



Terrorism with Its Differentiating Aspects

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Abstract. *Terror and terrorism are of many types, and this study focuses on political terrorism. Although this should be condemned whatever its political rationale, the international community is not united. This paper goes on to analyze the position of terrorism in terms of state terror, international relations, internal affairs, and transnational relations. State sponsorship is a particularly serious problem as it gives considerable advantages to the terrorists. Even democratic countries have shown an unfortunate willingness to tolerate terror in lesser ways. The stages through which ethnic terrorism may pass are illustrated. Finally, religiously-inspired terrorism is discussed. The study draws attention to the loose structures and anti-globalization message of al-Qaeda.*

Keywords. Terrorism, state terrorism, separatist terrorism, state sponsorship, state support, al-Qaeda

Introduction

The aim of this study is to assess the concept of terrorism within the period of its recent changes, to diagnose the problems of today's situation through exposing the new characteristics of this type of violence, and thereby to seek to find solutions.

If we were to attempt to research the roots of 'terror' from an historical perspective, it would be possible to go all the way back to Cain killing his brother Abel. Then we could talk about what Hasan Sabbah did at Alamut Castle, too. History is full of rather impressive terror incidents. One of the most impressive would be the murder in Bosnia of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne. Terror has had just as significant effects on Islamic history as well. The murder of the holy caliph Ali caused Islam to divide into sects. However, we wish to examine 'terrorism', with the features that distinguish it, and specifically the changes it has undergone over the last four decades. In other words, we will take into account the effects of terrorism upon the

contemporary political system, and we will evaluate the subject's development over the last four decades.¹

In terms of its etymology, the word 'terror' comes from the Latin word 'terrere', meaning 'to frighten, to terrorize, to intimidate'.² In Turkish, *tedhiş*, a word of Arabic origin, can be used with the same meaning as *terör*.³ Terror can manifest itself in an individual action, just as it can occur in a mass violent action precipitated by chance.⁴ Indeed, it is mostly unpredictable, and it is not organized or systematic. For this reason, neither an individual action nor a series of incidents emerging by chance can be termed 'terrorism'. In order to talk about terrorism, what is needed is a series of terror incidents which are interconnected and directed at a certain political target: 'Terrorism is a strategic approach which, for political purposes, identifies itself with a method which includes the use of organized, systematic and continuous terror.'⁵

2. The Determining Issues of Actions in the Form of Terrorism

In order that this study can expose the changing features of terrorism in a simple way, it is appropriate that we locate the determining issues of actions in the form of terrorism, and then make a valid definition. To find out these determining issues, it is possible to refer to the categories of reason, intention, and purpose, which are found in the principles of penal law.

As seen in figure 1, in political terrorism the perpetrator claims to be motivated by a political rationale. The content of that rationale, that is to say the political view of the perpetrator, makes not difference to the fact that he is a political terrorist. The reasons he gives may reflect any kind of viewpoint of a political nature. This assessment expresses an opinion with which the author of this paper agrees, but which, unfortunately, is not one which is universally accepted. The terrorist who commits the most unforgivable crimes on one side of a border can be seen as a national freedom fighter when he crosses the border. The best place to find typical expressions of these various approaches, which lead to contrasting definitions, is in the publications of the United Nations General Assembly Ad Hoc Committee on International Terrorism. To take an example from the 1970s, according to Algeria, Guinea, India, Congo, Mauritania, Niger, Syria, Tanzania, Tunisia, North and South Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zaire and Zambia, which have a common view on what terrorism is, any definition should not undermine national liberation struggles.⁶ According to

¹ When we evaluate this period of four decades in respect of Turkey, we can identify four great waves of terror. The first is Armenian terror, the second is the terrorism that arose from right-left conflicts which date back to the 1970s. The third is the PKK and separatist terror, and the last wave is 'reactionary' terrorism. See Kongar, E., *opp. Cit.*, pp 86, 90, 92.

² Wilkinson, P., *Political Terrorism*, London, 1974, p. 9.

³ *Türkçe Sözlüğü*, Ankara, 1983, vol. 2, pp 1159, 1177.

⁴ Although there are other types of terror and terrorism, political terrorism is focused on in this study.

⁵ Bozdemir, M., 'What Is Terror and Terrorism?', School of Political Sciences Press and Publication College, 1981, v, vi. See also Wilkinson, P., (*op. cit.*), p. 17, and Crenshaw, M., 'The Concept of Revolutionary Terrorism', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, September 1972, p. 384.

⁶ See United Nations General Assembly, 'Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on International Terrorism', *Official Records*, 28th Session, Supplement No. 28 (A/9028), New York, 1973, p. 21.

these countries, if the political reason of the perpetrators is to exercise their right to self-determination, to struggle for freedom, and to realize the aims of a national liberation movement, then there is no point in talking of them as terrorists. They note that the violence, and other assimilating actions, which colonialist regimes commit are to be regarded as terrorism in every respect.

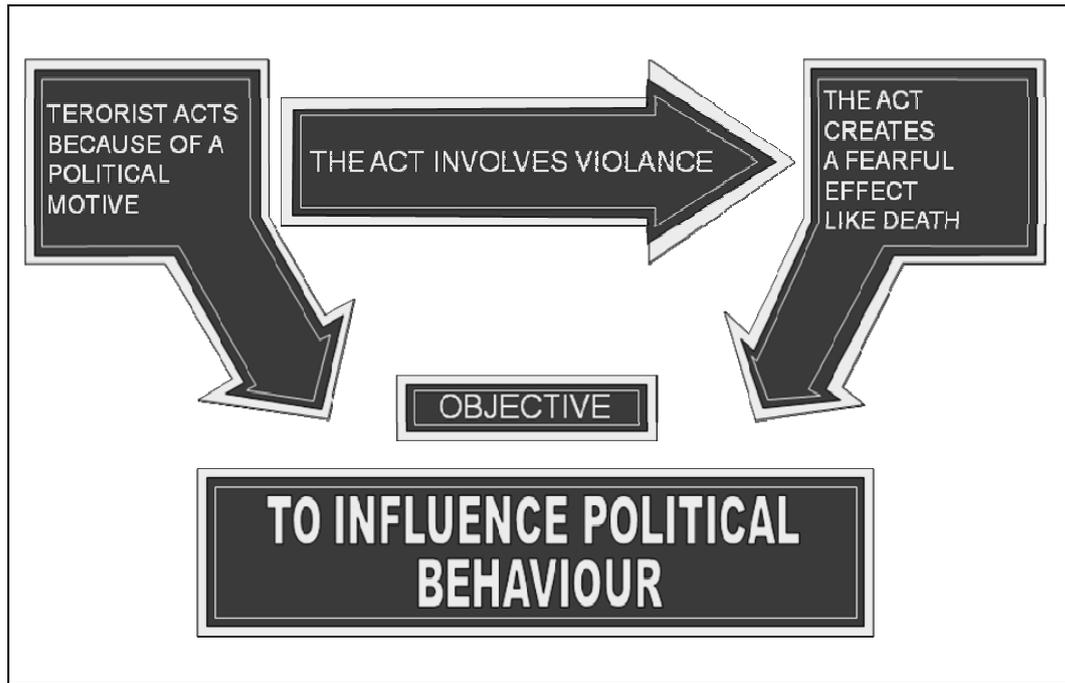


Figure 1. The determining issues of actions in the form of terrorism.

The militant who engages in an action on the basis of a political argumentation acts with violence. Here, the violence is a tool for achieving a goal as part of realizing the more distant aim.⁷ This violent action creates an advantage in favor of the terrorist. It is directed at a target which is impossible to determine beforehand, and mostly it is not related to the current political struggle, but is important in the eyes of the general public. For example, the action leads to a goal such as the murder of diplomats. The perpetrator wants to obtain a benefit beyond that goal: the aim is to

⁷ Dönmezer, S., *Kriminoloji* (Criminology), Istanbul, 1981, Chapter 6, p. 220; Bayraktar, K., *Siyasal Suç* (Political Crime), Istanbul, 1982, p. 163; Alpaslan, S., *Kriminoloji ve Hukuk Açısından Tedhişçilik* (Terrorism from a Criminological and Legal Viewpoint), Istanbul, 1983, p. 9. For a 'convenient tool' on the penal code, see Dönmezer, S., Erman, S., *Nazari ve Tatbiki Ceza Hukuku* (Theory and Practice of the Penal Code), General Section, vol. 1, Chapter 9, Istanbul, 1985, p. 409.

affect the masses. In other words, violence and propaganda are used for their affect.⁸ The most significant issue underscoring terrorism appears at this point. When the goal exemplified by the murder of diplomats through violent action is compared with the goal which is achieved in terms of its affect upon the masses, the former becomes very small, whereas the final goal is extraordinarily large. That is to say, the effect in proportion to the action is extremely large.

The act of terrorism is, by means of killing one person, to frighten millions and to have an effect upon their political preferences. Therefore, it is essential to say that the act of terrorism is a symbolic one. A direct action is not important in respect of its conclusions. It is very important for the effects which are created beyond the conclusions. In this way the action is not instrumental, but symbolic. At this point, it is useful to remember the definition of terror introduced in the 1960s: 'Terror is a symbolic action shaped for affecting political behavior by using violence or by unusual ways including the threat of violence.'⁹

Our definition of terrorism has now gained sufficient clarity. Together with this, in the course of time, with its emergence in different contexts, terrorism has become diversified and it has gained new features.

3. Terrorism in Different Political Relations

It is possible to show the political relations in which terrorism may occur through drawing a macro-model covering both national and international political ties (see figure 2).

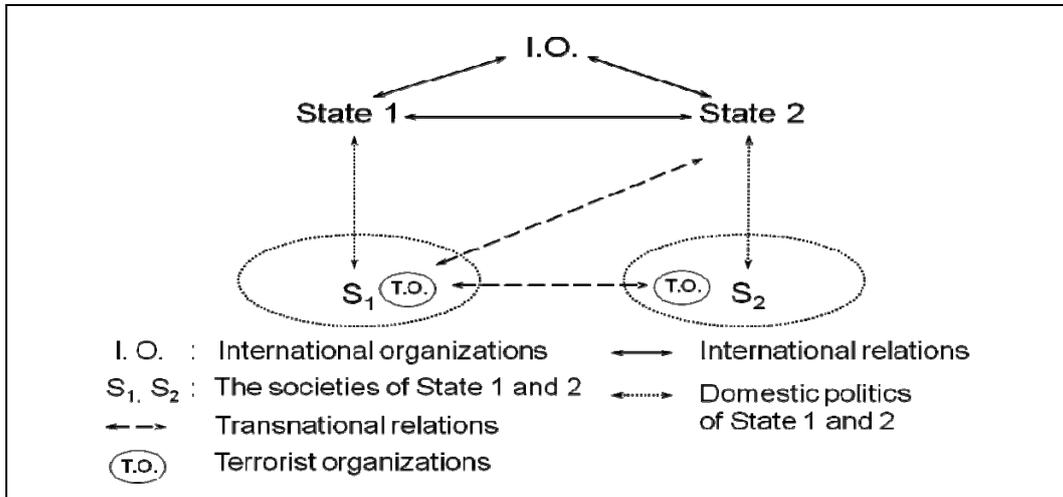


Figure 2. Terrorism in domestic and international relations.

⁸ İsen, G. B., 'Terörizm: Değişik Boyutlarda Çağdaş Bir Sorun' ('Terrorism: A Contemporary Problem with Different Dimensions'), *Journal of Dicle University School of Law*, 1983, vol. 1, pp 1, 197.

⁹ Thornton, T. P., 'Terror as a Weapon of Political Agitations', *Internal War*, Eckstein, H. (ed.), London, 1964, p. 73.

The actors in this model are states, international organizations, and terrorist organizations (the terrorist organizations are at the same time foreign policy tools). S_1 and S_2 represent State 1 and State 2, while I. O. stands for International Organizations. The relations between these are conducted according to the processes of classical international relations. Apart from these international relations, the internal policies of the countries are illustrated in the model as well. The communities of S_1 and S_2 are C_1 and C_2 . The relations between S_1 and C_1 , and the relations between S_2 and C_2 are 'internal affairs'. Additionally, there are relations in which S_1 and S_2 address each other's communities, and there are relations which exist between the different communities. These are 'transnational relations'.

Going into more detail, we will highlight the features which terrorism has acquired in respect of the various relations illustrated in this model.

4. Terrorism in Internal Politics

Terrorism in internal politics appears in the S_2 – C_2 circle in figure 2. Here, the political struggle based on violence, i.e. terrorism, has two dimensions. On the one hand, it is possible for states to use terrorism as both an internal and an external political tool in order to perpetuate their current state regime. On the other hand, it is possible for those who want to destroy the established order and to take control of power to use terrorism in their struggle against the authorities. When those in power use terrorism to shore up their position in power, this is called state terrorism. We will touch on the subject of states which use terrorism as an external political tool under the sub-heading 'State-sponsored Terrorism' in the paragraphs below.

Resorting to terrorism to perpetuate a regime at home became institutionalized in totalitarian regimes such as Nazi Germany, the former USSR, and the Eastern Bloc countries. Cambodia can also be given as an example: Saloth Sar, the prime minister from 1975–1978, was leader of the Khmer Rouge and also known as Pol Pot. He caused the death of more than one million Cambodians in his attempt to govern the country in accordance with his particular communist vision. The regimes mentioned have been consigned to history, but this has not ensured the end of this 'assimilating terrorism'. Today it is possible to identify various dictatorships which do not hesitate to make use of terrorism in order to control their homelands. Considerable levels of torture and inhumane treatment are typical evidence of this situation.

There is a causal relationship between this terrorism and the terrorism that is committed by people in a struggle against the *status quo*, which seeks to destroy the established order and seize power. The latter we can call straightforward terrorism. State terror may precipitate this terrorism against the state, or this terrorism may lead to state terror. If the states involved have ethnic disputes, and if these become caught up in the above-mentioned struggle, there is inevitably a strong possibility of civil war.

a. Ideological Terrorism

Terrorism is in the service of ideologies, too. The majority of terror organizations emerging in the 1970s had Marxist features, and they identified themselves as parts of a revolutionary and anti-imperialist movement. The Red Army Faction (RAF), which emerged in 1968 and lasted until 1998, the Brigade Rosse (BR), which emerged in 1969 and lasted until 1982, and the

Revolutionary 17th November Organization, which opposes Turkey, and which emerged in 1975 and still exists, are the most important examples. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC), established in 1966, the Ejercito de Liberacion (ELN), which was established in 1965, and the Sendero Luminoso (SL), established in Peru in 1969, might also be listed in this category. In Turkey this kind of terrorist organization existed as well. Actually, some of them are still active and constitute a considerable threat to Turkish security and political order.

In Europe, organizations with extreme left-wing ideologies left the arena in the 1980s, when their places were taken by organizations with ideologies of the extreme right. In Germany, as is well known, many right-wing extremist organizations have appeared, some of which are neo-Nazi. These groups use violence as their means, and they consider Turks to be their prime targets. The killing of five Turks in Solingen by setting fire to their house is one example of terrorist violence which cannot be forgotten easily.

b. Ethnic Terrorism

The spreading of western values in the world, which we call globalization, results in the crumbling of older political structures. In the wake of this political disintegration come ethnic conflicts and the ethnic terrorism which is a part of these struggles. Ethnic terrorism can be used as a tool by separatist movements, and it can turn into the terrorism of ethnic civil wars.

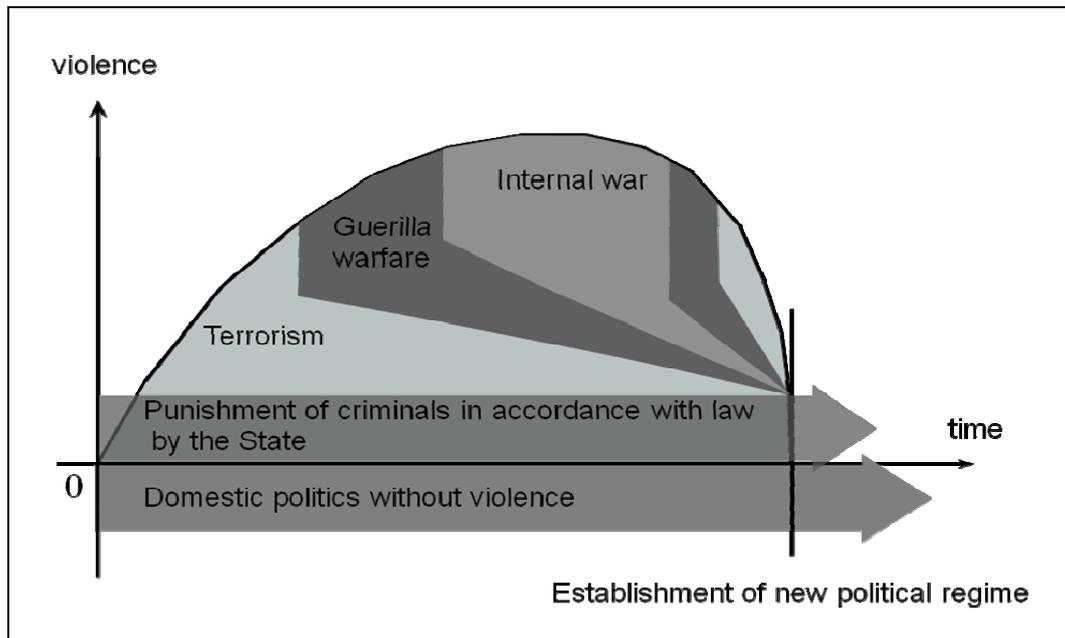


Figure 3. Stages of the response to terrorism against the state.

In this context, it might be beneficial to evaluate this kind of terrorism according to a process in which different types of political violence emerge. In figure 3 the changes in social cohesion and the political regime are assessed, which may involve adapting or suspending the normal constitution, and which may lead to civil war.

In this process, which begins with violence rising to abnormal levels, in excess of the political violence which is to be expected in a society, terrorism may be encountered at every stage.¹⁰ As the process evolves, due to the suppressive and revolutionary terrorism which mutually rise, political violence grows increasingly and, at its highest level in terms of growth, it starts a steep decline and finishes when it reaches a normal or tolerable level of violence in the new order. Although not always the case, we find the elements of terrorism, guerilla warfare, and war in this political struggle. Theoretically the process may take place with only one of these, terrorism, guerilla warfare, or war, being present. Still, types of political aggression do not appear as alternatives to each other; practically speaking, most of the time they co-exist in a complementary manner.

During ethnic civil wars, often genocide or ethnic cleansing policies are pursued, thus forcing the ethnic groups which form part of the nation to leave their homes. Predictably, the means resorted to are terror, mass killing, and rape. These wars result in great numbers of refugees and casualties to an extent not comparable with the other types of terrorist activity. This struggle within the state has two important dimensions with respect to International Law: the state of emergency legislation (problems which exist before the state of emergency are left outside the scope of the study), and the legal status of armed conflicts which lack an international dimension. In this respect, the relation of the subject to International Law appears in the human rights dimension. Two topics are to be studied therefore: states of emergency and non-international armed conflicts (seen from the viewpoint of humanitarian laws). These humanitarian laws, which can be defined as laws for armed conflicts, prohibit terrorism. At this point it is appropriate to comment that the Geneva Convention is the document which expresses human rights regarding non-international armed conflicts most precisely, and the additional protocols prohibit terrorism. Not every act of ethnic violence develops into ethnic civil wars and mass terrorism. Some separatist terrorist groups lack a basis in the community but, although they are unable to initiate ethnic struggles, they succeed in surviving. The way to impede these terrorist organizations from provoking widespread terrorist activity is directly linked to the existence of a functioning liberal democracy in the country. Democracy does not mean the collapse or separation into different political parts of the state. International Law as it is experienced does not manifest itself in the collapse of the states, but in the continued territorial integrity of the countries. On the other hand, democracy does not necessarily imply that separatist political currents are included in the legal political system. Democracy does not mean ending the unitary structure of the state as well.

¹⁰ The term 'abnormal violence' refers to violence which is unacceptable in respect to the legal, political and social rules of the society in which the crimes of terrorist nature are committed. In this context, it does not apply to the terror which the established regime uses in line with legal rules in order to protect itself.

5. Terrorism in International Politics

Up to this point, in order to keep the discussion simple, international relations have not been included in this analysis. But the subject is almost never this clear-cut. In the real world terrorism will involve at least one international dimension which traverses the national borders (sponsorship from another nation, issues of the nationality of the perpetrator or victims, the place where the crime is committed, etc.). Now it is time to go back to our macro-model in figure 2 and add this new element. Another state may be involved in the armed conflicts that are not international. In this new dimension S_1 may intervene in C_2 , or S_2 in C_1 , and support terrorism there, or even cause it to happen in places where it previously did not exist.

It is possible for states to use terrorism as a tool in external politics, just as they use it in internal politics. Many examples of this have been observed in the recent past. Formerly the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc countries provided support to terrorist organizations. Although the amount of support from these countries declined after the Cold War, it has not completely ceased.

The support which countries lend to terrorists as a tool for those countries external politics can range from simple types of help to full-scale sponsorship. Today this situation is mostly observed in the Middle East. State-sponsored terrorism, in other words terrorism under the direction of states, is very important due to the fact that states can provide weapons with greater fire-power, money, intelligence and training possibilities, so this type of terrorism is extremely dangerous and destructive. With the help of sponsorship, terrorist attacks may no longer be on the level of symbolic actions, and they may become far more destructive in terms of the immediate outcome of the attack. Again, as part of states' vital support, they may provide safe havens for terrorists, to which they can escape from law enforcement authorities. It becomes much harder to combat terrorism when there is this kind of support. Sponsoring of terrorism by states is also dangerous as this provokes conflicts between states.¹¹ Turkey was only able to end the support that Syria gave to the PKK by showing its determination to exercise its right of self-defense.

Democratic states may also support terrorism for various reasons, although the support given by these countries usually does not reach the level of sponsorship. Democratic states sometimes allow terrorist-related activities for the commercial benefits they may bring.¹² Sometimes they resort to state terrorism as a means of fighting against terrorism, and sometimes they support governments which perpetuate their rule by using terrorist methods. Groups which try to topple regimes also strike at those foreign governments which are seen as rivals, and this may result in the globalization of internal conflicts. Even though they may not sponsor it, for a state to overlook terrorist activities within their borders which harm other states does not conform well with the duty each state has to prevent activities which harm other states. The conditions in Iraq, which is occupied by the USA, are well known. Nonetheless, permitting or overlooking the presence of the PKK in this country is not acceptable.

¹¹ Wilkinson, P., 'Why Modern Terrorism? Differentiating Types and Distinguishing Ideological Motivations', *New Global Terrorism*, Kegley, W. C. (ed), 2003, p. 126.

¹² *Ibid.* p. 128.

6. Global Terrorism and Terrorism That Seeks Religious Legitimization

Throughout history religious fanatics have resorted to terrorism and tried to legitimize this with appeals to religious beliefs. Neither religious fanaticism nor the use of terrorism as an expression of that fanaticism are confined to any one religion. Although all major religions in the world oppose terrorism, it is possible to find examples of attacks conducted by believers in each religion, attacks which they try to legitimize on the basis of their scriptures. One of the most horrifying examples of this kind of terrorism was the Inquisition, and the trials which took place to find and punish those who defied Catholic beliefs. The president of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin, was murdered by a Jewish fanatic who claimed he was fulfilling the orders of God.¹³

Today it is mostly the terrorism which seeks its justification in Islam that is in the foreground. This should not be allowed to result in fear of Islam. In America the media, without any evidence, blamed Islamic groups for the bombing of the Alfred Murray Federal Bureau in Oklahoma, but the truth turned out to be otherwise.¹⁴ Connecting religious legitimization of terror to Islam is very wrong and the results will harm everyone. Still, denying the existence of such religiously-inspired terror organizations in Islam, and the serious nature of the situation, is not possible.

There is no state which sponsors or controls these groups. They present the characteristics of sub-state actors, which act freely in the international dimension (equivalent to the terrorist organization in figure 3 striking S₁). The ties which constitute the organization are very loose. In the case of some of the terrorist plots it is clear that organic organizational structures was non-existent. Fanatics who are influenced by the news reflected by the media, people with no former organizational connections, can be seen to have become active and engaged in crimes in the name of the organization. As seen in the September 11 attacks, the outcome of the action is grave enough to cause serious security problems.

Although religion is being used to legitimize the act, a political factor also exists. Al-Qaeda is trying to force the USA to withdraw from Saudi Arabia and the entire Gulf region. It also wants to destroy the regimes which are seen as collaborating and betraying 'true' Islam. Al-Qaeda affiliates want to gather all Muslims around a pan-Islamic caliphate which would rule in accordance with the rules of real Islam.¹⁵ This new terrorism is being used to fight against globalization, which means the domination of western values in the world. 11 September 2001 was a very typical example of this. Usama Bin Laden was a warrior created by the United States of America against the Soviet Union, when the latter invaded Afghanistan during the Cold War era. When seen in this light, the September 11 terror was not only a matter of achieving certain results. We need to recognize that the source of these attacks lies in globalization, in the form of the Cold War for example.¹⁶ The targets of the September 11 attacks were also striking in their symbolism. The Pentagon symbolizes the military power of the United States of America, and the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York symbolize the economic dominance of international

¹³ Ibid. p. 122.

¹⁴ Ibid. idem.

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 124.

¹⁶ Kongar, E., *Küresel Terör ve Türkiye, Küreleşme*, Huntingdon, 11 Eylül, İstanbul, 2002, p. 81.

capital.¹⁷ Even though the attacks seemed to strike America, in fact they were an assault on the globalization process as a whole. The United States of America was attacked as they are the leader of this process.¹⁸ In order to end global terrorism, which has now become a grave threat, we need to eliminate its reasons. With this in mind, it would be useful if the US provided an example of political stability, peace and prosperity.

Presenting Turkey as a moderate Islamic state does not go along with the country's secular structure. Expecting a more positive approach along these lines at this point is extremely misguided, and impossible to accept if democracy in Turkey is to last and improve. It is obligatory that one consider different measures to impede the radicalization of the region.

7. Conclusions

Terrorism, which is in principle an affect-based political struggle, is used both in internal and external politics. The different circumstances in which terrorism has been used have caused it to diversify and acquire different characteristics. The creation of new types, possessing different features in new dimensions, does not end the uses made of terrorism in longer-established contexts. In other words, the new political circumstances mean that we observe a terrorism that is used in different dimensions, and terrorism with different characteristics.

In totalitarian regimes, which constitute the most important source for state terrorism, widespread torture shows that different types of dictatorship continue to use state terrorism in order to perpetuate their existence. Especially these countries use terrorism in external politics as much as they use it in their internal affairs. Although their number has declined, there are still states which sponsor terrorism. Terrorism with this kind of support is more destructive and harder to prevent.

Resistance based on violence against globalization creates global terrorism. In this respect, organizations which resort to terrorism are not under the control of any state. They present us with an organization and actor identities, but beyond these the ties which make up the group are extremely loose. They try to legitimize their destructive actions with religious argumentation.

Terrorism is no longer a marginal phenomenon. Every kind of terrorism has become less specific and more destructive. Nonetheless, ethnic mass terrorism, which manifests itself in ethnic civil wars, is still incomparably the most destructive terrorism type.

¹⁷ Ibid., idem.

¹⁸ Ibid., idem.

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