Terrorism or not? That is the question..

As the saying goes, ‘one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter’, a saying that pretty much relates to both domestic and foreign policy in regards to international security and terrorism at this very moment. Finsbury Park is a location that is home to multiculturalism and diversity, with the population composing of a number of nationalities and worshippers of different religions. On Sunday, June 18, 2017, a driver in a white van with yellow stripes had driven through worshippers nearby Finsbury Park Mosque in North London, resulting in 8 injuries, two of a very serious nature.

The attack first could be seen to be of the ‘ISIL or Al-Qaida’ type whereby publications of the organizations had provided instructions and tuition upon how to find a van and utilize it in a potential attack. Recent attacks in London and other cities worldwide have been classified as terrorist attacks quite swiftly as the utilization of vans and vehicles for terrorism use could be mentioned as a unique typology to that of ISIL now. The latest attack in London, on the other hand, was treated as a ‘potential’ terrorist attack. The attack typology, on the other hand, fits hand in hand with ISIL, but the targets were different?

A 48 year old van driver of male gender was arrested on the scene for ‘attempted murder’. It has been reported that no one else was in the van besides the ‘suspect’ and according to witness accounts he had shouted ‘I am going to kill all Muslims’ while executing the attack. Further on, Dep Asst Comm Neil Basu had later stated ‘No matter what the motivation for this attack proves to be we are keeping an open mind. This is being treated as a terrorist attack and the counter-terrorism command is investigating. This was an attack on London and all Londoners and we should all stand together against extremists, whatever their cause. Given the methodology and given what was occurring and what’s happened across the country this had all the hallmarks of a terrorist incident’.

The potential terrorist had acted alone and could be classified as a ‘lone-wolf’ attacker. In terrorism studies, a lone-wolf, lone-wolf terrorist or actor is termed to be an individual who possesses violent and radical ideology, and prepares and commits an attack alone with no accomplice. He is outside the command structure of a terrorist cell and receives no material support from a network or group also. The attacker of Finsbury Park can be seen to fit this profile. Through slogans stated while conducting the attack, it could be suspected the attacker truly possesses far-right radical ideology which has resulted in anti-Muslim hatred, similar to groups ACT for America and the English Defence League.

The vehicle utilized for the attack has yet to be confirmed if it has been stolen, or belongs to the attacker. A third option could also be the vehicle was rented from a car rentals agent and then used for the attack. The choice of venue could be seen to be calculated and one of rational choice, most likely with intentions to frighten, shock, outrage and excite people or a population. The time of attack being after congregational prayer was a willful and rational choice of the attacker to maximize casualties and minimize effort.

In conclusion, terrorism used a strategy is a willful choice made by individuals, no matter their race, color or religion. Governments should not fight a single type of radical ideology or label it according to one's religion or region, but should fight all of them at once no matter if they are from religious descent, or of the far-right. Terrorism should be counted as terrorism, regardless of location, shape or form.