

The Hybrid Terrorist Organisation

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Islamic Theology of Counter Terrorism

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Introduction

"Terrorism may well be the most important word in the political vocabulary these days", as stated by Schmid (2004), and yet, there is a critical lack of a unified international definition on terrorism, which means there are hundreds of characterizations from various sources. For this paper the definition given by Boaz Ganor (2002) will be used: "*Terrorism is the intentional use of, or threat to use violence against civilians or against civilian targets, in order to attain political aims*". What is important to note is that the aims are always political, which has allowed for a smooth transition into a hybrid terrorist organisation on many fronts. This will be discussed further below, however, it is essential to have a basis of what a terrorist organisation is, before discussing the evolution into a hybrid terrorist organisation. This paper will focus on Islamist terrorist organisations and on two case studies: Hamas and Hezbollah.

Hybrid Terrorist Organisation

The first hybrid terrorist organisation was the Muslim Brotherhood, which emerged in in Egypt in 1928 (Azani, 2013). A hybrid terrorist organisation is one that has two or more legs, a combination of legitimate and illegitimate. Ganor (2015) explains "the hybrid terrorist organization subsumes two, and sometimes three, components: a *militant-terrorist wing*, a *political wing*, and a wing devoted to providing *social welfare services*". The hybrid terrorist organisation strives to "integrate da'wa [missionary work], social infrastructure, and jihad, and to leverage the three to gain political power" (Azani 2013). These three elements were the foundation stones of the Muslim Brotherhood and helped to further entrench the terrorist organisation into the society of the people. There are both internal and external factors that cause a terrorist organisation to evolve into a hybrid terrorist organisation. One being the lack of an effective government. Ganor (2015) attributes one criteria of the evolution into a hybrid terrorist organisation being the "government's quiescence". In many ways, the hybrid terrorist organisation is fulfilling a crucial role in which the government has failed.

It is important to remember that “its essence as a terrorist organization is preserved, and it can continue to engage in terrorist activity” (Ganor 2015), regardless of the legitimate work it is conducting. The development of Hamas can be seen to fill an internal vacuum, for example by winning the 2006 vote in Gaza. Whereas Hezbollah was heavily influenced by the Iranian Revolution in 1979, and to this day, continues to be a proxy of Iran.

Militant Terrorist Branch

The adoption of legitimate branches does not absolve the organisation from remaining a terrorist organisation, with the first branch of the classic terrorist organisation persisting in parallel to legitimate ventures. Using the definition of terrorism by Boaz Ganor stated above, the target of a terrorist organisation is primarily civilians. While claiming to represent the people, often the organisation will embed itself within densely populated areas. “The hybrid terrorist organization plants its military bases of operation, its rocket launchers, and its fighting men in schools, mosques, hospitals, and other public buildings, effectively turning its supporters into human shields” (Ganor 2012). The use of innocent civilians as human shields according to Customary International Law is prohibited and constitutes terrorist activity.

Political Branch

In addition to filling the vacuum the government has formed, “the hybrid terrorist organization has been created to try and garner legitimacy for terrorism” (Ganor 2012). The main way in which they have tried to do this is through popular elections. Both Hamas and Hezbollah have participated in parliamentary elections. Hamas won the 2006 parliamentary elections in Gaza and have been defacto in control since, with its legitimisation enabling it to continue to conduct acts of terrorism. Further legitimacy can also be gained by the organisation claiming it is acting in defence of the people it represents.

Welfare Branch

Once the organisation has won seats in the election and gained legitimate support, it needs to fulfil the role of government. This is when the third leg, the social- welfare component comes into play. This can include providing educational and childcare services, building hospitals, mosques and providing jobs. At this point the hybrid terrorist organisation is fundamental to the welfare of the population by providing (often free) services for the people. The services provided are indeed invaluable to the society, however, under the surface there is a level of indoctrination. Often the people, which the organisation claims to represent, suffer from poor socioeconomic conditions. “Between 2007 and 2018, GDP per capita shrank by 27% and unemployment increased by 49%” (UNCTD, 2020). The people often have very little means, having to rely on free services, such as free childcare. One must remember that day care services are offered by a terrorist organisation at the expense of indoctrination from a young age.

Hamas as a Case Study

Hamas was founded in 1987 by Sheikh Ahmad Yassin after the start of the First Intifada. Hamas means *Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyya*, or Islamic Resistance Movement (Tahhan, 1, 2017). Hamas follows the ideology of Sunni Islam and is recognized as a terror organization by the United States and the European Union, amongst others. According to the 1988 Hamas Charter, “Hamas advocates Jihad, violent resistance as the only means of fighting against Israel” (Laub, 1, 2014). Hamas places emphasis on building this hatred from a young age. Hamas’ use of indoctrination is explained by the IDF stating “Hamas' indoctrination of children begins at a young age, when children are exposed to formal and informal education that lauds jihad and incites children against Israel”. The IDF continues: “the eighth Childhood Festival of the Islamic Association in Khan-Yunis in April 2016, Gazan children performed a play that included stabbing and executing Israeli soldiers”. This breeds a cycle of hatred at

a young age, which will most probably amount to political support for Hamas. This indoctrination is another tool used to striving to gain legitimacy (Ganor 2012).

Hezbollah as a Case Study

Hezbollah was blacklisted by the European union, after a compelling testimony given by Dr Eitan Azani. Muhammad Fneish (2002), a senior member of Hezbollah, stated “One cannot separate Hezbollah’s military wing from its political wing”. By their own declaration they are a hybrid terrorist organisation. “Since 1982, Hezbollah has evolved from a ‘revolutionary vanguard’ terrorist organisation bent on violently overthrowing the Lebanese government to a hybrid terrorist organization that uses legitimate political tools to the same end” (Azani, 2013). Azani argues that Hezbollah was able to make this transformation because it deepened “its commitment to three complementary, related areas of activity: da’wa and social welfare, military resistance (jihad), and political activity”.

Hezbollah existed before the Iranian Revolution “as an agglomeration of groups” (Azani, 2013), however, after the revolution Hezbollah “established an umbrella framework for pro-Iranian Islamic organizations”, which essentially planted the seeds to becoming a hybrid terrorist organisation. Hezbollah entered government in 2005 and since then it has gained in influence and control within the government. “Today, Hezbollah is involved in every aspect of Lebanese politics at the municipal, parliamentary, and government levels. Hezbollah also enjoys extensive public support in Lebanon” Ganor (2015). It is important to remember that Hezbollah still remains a designated terrorist organisation and thus continues to perform acts of terrorism. Hezbollah currently has over 100,000 rockets and missiles aimed at Israel (Dickstein, 2017) and as a known proxy of Iran, is awaiting the order to release its arsenal. Hezbollah have missiles which can cover the length of Israel and are aimed at attacking civilians. “During the Second Lebanon War (2006), Hezbollah fired some 4,000 missiles at Israel’s civilian population” (Azani, 2013).

Conclusion

This paper has discussed the relevant branches of a hybrid terrorist organisation, focussing on Hamas and Hezbollah as case studies. It is important to remember that the expansion of the organisation into political and welfare branches does not bring its implementation of terrorist activities to an end. It has been shown that Hamas fits into the mould of a hybrid terrorist organisation by offering free childcare services as one of its social and welfare branches. Often this will come at the price of indoctrination of young children. Hezbollah too is a hybrid terrorist organisation, which is evidenced by its extensive involvement in politics and governmental affairs, coupled with its continuous militia acts, currently including a huge arsenal of weaponry constantly aimed at Israel.

ITCT does not necessarily endorse any or all views expressed by the author in the article.

Photo: The Independent

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