

Terrorism Today and Tomorrow: An Analysis and Projection Study

Ercan ÇİTLİOĞLU

Başkent University, Turkey

Assist. Prof. Dr. Murat Tüzünkan

Abstract. Terrorism, as a dominating threat in today's security environment and an important agenda of current world politics, has been transforming into an instrument of state security functions through proxy wars and asymmetric threats. Thus this phenomenon is becoming a tactical choice rather than ideology or anarchic violence activities. This is thought to be the most dangerous aspect of terrorism threat, as it may provide a "beneficial" option for states' security measures. Consequently, motivations and roots of paramilitary activity, called terrorism, should be investigated.

Key Words: Terrorism, Proxy War, Ethnic Separatism, Religious Extremism, Strategic Culture.

Introduction

Especially after 9/11, terrorism has become one of the determining factors in world politics, from internal security issues to theoretical discussions of international relations. Being mentioned as 'uptrend' and the state of being a determining factor are thought to be results of both the nature of politically motivated paramilitary activity and its transformation. This article basically focuses on the present parameters of today's terrorism and possible 'future evolutions' of the terrorism phenomenon. The main idea, which directed this study to interpret the future possibilities, is that transformation itself has become a key component of terrorism. Moreover, transformation or globalization of terrorism and its changing motives (in ethnic and religious extremist ways) resulted in paradigm shifts in a very large spectrum including trans-Atlantic balances, Middle Eastern politics, Central Asia, Far East, Turkish-American relations, and even the recentralization of the Russian state system (with Moscow's moves under Putin presidency after the Beslan event of 2005).

In this study, the dominating parameters of terrorism and recent transformation of this threat are going to be evaluated. Besides, the future modeling and current models concerning the evolution of international terrorism will be subjects of the article as well as trends of ethnic separatist movements and religious extremist terrorism.

Making projections may be disadvantageous for the study's scientific value and may cause consistency problems too. However, one of the main factors which led terrorism to evolve into a 21st century plague has resulted from the lack of future projections about evolution and transformation of

terrorism after the Cold War era. So, the functionality of this essay is to be well harmonized under strategic and scientific perspective.

This article will focus on ethnic separatist and religious extremist motivations of terrorism from a different perspective. In addition, the functional field will not be disregarded. Terrorism will be analyzed as a tactical choice and as an instrument of proxy wars. This is neither a specific study of a certain period nor an investigation of a given case. Our aim is to state a conceptual approach and framework about the terrorism threat and its roots, as well as its present and near future functions. Also we would try to bring future threats which result from analytical misperceptions and lack of awareness about conceptual differentiation of terrorism phenomenon to the attention of the security society.

1. Parameters of 21st Century Terrorism and Terrorist Movements

Understanding the dominating parameters and motives of present terrorist movements is a vital aspect of evaluations on terrorism's today and tomorrow. As the word 'terrorism' stands same etymologically, the meaning and functions beyond have changed dramatically. Because of major paradigm shifts in terrorist activity, it would be accurate to follow a multifactor classification in categorizations based on their motivations and political aims, as well as their areas of operational fields.

In order to make this relatively complex perspective clear, the following example may be useful: While al-Qaeda should be identified as a 'religious extremist' group in the motivations column, it should be regarded as a global threat in its area of operation. On the other hand, the PKK and ETA stand as ethnic separatist terrorist organizations which are acting within regional limits for their area of operations,

1.1. Categorizing and Evaluating the Geography Perception of Terrorism

At this point, the terminology of 'area of operational field' should be gripping. 'Areas' where terrorist elements act are increasing in variety due to complexion of world sociopolitical and socioeconomic channels, coupled with ties which enable intensive interactions and permeability among national borders. In order to be explanatory, we are going to make a distinction between the concept of area as 'political and operational,' depending on functionality.

Being aware of general perception, 'geography of terrorism' is basically understood as the area where terrorist attacks take place. It is thought that sophisticated interactions cause complex characteristics in terrorist activities. Thus, the concept of area of operation is used to define areas where terrorist strikes take directly place directly, (i.e. New York, London, Madrid, and Istanbul should be regarded as al-Qaeda's area of operation). On the other hand, it-is known that low intensity conflicts (LIC) including terrorism, are basically political struggles.¹ Therefore, such political domination naturally brings requirement to political support as well as vital requirements in logistics, finance etc. With the Algerian resistance, there occurred a new concept (political field) for security studies literature. This concept was used for the fields where armed movements could find the support they need to continue their paramilitary activities.² In other words, within the framework of terrorism studies, the political field resembles an oxygen tent for terrorist organizations for reproducing and strengthening themselves.

In the light of political field concept explained above, now it may be easier to give a new interpretation for the cliché about why an international definition or perspective against terrorism is not something that could be reached yet globally. While a state's territory is operational field of a terrorist organization, some other country or countries serve(s) as political field to same terrorists. This fact can also be regarded as the reason for grounds of cross-border or even trans-Atlantic operations against terrorism.

¹ See Robert W. Livingston, *Low Intensity Conflict Intelligence: Lessons From Vietnam* (US Department of Army, 1990).

² T. N. Greene, *The Guerilla and How to Fight Him* (Ankara, Genelkurmay Basimevi, 1965), p. 37.

While the world is globalizing, the terrorist networks are globalizing too. Al-Qaeda is training its militants in the Pakistani-Afghani tribal regions, cells are operative in nearly the whole world and messages are being broadcasted via Internet and television. Furthermore on 9/11, which is the biggest terrorist act of al-Qaeda undoubtedly, terrorist used air transportation, flight simulators and in indirectly, even live television coverage.

The al-Qaeda terrorist manifest (rather than an ordinary terrorist organization) can be defined as an umbrella structure for operative cells which have no or very low connectivity and hierarchy. These attributes has caused al-Qaeda to become more an ideology which should be defeated, not only as paramilitary groups but also as a cluster of destructive ideas. Another paradox of the al-Qaeda case is that while these umbrella and cluster of destructive ideas target the symbols of globalization, they are also taking advantage of globalization by using high-tech means. This fact shows that the world's new socioeconomic and sociopolitical processes provide advantages to terrorists as well as integration and interdependence among states and the international community.

Seen from another aspect, in the case of the PKK, terrorists have been attacking Turkish civilian and military targets for decades in both rural and urban areas of Turkey; thus Turkish territory is perceived as a area of operations. PKK terrorists, who are mostly from Turkey, Syria, Iran and, Iraq, had been provided paramilitary training within a wide geographical region that includes Lebanon, Syria, Greece and Iraq, doubtless not beyond the knowledge of intelligence services of those states.³ Moreover, the PKK terrorist organization has been exploiting banking systems, political freedoms (such as establishing associations), and television broadcasting (i.e. Roj TV), trafficking in arms, human and drugs in several countries and even continents. Assuming sufficient training, financial and political support, both the Middle East and Europe can be categorized as political fields of this separatist terrorist organization.

In the light of two examples given above, it can be argued that the geography of today's terrorism is significantly more complex, broad, functional and beneficial than it was perceived to be before. Globalization trends show that this process is now serving and will continue to serve both the interests of the international community and the terrorist organizations at the same time. Furthermore, while states' perception of geography are relatively static due to their traditional national territory and borders approaches, terrorists may be perceiving the geography in a more sophisticated and fervent way. So both in perceptual and actual dimensions, transformation in states' activities seems to be a must in counterterrorism. From now on, this study will focus on factors which trigger terrorist motivation.

2. Motivations and Political Aims of "Today's Terrorism" and Tomorrow

As the geographies of terrorism become wider and show complex functionality today (and are predicted to be more so tomorrow), also motivations and political aims are diversified and complicated too. Within the framework of this subtitle, terrorist organizations will be classified due to their motivations and political aims.

As is well-known, there is no internationally- or widely-accepted definition of terrorism. However, this problem does not seem to result from lack of distinct characteristics but more a matter of conflict of national interests. Also, reaching an international definition is neither possible nor academically necessary as some states have been facing terrorist movements which are rooted in support from other states. Therefore we may try to define the 'distinctive signs' of terrorism rather than deciding on who is a terrorist and who is not.

Four distinctive key elements can be used to distinguish a terrorist act from a mundane crime. These are political aims and motives, violence or threat of violence, objective of a "far-reaching psychological repercussions beyond the immediate victim or target" and lastly, the existence of an organization, cells or chain of command.⁴ Hoffman's study shows us that terrorism is organized violence or the threat of violence which tactically seeks large-scale psychological impacts in order to achieve specific political aims.

³ See Ümit Özdağ, *Türk Ordusu 'nun PKK Operasyonları* (İstanbul, Pegasus Yayınları, 2007).

⁴ Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 43.

Political aims and motives are important because all "terrorist efforts" and tactics have been performed in order to achieve them or by the motivation that these factors create. Seen in the light of this discussion, terrorism, which poses a grave threat to a large spectrum of targets including individuals, states, regions and the international system as a whole, should be evaluated due to its unique political conditions.

After the Cold War era, notwithstanding there are still Marxist-Leninist and Maoist terrorist organizations, it can be emphasized that today's terrorism has two dominant motives: religion and ethnic separatism.

3. Ethnic Separatism and Ethnic Terrorism: Today's Parameters and Tomorrow's Threats

Within the context of ethnic separatism motives, terrorists usually seek independence or autonomy for an ethnic group, while accusing governments of being colonialist, repressive and even dictatorial.⁵ Political psychologist Volkan is of the opinion that the distinctive characteristic of ethnic terrorists is an overidentification with the group they belong to. Regarding present international relations parameters, micronationalist ideologies are overriding and these ideologies are the most dominant factors which force nation-states to evolve significant perceptions of threat about their territorial integrity. Interestingly, both lack of integration to central national identities and governments' discriminatory policies based on ethnicity may trigger separatist moves.

While ethnicity and minor identities have been perceived as significant parts of cultural diversity and world's socio-cultural heritage, ethnic motivations play a destructive role and have a kind of multiplier effect in terrorist activities. In this context, Bařeren argues that ethnic terrorism may also be used as an instrument to turn ethnic tension into ethnic civil wars and ethnic civil wars may then cause genocides and ethnic cleansing.⁶ The cases of Rwanda and Bosnia seem to verify Bařeren's findings.

3. 1. A Democracy Dilemma? Two Key Questions about the "Democracy Factor"

In the light of ideas given above, two questions may be asked to help a nation-state rectify an effective counterterrorism policy which should protect the national and territorial integrity:

- What can be the results of democratization and providing more freedom to ethnic groups which are not official national minorities?
- And how can we evaluate the role of "foreign" involvement?

Firstly, notwithstanding that democracy and freedom seem to provide space for separatist movements or an antidote for uprisings caused by discriminatory policies, the role of democracy and political freedom is strongly dependent upon political aims and way of representation for people of a country.

To be more explicit regarding statements above, if a state system defines democracy and political freedom as depending on ethnic identities and as ethnic rights, it may simply enable ethnic separatism to find more effective outlets for propaganda and ethnic awareness which is a must for separation demands. On the other hand, systematic reductions in political freedom and democracy should trigger oppression and even a collective emotional state called "chosen trauma."⁷

To sum up, while democracy acts as a guarantee for national integrity under proper conditions, defining democracy as the rights and freedom of ethnic groups instead of citizens may open Pandora's Box.

⁵ See Vamık D. Volkan, *Kanbađı Etnik Gururdan Etnik Teröre* (İstanbul, Bađlam Yayıncılık, 1999).

⁶ Bařeren, Sertaç, "Terrorism with Its Differentiating Aspects," *Defence Against Terrorism Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Spring 2008), pp. 6-7.

⁷ See Ercan Çitliođlu, *Gri Tehdit TERÖRİZM* (İstanbul, Destek Yayıncılık, 2008); Volkan, *Kanbađı Etnik Gururdan Etnik Teröre*.

The answer to the second question is: yes, simply it is possible to observe systematic foreign support to some terrorist organizations. For that reason, some scholars define such foreign support as a proxy war in which a surrogate element wages war to advance supporter state(s)' interests.⁸ Turkey's still ongoing PKK terrorism experience can be explained in terms of a proxy war as some of her neighbors, which are engaged in a conflict of interests with Ankara, have systematically supported PKK terrorism, i.e. Syria.⁹ Although the role of foreign involvement should not be seen as the only cause of ethnic separatism, it is an important role, sometimes as a concept of indirect approach via proxy wars.

3.2. "Soft" Borders and Proxy Wars

While sociopolitical parameters have a strong influence on ethnic separatism, states' geopolitical and geostrategic conditions are also determinant. In some cases, a country with a region which is geographically different from the rest, and hosting an ethnicity which has kinship relations with border neighbors (i.e. Basque region of Spain and France), would be 'susceptible' to separatism. This study considers that possible impacts of mentioned susceptibility which is a result of soft borders are:

- Lack of interaction with country's other regions and peoples' over interaction with relative or identical ethnic groups living in neighbor countries thus empowering ethnic awareness;
- Making governments 'paranoid' about the outlying ethnic group and increasing pressure while limiting democratic living space; and
- Offering advantages to foreign involvement for proxy war in order to create territorial disputes.

Borders with high interaction among residents, which are distinct in political and international law terms but undivided in geography and ethnology, (i.e. the Turkey-Iraq border, the Afghanistan-Pakistan border), generally impose some threat to national security.

Also, soft borders can provide recruitment advantages to ethnic separatist groups by enabling cross-border activities and increasing human resources. For instance, for the case of Turkey's PKK, it is possible to observe that a significant number of terrorists are not Turkish citizens but are instead from the Kurdish communities of Syria, Iran and Iraq. Moreover, terror camps had been located in a large area of Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Iran (there are still PKK elements also deployed in the area of responsibility of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq). Thus, it can be stated that soft borders hold a potential for ethnic terrorism.

The interesting and extraordinary part of the PKK case is that some third parties, which are neither hosting an indigenous Kurdish community nor stand in Middle East geographically, have supported terrorism against Turkey for years, even in paramilitary training.¹⁰

Most probably, strategic objectives of such third parties were to gain advantage in conflicted areas with Turkey, like the Aegean territorial waters dispute or the Cyprus issue. Those examples can be named as providing tactical advantages to waging a proxy war.

Starting from the 1970s and actively from; the 1984 Şemdinli-Eruh terrorist raids, the PKK is still active and holds an important part of the Turkish national security agenda.¹¹ From 1984 until the end of the 1990s, numerous states had systematically supported PKJC terrorism and some of them even waged proxy wars against Turkey.¹² They used elements for covert actions, hosted PKK camps, and provided paramilitary training notwithstanding the objections of the international community and the good

⁸ See Stephen J. Cimbala, *Politics of Warfare* (Penn State Press, 2004).

⁹ See Özdağ, Ümit, *Türk Ordusu 'nun PKK Operasyonları*.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ See Çitlioğlu, *Gri Tehdit Terörizm*.

¹² See Özdağ, *Türk Ordusu 'nun PKK Operasyonları*.

neighborhood policy of international relations¹³. The results can be evaluated as "quite beneficial" for those states because:

- Turkey had to shift some of her resources and efforts to the counterterrorist agenda;
- Ankara faced an oppressive cost in the economy, social harmony, and serious casualties of security forces;
- They created room for foreign involvement in Turkish politics; and
- The most important of all, Turkey lost nearly three decades which should have been used for economic and social development.

3.3. The Alarming Threat to the International System of "Tomorrow": Terrorism and Proxy Wars are Becoming Strategic Culture

On the other hand, third parties' costs were so minimal compared with those of Turkey or even the PKK. Thus proxy wars seem much more beneficial than waging a conventional war, especially taking notice of developments in weapon systems and the destructive results from the 21st century's armies and armament technology.

Because of the effectiveness of proxy wars, some consider the most alarming issue about tomorrow's terrorism threat is the evaluation of proxy war into a part of "strategic cultures" of significant number of states.

Theoretically, strategic culture is the "sum of ideas, conditioned emotional responses and patterns of habitual behavior that members of a national strategic community have acquired through instructions or imitation and share with each other."¹⁴

Keohane also emphasized strategic culture by arguing that ideational factors should be considered while evaluating the decisions of political figures.¹⁵ Simply put, strategic culture can be defined as the inclinations of political figures and the customs which accompany their rationalism. The key factor which forms a 'strategic culture' is the repetition of strategic decisions and concepts because of the decision maker's inclinations. Thus, in order to support the thesis of this article, which argues that proxy wars are justified by strategic culture, two factors should be examined: repetition and inclination.

Within today's conjuncture, because of asymmetric conditions and the previously mentioned deterrence of conventional wars, significant numbers of states are using proxy wars as an instrument to cause losses while confronting a sophisticated military power.¹⁶ The 2006 Lebanon War of Israel (because of Hezbollah's role) or Iran's Quad's Forces' efforts to support paramilitary groups in the Middle East may be explanatory examples of proxy war events. But the most alarming issue is not only the existence of proxy wars but also the threat that proxy war is becoming a tool for even routine security procedures.

The transformation of terrorism into a concept of conflict management through proxy wars would probably be the new disaster in the international security environment as counterterrorism operations are gaining a more proactive and more preemptive characteristic day by day. The Iraq and Afghanistan experiments showed that, as international terrorism could be very destructive, the reaction of the victims could be even worse

The result of using terrorist organizations and proxy wars as instruments of international relations, or at least international conflict resolution, have triggered a new counterterrorism methodology, including

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Jack Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications For Limited Nuclear Operation* (Santa Monica, RAND Publications, 1977).

¹⁵ Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in The World Political Economy* (Princeton, 1984), pp. 73-77.

¹⁶ See Cimballa, *Politics of Warfare*

more inclination to conduct cross-border (or even transoceanic) operations, higher arrest periods (i.e. United Kingdom after the London subway attacks in 2005), and more radical concepts like the Bush Doctrine -'you are either with us or with the terrorists or axis of evil' rhetoric. In other words, alternations in perceptions about the functionality of proxy wars have been changing counterterrorism measures, and consequently there appears to have been an almost worldwide shift in the security dimensions of strategic cultures.

The shift in strategic culture of security and growing inclinations in favor of supporting terrorism in order to wage a proxy war may become a more dangerous 'race' than conventional wars or even the nuclear armament race for the international system. Because although the nuclear race of the Cold War era was capable of destroying the world "several times over," the balance of terror, which means that Cold War balance in nuclear capacity of both sides prevented wars and established a terror equivalence depending of Armageddon weapons, was the key factor that deterred Moscow and Washington.¹⁷

3.3. J. Terrorism and Proxy Wars as "Tactical Choices"

Within present parameters, the 'unfavorable' nuclear and conventional wars are being replaced with 'cheaper' and 'less risky' proxy wars, covert operations and terrorism. As mentioned, the reactions of victims are getting harsher and this mutual interaction is causing counterterrorism measures to be reduced to a simpler state depending on short term, hard power strategies rather than structural solutions such as socio-economic development or democracy. This situation is alarming because both the economic and the technologic gap between West and East (or North and South), or in other words, developed and developing ones are increasing dramatically as well as the costs of conventional wars between developed states.

As is well known, a strategy is based on objectives and capabilities; the gap between those two elements creates the risk factor.¹⁸ In terms of military strategy, technology is changing the 'basic nature of weapons' and transformation capabilities.¹⁹ On the other hand, while the gap between capabilities is growing in today's world, the objectives of actors generally remain unchanged. Thus, expected shifts in strategic culture may become the structural problem of international security and a main threat in the near future. For example, suicide attacks were regarded as if they tactically belong to the terrorists of Islamic societies and result from the belief of martyrdom. However, the terrorist organization which mostly preferred suicide attacks is the Hindu Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka.²⁰ Furthermore, although terrorists seem to be irrational, bloodthirsty monsters, research has established the case clearly that a considerable number of them are intellectually sophisticated, psychologically healthy people who can think, plan and act rationally.²¹ As a result, it should be taken into consideration by political decision makers and security society that the terrorism and its violence attributes are becoming tactical preferences instead of ideologies.

Terrorism, as a tactical approach of non-state actors in the international system, has created the concept called 'asymmetric threat' Moreover, terrorism can be preferred by states in order to exert systematic violence or waging proxy wars, as mentioned before. The embrace of terrorism as an element of proxy wars by some states will make others edge towards protectionism by military means. However, military measures should only be regarded as short-term and tactical solutions for terrorism.²² In other words, while using terrorism through proxy wars will cause more military hardening, more military hardening

¹⁷ See Albert Wohlstetter, *The Delicate Balance of Terror* (RAND Corporation, 1958).

¹⁸ See B.H. Liddell-Hart, *Strateji Dolaylı Tutum* (Selma Koçak, trans., Istanbul, Doruk Yayıncılık, 2003); J. Boone Bartholomees, Jr, ed, *Theory of War and Strategy* (US Army War College, 2008).

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Shircen M. Mazari, "Analysis on Future of Terrorism," *Defence Against Terrorism Review*, Vol.1, No. I (Spring 2008).

²¹ See Çitlioğlu, *Gri Tehdit Terörizm*.

²² Dominika Svarc, "Military Response to Terrorism and the Jus ad Bellum" *Defence Against Terrorism Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Spring 2008).

may provide interim solutions instead of structural ones. In fact, solely military efforts sometimes mean a self-defeating strategy that can only confront in a provisional dimension.²³

Another aspect of terrorism is religious extremist motivation. Thus, as a part of the third subtitle, religion-terrorism interactions will be examined.

4. Religious Extremism and Terrorism: *Where We Are Today and What to Expect for Tomorrow?*

When evaluating the relationship between religion and terrorism, maybe the most misleading factor is to generalize all kinds of interaction between terrorism and religion. Embrace of a religion or a specific sect can be one of the characteristics of a terrorist organization. Hoffman gives the examples of the IRA as "overwhelmingly Catholic," the PLO as Muslim, or the Protestant Ulster Freedom Fighters.²⁴ However, for those organizations, the dominant motivation is political and religion factor is a secondary identification mark.²⁵

As mentioned before, Tamil Tigers were mostly Hindu. However, they were not using terrorism as a Hinduism struggle but for ethnic separation and the political freedom of the Tamil Society in Sri Lanka. Consequently, the main factor which decisions makers and security societies should focus on is regarding not only the existence of the religion factor but also the role of religion while evaluating and categorizing terrorist movements.

This article is neither a religious terrorism-focused study, nor would it provide a rigorously prepared paper on religion-motivated terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda. Instead, the focus of this work will be enhanced by focusing on the social codes of Muslim-terrorism perceptions in the Western World.

4.1. Asking "Which Muslims" and Why

In July 2005, London was shaken with terrorist bombings. It was then revealed that the offenders were Muslim but from not coming from Muslim countries; they were actually born in England and were members of the British Muslim community. Also, most of the 9/11 terrorists were Western-educated too.²⁶

These two cases should give a hint about analyzing events labeled "Islamic Terrorism," as the most popular part of the category of religion-motivated terrorism. The generalization problem that mentioned before is also valid for interpretations about Islam and violence.

Firstly, generalizations of all 'proceed to violence' events should not be generalized as if they are identical. For instance, the Sunni Arab insurgency in Iraq seemed to be a unitary element since the 2007 Baghdad Security Plan (BSP) and Surge Offensive (SO). However, it was well known before that nearly 1000 foreign jihadist and indigenous elements were acting against Coalition troops separately. Furthermore, the motivations of indigenous Sunni Arabs were quite different than those of Al Qaeda-linked jihadists. In fact, they opposed the invasion and the methods of the invasion and the invaders.

On the other hand, foreign elements were following the global jihad fatwa of Ayman al-Zawahiri.²⁷ It is vital to remember that, with the BSP and SO, Sunni tribes in Al Anbar Province, which were holding a place in insurgency, had allied with General Petraeus.²⁸ Surprisingly, they had acted against foreign jihadists and strived to help General Petraeus maintain security and stability in Iraq.

²³ See Daniel Benjamin, *Strategic Counterterrorism* (Washington, Brookings Institution, 2008).

²⁴ See Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*.

²⁵ Ibid, at 87.

²⁶ Mazari, "Analysis on Future of Terrorism," pp. 88-89.

²⁷ See Michael Eisenstadt and Jeffrey White, *Assessing Iraq's Sunni Arab Insurgency* (The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2005).

²⁸ Anthony H. Cordesman and Adam Mausner, *How Soon Is Safe? Iraqi Force Development and 'Conditions-Based' US Withdrawals* (CSIS, Washington DC, 2009).

4.2. Biases in Intelligence Analysis When Evaluating Religious Extremism and Terrorism

It is certain that there are lessons to be learned from the Iraq insurgency example. It can be argued that the main weakness of Western states is not their military capabilities to defeat or prevent terrorism but their intelligence analyses when categorizing and evaluating terrorism. It should be clear that each violent act done by Muslim groups is not 'Islam religion-motivated terrorism.' The same is valid for other religions and sects or cults, of course.

It is clear that intelligence analysis is one of the dominant factors that influence the manners and policies of decisionmakers. This article argues that, mainly, the "psychology of intelligence analysis" is the reason of misleading generalizations and wrong categorizations about "Islam religion motivated terrorist actions" in Western states, especially in United States of America.²⁹ Heuer advocates that biases about causes and effects compose a vital part of the psychology of intelligence analysis and that biases sometimes may take the place of the rationality that is needed in intelligence analysis.³⁰ Thus, biases and manipulations about religion-motivated terrorism or, Islam for instance, may shape the analysis and evaluations of Western security elite and academics.

It would not be fair to reduce these biases in intelligence analysis as a problem of Western perception. In Muslim communities, indeed, there are inclinations to label all the security measures of the US or allied Western states as 'crusades against Islam,' all national defense acts of Israel as Zionism and all secular or Western-allied regimes with Muslim communities as collaborators of infidels.

In fact, the biases which are discussed above can be counted as the primary reason causing lack of dialogue between Muslim communities and Western states. Lack of dialogue, without doubt, is providing an important advantage to al-Qaeda or Taliban, which they are exploiting to recruit new militants, since lack of dialogue creates a lack of collective acquaintanceship among societies and consequently, increases the fear of 'the other.'

Reform in the perceptions of security and intelligence elites seems vital for US and her allies, especially in Afghanistan and particularly in Iraq, and also to prevent global terrorism in their own territories. There are evaluations about even how al-Qaeda and Taliban have cells and groups which can be negotiated with.³¹ In order to detect which group or cells they are, identification of all Muslim elements should be leaved.

4.2.1. Disregarded Social Factors in Intelligence Analyzes and Political Perceptions

According to the literature of psychology, an identity which is living away from its homeland will be more inclined to harshly protect its core values and isolation.³² The positions of Muslim communities in Western states seem to match the conditions above - they are away from their homelands, ironically watching operations in Iraq and Afghanistan from the homelands of Coalition Forces and facing prejudices.

Under these circumstances, it becomes easier for religious-extremist terrorists to exploit and manipulate Muslim communities in Europe and USA. Especially, any acts of the government which would be reminiscent of the marginalization of Muslims serve the interests of religious extremist terrorist organizations. The fraud of minority can be counted as the primary motivation that Al Qaeda used when recruiting militants from West.

²⁹ See Kenneth Lieberthal, *The US Intelligence Community and Foreign Policy* (Washington. John I. Thorton China Center, Brookings Institution, 2009).

³⁰ Ricahrds J. Heuer, Jr., *Psychology of Intelligence Analysis* (Center for the Study of Intelligenee, Central Intelligence Agency, 1999).

³¹ See Jason Burke, *Al Qaeda: Casting a Shadow of Terror* (I.B. Tauris, London, 2003).

³² See Abdülkadir Çevik, *Politik Psikoloji* (Ankara, Dost Kitabevi, 2009); Volkan, Kanbağı *Emik Gururdan Emik Teröre*.

Furthermore, there is a Western community factor. While Muslim communities are feeling the fraud of minority, Europeans and Americans naturally feel themselves vulnerable to betrayal because of terrorist attacks committed by Western-resident or Western-educated Muslims. Consequently, the collective mutual psychologies of the fraud of minority leads to the vulnerability to betrayal composition, resulting in rising ethnic and religious tension and even de facto 'apartheids.'

It can be argued that rising conflicts between Muslim communities and European/American societies may become the most serious threat in the future due to potential religious tensions.

Conclusion

Existent dominant paradigms which determined the 'road map' of today's terrorist movements and factors of counterterrorism are mentioned below:

Ethnic separatism and micronationalism which exploit democratic freedoms and also the ethnic separatism that result from the lack of democratic freedoms are and probably shall be the main threat to the territorial unity of states.

As a result, states should refrain from both providing democratic freedom based on ethnic separations and also eliminating democratization and socio-political space for the freedom of their citizens.

Social tension and marginalization, based on religion differences are inclined to radicalize minor communities and make them prone to assert systematic violence. Thus, governments and security elites should avoid making generalizations about a religious identity to prevent social conflicts.

As terrorism becomes a tactical choice, technological improvements, especially in military science, transportation and biochemistry are becoming more crucial because:

They could also be in service of terrorist organizations. Thus, technological secrets and weapons technology must be held tightly.

Related with the article above, regarding the situation and circumstances in the Af-Pak Region,³³ nuclear warheads have to be watched carefully.

Biochemistry research and labs should be watched carefully, as well as chemicals used in detonations, because of terrorist methods expected in the near future.

Tomorrow's terrorist activities will probably act and organize using a 'cells' model, and 'umbrella organizations,' such as Al Qaeda, are expected to loom large due to improvements in military capabilities. Thus, HUMINT-type intelligence shall gain importance as well as more orthodox means of intelligence. Regarding this fact, recruiting from crisis areas and reflecting the demographics of the world is noteworthy with Taliban, it is vital to analyze social codes of the Pashtun community of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Generally, studies on terrorism advise the transformation of armies into small but mobile units. Keeping the idea of mobilization is quite critical in counterterrorism; the Afghanistan and Sri Lanka cases showed that territorial superiority holds an indispensable role in confronting large-scale terrorist movements. Consequently, large-scale armies which also contain mobile operational units should meet the demands of states facing territorial threats or waging cross-border operations.

A sense of violence is one of the identical instincts of being human. It is thought that terrorism studies should not focus on whether violence results from external factors or genetics, but exactly which elements suppress or provoke the violent nature of mankind. The question of why a person becomes or chooses to become a terrorist gains importance right at this point. It can be argued that the problem of self-identification opens the way. In other words, humiliations or damnifications, even childhood or youth

³³ Afghanistan, Pakistan, and their geopolitical environment.

traumas, do not solely spark the terrorization process but opens it through the destruction of self-esteem and causes identification problems.

These self-identification problems are thought to force repressed people to characterize themselves by devotion to an ideology and an organization or higher body (umbrella for self-esteem and determine an "other" or "enemy" for a better *self-identification*).

Thereby, a 'lost person' identifies himself/herself within the 'protective' umbrella of a terrorist organization, its ideology, and its targets. Thus, dying for the 'sacred objectives,' for instance as a suicide bomber, becomes even a ritual of reincarnation.

It is considered that the most interesting point of suicide bombings is the terrorist's awareness of his or her impending death. This should show the signs of great devotions to a 'holy' purpose.

When the general profiles of those 'devoted' ones are examined, it is possible to reach some interesting results:

- Terrorists suffer from self-confidence problems and try to recreate themselves within the organization,
- Individually, terrorists must be familiar with the area where they operate,
- Within this context, terrorists from rural areas are usually uneducated because of socio-economic factors.
- Leaders of terrorist organizations strongly differ from ordinary members,
- Leaders are inclined to have a paranoid state of mind about the loyalty of others,
- Leaders are tending to create and play in fantasy worlds. Especially middle ranks do not pretend to be 'romantic warriors' (but they feel as if they are) while upper ranks are quite pragmatic.

Consequently, the psychology of a terrorist is something that can be determined but on the other hand it is diversified. In brief, the psychology of a terrorist in fact defines a plural situation, as the psychology of ordinary terrorists, mid-rank operational leaders and 'master-minds' have identification marks but differ from each other.

In the light of above, psychological operations or psychological confrontation with a terrorist organization should actually represent multilevel activity which must categorize not only terrorist organizations but also their types of elements.

In conclusion, terrorism is expected to dominate much of the world's security agenda in the future as it does today. Reforms in perceptions and multidisciplinary, holistic approaches should be developed and improved in order to confront a complicated terrorism paradigm.

It should be understood that neither religion nor ethnic motivation is the key factor that gives rise to worries about tomorrow's terrorist threats, but instead the fact that terrorism is becoming a strategic culture under risky or disadvantageous circumstances or asymmetric conditions. In order to understand and prevent tomorrow's threat, it will be vital to defeat terrorism, not only as a paramilitary element but most importantly as a tactical choice.

Bibliography

Bartholomees, Jr, J. Boone, ed, Theory of War and Strategy (US Army War College, 2008).

Başeren, Sertaç, "Terrorism with Its Differentiating Aspects," Defence Against Terrorism Review, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Spring 2008).

Benjamin, Daniel, Strategic Counterterrorism (Washington, Brookings Institution, 2008).

Burke, Jason, Al Qaeda: Casting a Shadow of Terror (LB. Tauris, London, 2003).

Cimbala, Stephen. J., Politics of Warfare (Penn State Press, 2004).

Cordesman, Anthony H. and Adam Mausner, How Soon h Safe? Irađi Force Development And 'Conditions-Based' US Withdrawals (CSIS, Washington DC, 2009).

Çevik, Abdülkadir, Politik Psikoloji (Ankara, Dost Kitabevi, 2009).

Çitliođlu, Ercan, Gri Tehdit TERÖRİZM (İstanbul, Destek Yayıncılık, 2008).

Eisenstadt, Michael and Jeffrey White, Assessing Iraq's Sunni Arab Insurgency, (The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2005).

Greene, T. N., The Guerilla and How to Fight Him (Ankara, Genelkurmay Basımevi, 1965).

Heuer, Jr, Richards J., Psychology of Intelligence Analysis (Center for the Study of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, 1999).

Hoffman, Bruce, Inside Terrorism (New York, Columbia University Press, 1998).

Keohane, Robert. O., After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in The World Political Economy (Princeton, 1984).

Lieberthal, Kenneth, The US Intelligence Community and Foreign Policy (Washington. John 1. Thorton China Center, Brookings Institution, 2009).

Liddell-Hart, B. H., Strateji Dolaylı Tutum (Selma Koçak, trans., Istanbul, Doruk Yayıncılık, 2003).

Livingston, Robert. W., Low Intensity Conflict Intelligence: Lessons From Vietnam (US Department of Army, 1990).

Mazari, Shireen, M, "Analysis on Future of Terrorism," Defence Against Terrorism Review, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Spring 2008).

Özdađ, Ümit, Türk Ordusu 'nun PKK Operasyonları (İstanbul, Pegasus Yayınlan, 2007).

Snyder, Jack, The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications For Limited Nuclear Operation (Santa Monica, RAND Publications, 1977). Svarc, Dominika, "Military Response to Terrorism and the Jus ad Bellum" Defence Against Terrorism Review, Vol, 1, No. 1 (Spring 2008).

Volkan, Vamık D., Kanbađı Etnik Gururdan Etnik Teröre (İstanbul, Bađlam Yayıncılık, 1999).

Wohlstetter, Albert, The Delicate Balance of Terror (RAND Corporation, 1958).