

GLOBAL TERRORISM AND ITS IMPACTS ON NATIONAL SECURITY

Doç. Dr. Yaşar ONAY

Kleanthis KYRIAKIDIS

Abstract:

Beginning with the 1990s, numerous scholars, politicians and political analysts alike have characterized terrorism as global, religious, irrational and rising. The main characteristics of the “terrorism”, its political, local and rational character, are outmoded in accordance with this line of thinking. Global terrorism is thought to be an enemy worth changing the National Security Strategy of the states in the international system, and even suspending some civil not to mention human rights. However, the decline or disappearance of many prominent terrorist figures or entire groups have been ironically overlooked, or selectively ignored as irrelevant to the “new” terrorism. This thesis challenges the aforementioned common knowledge and suggests that the “global terrorism” has very few if any differences from the “classical old” one. It remains a purely political, mainly local and definitely rational activity in a steady or declining stage

Key Words: Terrorism, Security, Globalism, Ideology, Totalitarianism

I. TERRORISM AND A STATE:

Terrorism viewed State as a system to influence through out history. According to this view, state as a kind of system has more than one center of power and the demolition of these power centers is the main target of terrorism. However the demolition state does not mean physical extermination. The aim of terrorism is to weaken the authority of state and the superiority of law. This can be defined as a creation of a graded affect. Since the social, economic, politic and military powers of the state are interdependent from each other, any attack that will harm to one of them will naturally affect the others. This is the main reason of the creation of the graded affect by the terrorism. Since the crucial points of the state produce more impression, they are the potential targets of the terrorist attacks. The crucial points that are chosen by the terrorist organizations may not always aim to physical destruction. There is no need to kill somebody to cause a social chaos or economic crises. With the pressure that will be formed on one of the national power components can cause a panic and depress the people and this may be the target of the terrorist organization to achieve. Today terrorist groups in order to create a psychological affect are using methods of fear. This is the main reason of the terrorist attacks targeting the state and the people in the strategic level.

Terrorist organizations use two types of power applications in accordance with the purpose/ intention and the created affect. These are the methods of forcing and using rough power. While the purpose of using the rough power is to influence the politics of the government by way of destruction, the method of forcing aims to change the politics of the governments by applying pressure. Therefore the political leadership of the state is the target of the strategic planning of the terrorist organizations. If the political leadership of the state is not chosen as a target, the terrorist organizations focus on the terrorist actions to influence the politics of the political leadership. Consequently, with the terrorist actions, to lessen the determination of the political power on fighting against the terrorism is aimed. Because the attacks to the heart of the state will cause “partial affect” and create a psychological pressure on the political leaders. On the other hand, the leaders of the terrorist organizations know that they are not able to achieve their goals by way of terrorism; however this is not important for them. For them terrorism is a tool to deprive the target state of reaching their social, economic and political targets. Till recent days terrorist actions have been always directed by the headquarters. It was impossible for the militants do some actions without the approval of the leadership. The political initiative is never given to the militants and collected in the hands of the leadership.

II. THE GLOBAL ASPECT OF TERRORISM¹

¹ This part is supported by Kleantlis Kyriakidis, “ 21st Century Terrorism: Wrong Diagnosis, Inadequate Remedy, Naval Postgraduate School Thesis, June 2005.

Global terrorism has three different dimensions. The first is worldwide public support. The second is global reach. The third and much more important is the global political aspirations of certain terrorist groups. The main example of a group with global public support is Al Qaeda and the intent is not to contradict its network of supporters. However, it is possible to claim that many groups have been enjoying a level of global support since their creation and are very strictly confined in their borders. The main example is the IRA, which has always been supported by organizations such as the American NORAD (the Irish National Northern Aid Committee) and has also always had supporters worldwide.² Nearly 50% of the IRA's weapons are believed to come from the United States.³ In accordance with James Adams from the onset of modern terrorism in Northern Ireland in 1969, the United States has played a key role in its support. The enormous Irish- American population has always felt a strong sentimental attachment to the "old country", and this has been translated into a steady stream of cash and guns to the IRA, which has in part enabled them to survive.⁴ Basques, Tamils and Palestinians of the Diaspora have been contributing to the "freedom fighting cause" of their compatriots by morally and economically supporting groups like ETA, LTTE and the numerous Palestinian terrorist ones. LTTE had official representatives in important countries such as India and PLO, while it had been executing terrorist acts, had representatives in many European countries.⁵ The phenomenon of a terrorist group gaining worldwide sympathy and having a considerable network is anything but new and cannot be considered a characteristic of "global terrorism". Obviously, none of the aforementioned groups can be characterized as global despite their universal network and sympathizers. Moreover, there is nothing "new" about it. Hence, worldwide public support is not enough to characterize the phenomenon or a certain group as "global."⁶

The second dimension of global terrorism is its universal reach. Paul Pillar suggests that "in today's globalizing world, terrorists can reach their targets more easily, their targets are exposed in more places..."⁷ Nevertheless; an important fact is that the vast majority of the terrorist organizations have a very limited area of operations. Al Qaeda is the only one with a sustained global reach and impressive results.

Hezbollah is often used as the fundamental example of "global terrorism". Daniel Byman suggests that "few terrorist organizations meet this standard (global reach) but Hezbollah is definitely one of them. The Lebanon-based group has cells on every continent and its highly skilled operatives have committed horrifying

² Tom F. Baldy, *Battle for Ulster* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1987), pp. 21-23, reproduces this quote from an article in the London Times, circa the death of Bobby Sands, the uncontested leader of the famous hunger strike of the IRA "terrorists".

³ Baldy, p. 125.

⁴ 50 James Adams, *The Financing of Terrorism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), p. 134.

⁵ Kleanthis Kyriakidis, "21st Century Terrorism: Wrong Diagnosis, Inadequate Remedy," Naval Postgraduate School Thesis, June 2005.

⁶ Kyriakidis, p.17.

⁷ Paul R. Pillar, "Terrorism Goes Global: Extremist Groups Extend Their Reach Worldwide," *The Brookings Review*, Issue 19, Fall 2001, p. 35.

attacks as far away as Argentina.”⁸ However, Hezbollah has not targeted any European or American for 25 years, it has rejected the accusation of being responsible for the Buenos Aires attack but proudly presents its military operations against the Israeli Defense Forces and the list of its “martyrs” everyday through its TV channel (“al-Manar”). With no proof of actual worldwide action and taking into consideration that whenever such action took place, the targets were always Israelis, groups such as the PFLP and the Hezbollah cannot be regarded as “global.”

Another important issue about the global reach of the “new terrorism” is that it is not at all “new”. The PFLP “hijacking barrage” that culminated in the “skyjack Sunday” occurred in 1968-1970. The Munich massacre took place on September 1972. The PanAm Lockerbie bombing happened in December 1988. Hence, the major terrorist incidents with a global reach are part of what is called “old” terrorism and from groups that have never been considered “global”. The third intrinsic component of terrorist “globalization” is what the author calls a “global political agenda,” a revisionist worldview. Al-Qaeda seems to seek the “toppling [of] existing Muslim governments and establishing a new caliphate, an undivided Islamic realm ruled by sharia.”⁹ Whereas all aforementioned cases lack a broader global aim and their goals are very narrowly geographically confined, Al Qaeda is considered by the supporters of the “new terrorism” as an exception. Hence, Al Qaeda is very widely used as an example by the supporters of this theory, as something radically different. However, it can be counter-argued that Al Qaeda expanded its initial goals from forcing the Americans out of Saudi Arabia⁵⁹ to finally ostracizing all “infidels” out of the “dar al Islam.” Actually, the “irrational” restoration of the Caliphate by uniting the entire Muslim world is mentioned at the Fatwa issued on February 23, 1998 and signed by Usama bin Laden (al-Qaeda), Ayman al-Zawahiri (the Egyptian Islamic Jihad later merged with Al-Qaeda), Abu Yasir Rifai Ahmad Taha (al Gamaa al Islamiyya), Mir Hamzah (Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Pakistan) and Fazlur Rahman (Jihad Movement in Bangladesh). It is evident that the “rational” short term objective of Al Qaeda has already been achieved. Hence, it can advertise a global agenda, no matter if it is a real aim of the group, in order to acquire prestige, worldwide support and elevate itself to the status of a global powerful player. Some authors suggest that other groups also have a broader agenda. However, it is not global. Some Kashmiri groups want to “liberate” the Muslims in the entire subcontinent⁶¹ and Hezbollah wants to establish a theocracy in Lebanon and expand it at least in the Shia Muslim communities. Amal Saad Ghorayeb suggests that “judging by the continued subordination of Hezbollah’s domestic political role to its geostrategic roles, it seems as though Hezbollah has chosen to accord its Lebanese identity and role as an influential local political force, secondary status to its Islamic identity and role as a revolutionary exemplar for the umma”.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the truth is that

⁸ Daniel Byman, “Should Hezbollah be Next?,” *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2003, p. 54.

⁹ Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror* (New York: Random House, 2002), p. 103

¹⁰ Amal Saad Ghorayeb, *Hizbu'llah, Politics and Religion* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), p. 191.

Hezbollah “transformed itself from a radical, clandestine militia to a moderate, mainstream political party with a resistance wing...” in order to achieve its short-term aspirations of winning the Lebanese public support and liberating South Lebanon from Israeli occupation.¹¹ In that sense, Hezbollah achieved its initial “rational” goal, in the same way as Al Qaeda did. One of the major mistakes of U.S. foreign policy was presenting Usama bin Laden as an extremely powerful opponent. As Paul Pillar explains “as far as public diplomacy is concerned, the emphasis should be on cutting him (Usama bin Laden) down, not building him up”!¹² An unintended consequence of the elevation of Al Qaeda to the status of a global powerful opponent was to change its character from a wellstructured group to a franchise. This is something radically novel that deviates from the typical command and control hierarchy. In accordance with the 9/11 Commission Report, “Al Qaeda represents an ideological movement, not a finite group of people...It has transformed itself into a decentralized force.” Stephen Sloan characterizes the small decentralized group as stand-alone, mini-terrorist group (which) may operate within an environment of racial, ethnic and anti-government hatred for example, but it does not have specific organizational ties to a larger organization, nor is dependent on some level of support from a larger organization, a front group or a sector of the community.¹³

Nevertheless, it applies only to Al Qaeda and mainly in the post-9/11 world, where the severely battered group lost much of their centralized power. With Usama bin Laden on the run, the structure of Al Qaeda is forcibly decentralized. It is even possible to consider him unimportant for the continuation and strengthening of the jihaddist movement, in the sense that his disappearance would not end Islamic insurgencies around the world, and possibly would ignite even more aggressive reactions. Jason Burke suggests that “the nearest thing to al-Qaeda as popularly understood, existed for a short period, between 1996 and 2001...What we have currently is a broad and diverse movement of radical Islamic militancy.”¹⁴ For instance, it is very doubtful that the so-called “Spanish cell”, which conducted the attack in Madrid, had anything to do with Usama bin Laden on a personal level. A plausible scenario is that there is a loose affiliation and a financial aid from the “parent” group of Al Qaeda; however, it is more likely that the attack was just conducted by an Islamic militant group in the name of Al Qaeda. In the aforementioned case, the Londonbased Arab newspaper “Al Quds al Arabi” received an e-mail, purportedly from the Islamist group Abu Hafs al-Masri Brigade with alleged ties to Al Qaeda, claiming responsibility for the bombs. After a while and via an anonymous phone call, a videotape was also found in which the self-proclaimed Al Qaeda’s military spokesman in Europe, Abu Dujan al Afghani, in Arabic declared the group’s responsibility for what happened in Madrid exactly

¹¹ Judith Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah, The Changing Face of Terrorism* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2004),

¹² Paul R. Pillar, *Terrorism and US Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), p. 199.

¹³ Stephen Sloan, “The Changing nature of Terrorism,” James M. Smith and William C. Thomas (ed.), *The Terrorism Threat and US Government Response: Operational and Organizational Factors* (Colorado: USAF Institute of National Security Studies, 2001), p. 63

¹⁴ Jason Burke, *Al Qaeda, The True Story of Radical Islam* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2004), p. xxv. He also points out that “we are now in a ‘post-bin Laden’ phase of Islamic militancy,” p. 21.

2-1/2 years after the attacks on New York and Washington in response to Spanish participation in Operation Iraqi Freedom. An even more clear case is the April 2004 British success of arresting eight terrorists and the seizure of half a ton of ammonium nitrate, enough for an explosion capable of killing more than 1,000 people. As Fareed Zakaria pointed out The authorities see no involvement by Al Qaeda. In fact, not one of the suspects is foreign-born or had spent any time in Afghan training camps.

These are British, middle-class Muslim suburbanites who the authorities say became terrorists...They are inspired, not directed by Al Qaeda.¹⁵ Therefore, it is suggested that one simply observe a franchise phenomenon, where Islamic insurgents around the world use Al Qaeda's name. An example of what the author calls "a franchise phenomenon", is that if a person commits suicide and kills 150 people, this person will then be deemed a common criminal, worthless of much attention. If 20 are killed but a message is left stating that the perpetrator belongs to a distant cell of Al Qaeda, it would be instant front-page news. In that sense, Al Qaeda is not a group that acts globally. There is a shared ideology by independent Islamist groups, which act locally using the same "brand", for easier recognition and publicity. Therefore, terrorism is very local.

Another factor that makes terrorism more local than in the past is that terrorists cannot spread because they cannot find safe havens. Primakov suggests that they "tend to become less closely tied to states and governments." Bruce Hoffman, an advocate of the "new terrorism" admits that currently terrorists have a "lack of bases and lack of patrons."¹⁶ It is evident that "rogue-state" leaders like Libya's Muammar Quaddafi and Iran's Mohammad Khatami have helped the anti-terrorist struggle. Quaddafi broke off relations with the IRA, expelled Abu Nidal and severed relations with the PFLP-GC and PIJ. Khatami was very careful during Operation Iraqi Freedom, pressed Hezbollah to keep a low profile and facilitated the anti-Taliban struggle for his own reasons. Even Pakistan makes efforts to combat the terrorist groups in Kashmir without hurting the "national cause of the real freedom fighters."

In conclusion, it is necessary to point out that the overwhelming majority of the terrorist groups think and act locally, despite the fact that they have the capability of global reach, and in many cases, a network of sympathizers around the world. Actually, the most important incidents of "global reach" are very old and cannot be connected to the "new terrorism" theory. The only group with real global reach is Al Qaeda. In that case, the counter-argument is that the main difference is that the "global political agenda" of the group is nominal, since its short-term goal has been achieved. Moreover, most of the operations carried out in its name are executed by autonomous or semi-autonomous groups, in a franchise manner, and there is no proof of actual relations between the different "cells", as

¹⁵ Fareed Zakaria, *The Best Ways to Beat Terror*, article from *Newsweek*, April 12, 2004, p. 35.

¹⁶ Bruce Hoffman, "Foreword: Twenty-First Century Terrorism", James M. Smith and William C. Thomas, *The Terrorism Threat and US Government Response: Operational and Organizational Factors* (Colorado: USAF Institute of National Security Studies, 2001), p. ix.

they are portrayed by the defenders of the “new terrorism” theory. In that sense, there is no war against terrorism but a struggle against “worldwide Islamic insurgency.”¹⁷

One last thing that makes post-modern terrorism more local than in the past is that there are no state-sponsors, at least overtly, and therefore, a group cannot easily spread, as was the case in the 1970s and 1980s.

¹⁷ Anonymous (Michael Scheuer), *Imperial Hubris* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey’s Inc., 2004), p. x.