



Comparison of Two Terrorist Organizations: Hezbollah and Al Qaeda

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Abstract

Terrorism is a short way to political aims. The term terror was firstly used in French Revolution and later it became part of the political systems. The real reasons of terrorism change from time to time and from place to place. There are nationalist, separatist organizations in the world. The two examples, Hezbollah and Al Qaeda are religion-based organizations and they emerged on very similar backgrounds. Both of them found ideological backgrounds in the history of Islam. Furthermore, both of their ideological bases interpreted Islam in a very harsh way. They aimed to expel the invasions. When the invasions ended, Hezbollah became part of the political system and Al Qaeda continued its terrorist activities.

Key Words: Terrorism, Religion, Hezbollah, Al Qaeda

INTRODUCTION

Terrorism has become a huge problem throughout history. The main aim of the terrorists is to reach their political aims from the shortcut. It is their attacks on the targeted community for propaganda. They want to show that their rights are usurped and the governments should do something. In order to compel the governments to take major actions, they try to psyche out the communities and decrease their dependence on the governments. To reach these aims, terrorist organizations come out many different societies with many similar strategies. Some of them accept the religion as an ideological base for their activities like Hezbollah and Al Qaeda.

1. TERROR AND TERRORISM

The expression "terror" comes from the Latin word "terrere" which means terrifying, scaring and thus deterring. According to Wilkinson in order to reach some political aims, terrorism is a systematic implementation of destructive activities and murders so that they would be able to terrify the social masses and oblige the governments to do what they desire (Macdonald, no date: <http://www.germanlawJournal.com/article.php?id=217>).

The word "terror" was firstly used during the French Revolution in the era of Jacobins as "reign of terror" in 1789 (Golder and Williams, 2004: 32).

The people who feel that they are threatened by terror go into a kind of psychological disorder. As a result of these, enmity to foreigners starts to emerge.

2. ELEMENTS OF TERROR

Although it is possible to mention different elements which threaten people in international arena, terrorism is one of the most powerful because it tries to reach at the aim from the shortcut. So terrorism has an effect of reorganizing the international relations.

Huddy, Feldman, Capelos and Provos (2002: 486-487) divided threat into two: Personal and National

The personal one is very close to individuals and it is perceived immediately. It creates fear, concern, depression and the degree that it affects is very high in relation to national threat. It is true that terrorism renders the feeling of fear. But especially those who are closer to the region where terrorist attacks take place feel the threat more than the others (Fischhoff, Gonzalez, Small, Lerner, 2003: 138).

a. Ideological elements of terrorism

Terrorism has to have an ideological base because it is the core of the political movements. Terrorist organizations tune up their strategies in accordance with their ideology. The main aim of these organizations when they give their members "political education" is to make them conscious of their ideology and aims. Throughout this process, the members feel more close to the organization. In today's world, the terrorist organizations have such ideologies as Marxist-Leninist, nationalist and religious. They are rooted to different sources and they generally aim to establish new regimes on the regions they exist.

Ideology has the leading power for terrorist activities. They mainly lean on these ideologies to reach their aims (Kongar, 1998: 23).

When there are some terrorist activities somewhere, there are some processes that lead to that point previously. Firstly people see some things as not true. Then they start to think that some things are not fair and they start to compare themselves to others. At the next step, they see the others as guilty of their deprivation and it is the phase of blaming. Next, they see the others as evil and they start to have some prejudices for the others. The last phase is the deviation of the psychology in which those who are ready for attacks feel that the other on the other side are enemies and they are there to respond. So they look down on the others and see them as nothing. As a natural result of these processes, they start to murder (Borum, 2004: 58).

b. Organizational Elements

The success of the terrorist entities is strictly related to their organizational skills. In order to reach their aims, they should move in unity and they should be commanded efficiently. Thus, the terrorist organization consists of people who aim the same thing and track the same way. In today's world, the terrorist organizations generally have a cellular structure and the secrecy of the movements is the core point. Illegal activities are supported by those in the legal area and who sympathize with these organizations. As they lack in the terrorists, they find more ones from those people.

c. The Element of Violence

One of the elements that makes these organizations survive is violence. It is an efficient means of getting their targets. In order to change the constitutional structure of the country they exist, they go through many violent activities. They even use violence as a means of propaganda. What they aim when they use violence is that they try to make people feel dismay and not depend on the government so as to compel it to change their policies.

3. THE REASONS OF TERRORISM

When the members of a terrorist organization are evaluated, it should be taken into consideration that their family background, financial status, psychological inclinations and the reasons that urge them to such activities are very important. Because they are in such a psychological deviation that they can even kill the innocent people. For that reason, some precautions should be taken to prevent terrorism such as cultural rights and betterment of financial situation of the whole community. This kind of precautions is necessary to put the social dynamics in order (Erkal, 1985: 137).

a. Financial reasons

Being in a poor situation financially is not a unique reason for terrorism. When there is this kind of situation, it does not mean that terrorism is inevitable. But it is very effective when some ethnic groups feel that they are treated unjustly. When the ethnic identity is irritated, it generally leads them to separatist movements (Kıslalı, 1993: 224). The difficulty of economic situation affects people from different ways. So unbalanced distribution of the sources is a kind of ammunition that terrorist organizations use very much. Some research showed that terrorists are generally from those who are financially poor (Caşın, 2008: 282). For these reasons, the most effective source of terrorism comes out in underdeveloped countries.

b. Social and Cultural Reasons

Clash of cultures can give a limited explanation to such deeds. When people enter a new culture, they normally have adaptation problems because their background is very different from what they see there. So they go into some clashes with the culture they have confronted. Especially for those who cannot acquire the norms of the target culture, it turns into a long-lasting problem. As a result of these, this kind of people are exposed to deprivation by the members of that society. There are this kind of people that feel that they are put to deprivation and they feel compelled to violation. There are also some people who are against the settled norms in the society and try to find some gangs for themselves for self-realization. So that kind of deviant characters are inclined to guilt. Those who become part of the gangs and commit crimes admit that they are well-adapted to these organizations which serve as a base for criminal activities (Bese, Gökceğöz, Cinoğlu, Güneş, 2003: 82).

c. Educational Reasons

Lack of education is a crucial problem for young people to go after terrorist organizations. Educational problems have two different dimensions:

- 1) The reasons that direct young people to guilt are because of poor education
- 2) The education itself has some problems, that is to say, they learn to rebel through educational process

For the terrorist organizations, these kind of young people are very useful for their targets and they are easily lured into misdeeds (Kongar, 1998: 211).

d. Psychological Reasons

There are some people in the society who are devoid of realization and they generally defiance characters this kind of people some other psychological problems such as length of self-esteem bedtime Bert nervousness bad temper and so on when they don't see any respect from the society, they try some other ways for self-realization. They are also inclined to violation and this is a kind of manner through which they want to prove themselves. The terrorist organizations a good way to prove themselves. Another dimension for this kind of participation is that they find their identity there. It should be taken into consideration that are generally abnormal people and they can look get in touch with other people easily. So they are targeted by the terrorist organizations (Caşın, 2008: 321).

e. Political Reasons

Politics normally serve for finding solutions to the problems in the society. But there are some extraordinary situations in which some parts of the society cannot express themselves through politics so they try to find some other ways and terrorism is the shortest way. Especially when there are unstable conditions, they have some urging effects for terrorism. When some social groups are dominant in politics and they remove the opportunities for other groups, this is one of the outstanding reasons for terrorism (Ozankaya, 1979: 173).

4. THE MAIN AIM OF TERRORISM

The first aim is certainly to draw attention to the current problems. As a result of drawing attention, they try to create an atmosphere of dismay and fear. So the terrorist organizations reveal their intentions that the whole society is somehow their enemies. After that they polarize the society and it leads to different social groups who always clash and are in a warfare situation. When the unity is distorted, people start to lose their dependence to the governments. When the terrorist organizations create a hostile atmosphere, the society gradually loses the resistance and dependence to political system. So they elicit this kind of way to gain some rights of which they think they are devoid. There is another dimension of terrorism in which other countries support a terrorist organization in the targeted country. So they use the organization as a means of political maneuver against that country.

5. HEZBOLLAH

a. Historical Background

The founders of this organization are Shiite origin which dates back to the first years of Islam. They emerged during the era of the fourth Caliph Ali bin Ebi Talib which was full of catastrophic events. It was the first time when Muslims warred against themselves. There were many murders that took place and compelled people to divide into groups. The people who went after the caliph were Shiites. They believe that Ali should have been the first caliph but the other three usurped his right to caliphate. They also have the belief that the people governing them are imams and they are innocent people and never commit sins. Another point that should be emphasized is that there is the belief of twelve imams in Shiism and the twelfth one was lost during his young age (Şahin, 2006: 40). It is believed that he will come towards the end of the world and save the poor people from the torture of the oppressors and he is called Al Mahdi.

They especially found a convenient atmosphere to develop after the son of Ali bin Ebi Talip, Hussein was assassinated in Kerbela in 680 A.D. After that they emerged as a political movement in Islamic history.

There are many branches of this sect, but some of them go much further and believe that Ali bin Ebi Talib is the God himself (Netzer, 2005: 70).

According to Shiism, the imam in front of the ummah (the whole Muslim community following the prophet Mohammad) has some privileged and divine rights. It is also an indispensable part of political system and belief. But the Sunni community believe that the imam does not have anything to do with the belief, it is simply part of legal and political system (Akyol, 2000: 157).

b. Historical Background of Hezbollah's Foundation

Shiites were all oppressed throughout the history. As a result they are very poor people financially. These people were the targeted group for Hezbollah to find militants in Lebanon. This country was continually under the attack of Israel and during the era when Hezbollah was founded, the country was still attacked by Israeli troops. There was also another tide that was deeply affecting the people in that area. That was the Islamic revolution in Iran. Hezbollah got much support from Iran to be established and resist against Israeli invasion. Iran transferred not only financial support but also ideology to that organization at the beginning. The senior managers in Hezbollah were from the religious people and others were from educated people.

The roots of this organization dates back to 1978 when Seyyid Abbas Musavi moved to Lebanon. The Israeli attack and Iranian revolution juxtapose and in the coming process, there was a social movement feeling close to Iran. Seyyid Abbas Musavi and some other scholars there wanted to take the advantage of this situation in Lebanon and founded Hezbollah (Alagha, 2007).

Toward the end of 1970s, the Islamic groups in Lebanon were divided into different bodies and some of them had nothing to do with politics. The others gathered to form EMEL which was another organization before Hezbollah. They just defended themselves against Israel and did not go through any terrorist activities (Qassem, 2010: 20-23). But later in 1982, EMEL divided into two because some administrators were inclined to secularism in the organization. The religious division participated into Hezbollah in the coming process. When they formed Hezbollah, they accepted some principles:

- 1) The religious base for the organization is Islam.
- 2) The first duty of the organization was to resist against Israel.
- 3) The commandment of Velayat-i Faqih (the imam in Iran) will be welcomed.

Then they assigned nine representatives, three from Bekaa region, three from Islamic committees and three from EMEL. The document was also signed by Ayatollah Khomeini and they came together under Hezbollah (Qassem, 2010: 20-23).

c. Policies, Aims and Ideology

Firstly, it should be underlined that this is a Shiite organization and religious background is to be explained through Shiism. Their overall aim is to collect all of the Muslims under the commandment of Shiite leader Velayat-i Faqih. But there is much political aim in depth which was the fight between Shiism and Wahhabi notion. Iran and Hezbollah did not leave this region to the effect of Saudi Arabia because they had deep ideological differences and clashes (Chaliand, Blin, 2007: 255-256).

It is possible to express the ideology of Hezbollah in four points (Harik, 2005: 43):

- 1) Islamic Order
- 2) The political attitude towards the United States of America
- 3) The political attitude towards Israel
- 4) The position to the Christian Community in Lebanon and coordination with them

It is possible to say that they are ideologically motivated to spread Shiite notion to the Muslim world and the sovereignty of God to the whole world and the way to it goes through the principles in Quran. What makes Shiism different from many other divisions in Islam is that politics and religion are not possible to divide here (Hamzeh, 2004: 29).

Another concept that directs Hezbollah's ideology is the term Jihad which has a very highly motivating effect. Although this term is interpreted very differently in different divisions in Islam, Hezbollah and Shiism referred to the Islamic sources and gave special importance to Quranic verses and Hadiths (the words of the prophet Mohammad) mentioning jihad. Even it seems that they distorted the meaning of some hadiths and cut the whole sentence so as to understand what they want. For instance, they put forth the hadith: "the paradise is under the shadow of swords." Although they use it as a slogan, the full version of the hadith is as follows: "O people! Never desire to confront your enemies. Pray the god for your health. But when you meet them (when you have no other choice but fight), be patient and know that the paradise is under the shadow of swords (Hamzeh, 2004: 29)." So the prophet commands not to be ambitious to fight the enemies, but when there is no other choice nobody should escape from war. So the hadith encourages people to fight on that circumstance and shows the way to the paradise then. Otherwise it is not general fact to summon all of the Muslims to fight.

In 1985, they published "Open Letter" revealing their ideology and existence to the whole world. That was nothing more than what is mentioned above expressing their ideology, aim and policy.

They also expressed in the open letter that they never had the intentions to reign in Lebanon but they opposed to two things very harshly:

- 1) There was an arrogant regime and namely the Maronites have the intentions to reign in the country. So it was impossible to correct the regime with small modifications but some radical changes are required.
- 2) The imperialist world is an enemy to Islam.

They also addressed to the Christians in the letter and expressed that they did not have any problems with them and they have many mutual points to share. So they called the Christians to be in peaceful relations (<http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/open-letter-hizballah-program/p30967>).

But with the start of 1990s, Hezbollah went through many radical changes. There were two options in front of them. They would either continue to act as terrorist groups and the other social groups would totally defeat them out of the system or they would be part of the legal system. So they chose the latter. They became part of the political system and tried to form coalitions to get stronger. In 1992, they took part in the elections (Elçi, 2010:89-90).

There were some other social changes during this process. The long-lasting civil war came to an end with a new constitution and everybody was satisfied with that one. Hezbollah reached a resolution to disarm in the region, but some of military groups Hezbollah was legalized by the government to only defend against Israel.

Their program before the elections in 1992 showed the change in Hezbollah. The following are the topics in their program:

- 1) Lebanon should be saved from Zionist invasion.
- 2) Racist policies will be ended.
- 3) New laws should be put into effect to make the representation in the Parliament fairer.
- 4) Political liberty should be provided and the press should be totally free.
- 5) Those who immigrated during the civil war should turn back to their homes.
- 6) Some reforms are necessary in education, government and socio-cultural issues.

Hezbollah went through so many changes that they arranged a meeting with Maronite archbishop and they tried to have dialogues with them. But they never quit the idea of struggling against Israel.

6. AL QAEDA

a. Historical Background

Al Qaeda defines themselves as from the Sunni origin. In fact, the Sunni Movement defines itself as those who just go after the prophet and his friends. It is generally accepted that Sunni notion does not have violent tendencies. On the contrary, they tried to interpret Islam once again after some extreme approaches emerged in the Islamic world.

Later in thirteenth century, the Muslim world had to deal with Mongolian invasions. Ibn Taymiyyah was born in 1236 in Harran. He experienced the invasions and called his people to jihad against the Mongolian troops (Shultz, 2008: 16).

Since he went through very difficult times, he urged people to jihad and tried to psyche people in with religious motives. He later became the father of Salafi notion in Islamic world which was welcomed by the Wahhabis in Saudi Arabia. The Salafis strongly believe that there is no other source than Quran and other sources like hadith are controversial and should not be accepted. They also

interpreted the Quranic verses very harshly to establish a ground for their strict actions (Öztürk, 2008: 68).

Al Qaeda kept the Salafi notion as a base for their terrorist attacks. It was set up in 1979 in Afghanistan after the Soviet invasion. Their members were both from the poorest parts of the Afghan society and from other countries who were called there to have jihad against Soviet invaders (Öztürk, 2008: 68). But later in ten years between 1982 and 1992, many jihadists came to participate in the organization and they were educated there in Madrasahs and had connections with each other to use in future (Raşid, 2001: 217). The difficult conditions during the war made the militants get closer to each other and later the atmosphere attracted many others to have jihad. In order to help the families of the militants, they established a foundation which served as public relations office (Demirel, 2004: 57).

Until 1988, the leader of this organization was Abdullah Azzam who was assassinated in 1989. In 1988, Osama Bin Laden divided it into two. When Azzam was killed, Laden controlled everything in the organization. After Soviet invasion ended, Osama went back to his homeland, Saudi Arabia and helped those who take part in the war against Soviet troops. Some of these people went to different parts of the world to have jihad later (Demirel, 2004:21).

b. Policies, Aims and Ideology

With the help of Muslims, they aimed to found a state in which everything will be in accordance with Islamic order. They had some panislamist ideas to bring all the Muslims together. To reach this aim, they firstly should eliminate the governments in Islamic countries who are puppets of the imperialist west. They also aimed to get in touch with Islamic groups in those countries. So their first aim was to expel the westerners from Islamic countries and form real Islamic regimes there (Demirel, 2004: 22).

They never aimed to invade any other countries like other organizations (Karlsson, 2005: 21).

In order to reach these aims, they put a three-phase strategy into effect: Announce, Congregation, and Jihad.

In the first phase, they aimed to inform the communities and find militants for themselves. In the second one, the people they found should be indoctrinated to be a congregation so as to cooperate. In the third phase, they aimed to war against the targets they already determined (Gürbüz, 2008: 117).

What makes Al Qaeda different from many other terrorist organizations is that while the others have some regional aims and act in those regions, Al Qaeda aims the whole world and all of the Muslim communities.

In their ideology, jihad has the central importance. They also interpreted the Quranic verses in accordance with their aims so as to encourage jihad in the whole Muslim world.

CONCLUSION

When these two organizations are compared, it is manifestly observed that both of them got their support from the scums of the societies. The poorest people who do not expect anything or very little from future somehow backed them.

They both tried to find their origins in Islamic history and both of the sources, namely Shiism and Salafi notions, interpreted Islam in a strict way to encourage people to have jihad. These two sources were also supported by the poorest divisions in the societies they were in.

These two organizations and their sources came into existence under very difficult conditions such as invasions and struggles. When Hezbollah was founded against Israeli attacks, Al Qaeda found grounds for their deeds during Soviet invasion.

Both of them interpreted Quran in a way that it forms background for their jihadist understanding. While there are many other verses in Quran to refute their ideas, they strongly clung to the verses to defend their ideas. Whereas, there are many encyclopedic works interpreting Quran, which looked at the verses supporting jihad from different perspectives. As it could be seen from the example from a hadith above, when they interpret a verse or hadith, they are inclined to get part of them so as to make it useful for their ideologies.

While there are this kind of resemblances, there are also some different points between these two organizations. Firstly, while Hezbollah was a regional organization and tried to save Lebanon from Israel and imperialist West, Al Qaeda is a world-wide organization and aims the whole Muslim world.

Since Hezbollah was part of a heterogeneous community in Lebanon, it transformed itself from a terrorist organization to a political party and tried to have good relations with others. But Al Qaeda is not part of any community and supported by the Muslims from all over the world, they did not have any concerns to be part of the political systems and they all fought against the West and the governments in Muslim world supporting the West.

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