media coverage of sports events enables terrorism to prosper (Galily et al, 2015). One act in one corner of the world leaves its impact on the rest of the world and subsequently generates a ripple effect (Atkinson and Young, 2012). Over the years terrorists have understood the impact of mass mediated terrorism and depend heavily on the media at global events to express their rage. (Toohey et al 2008)

Galily et al (2015) captured the motive of staging an attack at sports events through the statement of the orchestrator of the Munich Massacre of 1972:

“We recognized that sport is the modern religion of the Western world. We knew that the people in England and America would switch their television sets from any program about the plight of the

Palestinians if there was a sporting event on another channel. So, we decided to use their Olympics, the most sacred ceremony of this religion, to make the world pay attention to us.....cause” (p. 1000)

Riordan (1998 quoted in Hassan 2012) gives us another perspective of terrorist ideology: “Put simply if terrorists are to achieve their primary aims of creating fear, instability and exercising a challenge to the sitting government then promoting this message within a non-political and ostensibly joyous setting, such as sport, presents their work with added agency.” (p.264)

Due to the global nature of sports events, other global incidents also tend to affect sports events in terms of schedules and attendance (Toohey et al, 2003). For instance, though the Munich Massacre of 1972 put combating of terrorism into the forefront it was however the attacks of 9/11 that created the need for intense security in response to terrorism. The sports events industry was considerably impacted following the event of 9/11, many tournaments were cancelled or altered like the Australian Rugby League team’s tour of England in December 2001, the New Zealand cricket tour to Pakistan in October 2001 and golf’s Ryder Cup in September 2001 (Toohey et al, 2003). A similar response was seen to the terror attacks of Mumbai, in November 2008; the IPL Cricket Tournament meant to be hosted in India had to be relocated to South Africa in April 2009 due to threats and security concerns. (Richards,2012)

An article written by an Al Qaeda propagandist for an English language magazine paper called ‘Inspire’ had listed sports events as one of the preferred targets for attacks. The article mentions that areas with dense gatherings are ideal for inflicting loss and damage; sports arenas and social events fulfil this requirement (Spaaij and Hamm,2015). This is clear evidence that sports events are highly targeted by terrorist groups and individuals. Dense gatherings of people which would make it impossible to detect the perpetrator, close and easy access to transportation hubs for escape routes and the hospitality sector surrounding the event that would be potentially damaged in an attack, are all factors that create an ideal stage for the terrorist to enact his performance (Hadfield, Toohey, Taylor, & Mason, 2004 cited in Toohey et al ,2008). Jenkins’s quote of “Terrorism is theater” (1975 quoted in Galily et al 2015, p 999) agrees with other authors who have identified that terrorists aim to implant fear into a wider audience through outrageous acts or performances (Spaaij and Hamm,2015).

Another motive of terrorists is to inflict damage on the image of a nation and to show resentment against a government, it is obvious that desired targets of the terrorists cannot be reached as they are highly protected. In such cases, Richards (2012) explains sports events or sports personalities then become soft targets for the nation, as terrorists try to hurt the nation or government by attacking their representatives at an event. “We have to kill their most important and famous people. Since we cannot come close to their statesmen, we have to kill artists and sportsmen” (Hoffman, 1998 cited in Richards, p 6)

Motives of terrorists attacking sports events

The common motive of any terrorist attack is to embarrass and damage the government or country in retaliation to their ideologies and acts. Though the motive of inflicting severe damage is the same, the reasons differ for each terrorist (Spaaij and Hamm,2015). The perpetrator of the Centennial Olympic park bombing of 1996, Eric Rudolph, wished to show his anger against the American government who sanctioned abortion on demand. According to him he wanted to cause harm to the evil government as he was leading the fight against the unborn. Eric Rudolph placed warning calls so that an evacuation would take place with aim for only the police force to be present, who were

representatives of the evil government Rudolph was against. However, delay in informing the authorities led to the death of two individuals and injuring 110 civilians. Eric Rudolph had admitted that he had no hatred towards the game but rather saw the event as a prestigious and symbolic event for the nation; damaging this event would bring embarrassment to the government (Spaij and Hamm,2015).

The attacks on the Boston Marathon were carried out by Tsarnaev brothers who were against the US government due to the military actions carried out by the US Force in Iraq and Afghanistan. The brother's beliefs were fuelled by jihadist ideas including the Inspire magazine, which specified sports events as a potential target for damage (Spaij and Hamm,2015). The attacks orchestrated by Rudolph and Tsarnaev brothers are similar in terms of their targets, they chose symbolic events which are prestigious to the government, but Rudolph was more concerned with harming the government while Tsarnaev brothers intended to harm innocent civilians, imitating what was done to the civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan. Sports events are not hated by terrorists but preferred by them for causing widescale damage and fear.

Dilemma of countries hosting mega sports events

Due to economic restructuring, globalization and technological advancement, policy makers have begun considering opportunities that would benefit the public and ultimately use sports events due to their various economic and social benefits. The benefits of improvement in architecture and quality of life are used to justify the hosting of sports events (Ritchie et al,2004). Gripsurd and Nes (2010) explains that hosting a mega sports events is also the result of 'Nation Branding', a term coined by Dinnie in 2008. Nation branding is a concept by which countries aim to improve their image globally. The aim is to influence people to purchase products from the nation and also market the nation as a travel destination. These objectives push nations to host mega sports events. The element of 'showcase effect' pushes governments and countries to organise such sports events to build their image and create future opportunities and relations (Ritchie et al, 2004).

"For example, Kim Dae-Jung, the President of South Korea, saw the 2002 FIFA World Cup as 'a chance for [Korea] to make the country prosper diplomatically, economically and culturally, in sectors like tourism and science" (Toohey et al 2003, p.170)

Pringle (2012) argues that hosting mega sports events generates impacts rather than benefits. The justifications of magnification of the region, increased tourism and business investment becomes questionable after identifying some of the impacts of such mega sport events. The preparation of the Olympics of 2016 in Rio De Janeiro saw the forced evacuation of people from their homes without prior notice or alternatives. Owen (2005 cited in Pringle 2012) summarized that most of the costs involved in staging these events were treated as benefits, the cost of constructing a stadium was seen as a benefit and citizens believed that the same money could have been used for public development projects. Countries also organize sports events with the aim of giving a good impression on the outside world (Ritchie et al,2004), however during the Beijing Olympics 2008 the dictatorship of China came to the forefront (Pringle 2012).

Literature such as Hassan (2013) states that though countries use sports events for publicity and development, they receive hostility from residents during the preparation phase which also increases the threat of state led attacks. Two Greek government vehicles were attacked by a local group to oppose the death of workers at Olympic construction sites. (Toohey et al,2008). It is crucial

for countries and organizers to take into consideration the reactions and perceptions of people for staging a successful and peaceful event.

Attendees perceptions and reactions to terror attacks at sports events

Terror attacks around the world have left people in a state of anticipation of attacks. This behaviour tends to generate disengagement from communities (Toohey et al ,2008), which could result in less involvement in social and outdoor events. Though fanatical supporters or blind devotees (Toohey et al, 2008) are bound to attend the events, it is the occasional supporters who are most likely to be affected by risk perceptions, resulting in decreased attendance at events (Toohey et al, 2003).

Toohey et al (2003) have highlighted contradictory responses that were seen among the attendees of the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympic Games , the first set of games to be held after the attacks of 9/11 – cancellation of Olympics trips were minimum which could suggest attendees were unwilling to let terrorism threats affect their sport experience, demonstrating resilience towards terrorist attacks. However, tickets remained unsold until six weeks prior to the start of the games, which could signify that people were apprehensive about attending sports events (2003,p 171).

Gender and cultural differences also impact perceptions of risk and event experience. Risk perceptions are higher in women than men. Men feel that intense event security can hamper their event experience while women welcome strict security measures. Attendees from European countries like Greece, Ireland, Germany and France place low importance on safety aspects. But Toohey et al (2008) contradict this with the observation that western culture revolves around age of anxiety while attendees from China, Japan and Korea are more open to security measures (Toohey et al, 2003).

The Theory of planned behaviour could analyse spectator's decision in attending sports events. "The theory of planned behaviour predicts that attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control predict a person's intention to participate in an activity." (Cunningham et al, 2003, p 128). A positive attitude towards sports events can result in attendees going for sports events irrespective of perceived threats due to the strong positive relation and needs for social affiliation (Cunningham et al, 2003). Subjective norms can also result in spectators not attending sports events as they are influenced by social expectations of individuals around them. "In their study..... 15% had families concerned about their safety. In addition, many respondents reported that they were more anxious and nervous about attending major events because of the perceived threats to safety" (Qi et al, 2009,p 51).

Toohey and Taylor (2005) summarize best practices for security management at sports events as per the spectators who stressed that security should be visible but at a minimal level, communication about security measures should be clear and security personnel should be able to communicate in host language as well. Spectators also suggested that all attendees should be treated the same and not judged by appearance or ethnicity. These suggestions could improve spectator experience despite strong security.

Security at events

The attacks of 9/11 changed security measures worldwide, new and intense security measures were clearly visible at the Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City 2002 "A 52-mile no-fly zone was imposed

around the entire Games site, and sharpshooters were placed on various mountaintop positions to protect specific competition venues.” (Galily et al 2015, p 1002). Terror attacks create tougher security standards for organizers and increase both the security budget and insurance costs. “Security costs from the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games budget exceeded £550 million” (Spaaij, 2016, p 453). Apart from increasing costs, security used at sports events face criticism in terms of hampering civil rights and the spectator experience. Preparation of 2014 Sochi Olympics responded to terror threats by recruiting 50,000 police and soldiers, though the venue was described as most secure, Time magazine editor claimed it to be ‘the most anxiety-ridden and militarized Olympiad in recent memory’ (Spaaij, 2016). The Guardian (2009) described how people were critical of the security measures formulated for the 2012 London Olympics, which would allow police officials to enter private property to confiscate protest materials, in contravention of basic civilian privacy. Although authorities claimed the measures would not be put in practice, it was difficult for the public to trust the government. From the evidence of Giulianotti (2012), the police had unnecessary power during sports events, making it more militaristic.

The security legacies that are left behind after mega sports events are increasingly becoming more normalised due to threat perceptions. David Hassan (2013, p 7) explains how the citizens of London were at ease with the presence of 3000 troops in full uniform on the streets. The normalization and acceptance of security measures could justify why spectators and citizens are more accepting of intense security measures. However, these measures cannot let civil rights be violated but Baklouti & Namsi, (2013) state that today’s security measures do come at the cost of restriction on civil rights of citizens. Urban clearing programmes involving forced relocation as part of transformation of an urban area into a secure venue was particularly evident in the preparation for the games in India, China and South Africa, resulting in hostility towards those events. (Reuters, 2007; Spaaij 2016; Selva, 2005; Sudworth, 2006 cited in Giulianotti et al 2012). Brazil and South Africa experienced protests against the World Cup due to forced evictions and the fact that funds were used in staging such games rather than towards health, education or employment (The Guardian, 2010, 2014).

Strict security measures, and draconian effects in response to terrorism, can affect the events industry in terms of complex logistics, resulting in hostility towards the event from the public because of measures adopted, under security management, ultimately become a show of militarism. While intense police and security measures are generally frowned up, it can result in a reduction of crime in the host nation. (Ritchie et al, 2004)

Conclusion

Modern terrorism is a growing concern, especially for sports events; due its global coverage and the density of gatherings, it is an ideal target for terrorists. The media element of sports event is a crucial yet detrimental factor. Sports events thrive on media coverage to gain popularity and for the host nation to improve its image or build its reputation. People are able to enjoy these events in the comfort of their home due to the media. However, these are reasons for which terrorists attack sports events. It is also a method to damage the reputation of the host country or government. Terrorist express their different ideologies and anger by attacking a symbolic and prestigious event resulting in widespread fear. To battle terrorism and confirm globally that a host city can carry out a successful and safe event, organizers and authorities are faced with escalating costs and complex logistics (Toohey et Taylor, 2012). Counter terrorism measures lead to organizational complexity for organizers due to the national and international collaborations for security management which results in high investment in security alone.

Within current society there is a tendency for the media and authorities to amplify risk and with the mentality of anticipation of attacks, extreme solutions are adopted that lead to harming dignity and human rights (Baklouti & Namsi , 2013). Under the umbrella of security management, event preparation leads to forced evictions from residences in the case of India during Commonwealth and Sao Paulo during World Cup. Unnecessary and intrusive powers are granted to police officials that are heavily criticised by the public, as in the case of the 2012 London Olympics. Heavy criticism was also been seen from the public of Sao Paulo, who felt that unnecessary investments were made in supporting the hosting of the World Cup (The Guardian, 2014). Apart from the economic benefits in staging such sport mega events, a variety of social impacts are also observed, which ultimately lead to the event losing its popularity with the public and would be spectators. Spectator experience, in midst of strict security measures, can be enhanced through customer service. "Sport spectators attend for fun and security measures should not affect this purpose and intervene with human rights standards" (Baklouti & Namsi, 2013). Smoother security-spectator contact should be stressed in the form of shorter security checks, and clear information on restricted materials along with other security measures. Paul Wilkinson (quoted in Galily et al, 2015, p 1005) said that "Fighting terrorism is like being a goalkeeper. You can make a hundred brilliant saves, but the only shot people remember is the one that gets past you." Sports events are continuously battling modern terrorism, but one attack can still profoundly affect the industry and its spectators.

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