A SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE CONDUCT OF AL-QAEDA TERRORISM[1]

Betül ÖZYILMAZ KİRAZ [2]

Abstract

This article is primarily concerned with social psychological explanation of the conduct of al-Qaeda terrorism. Al-Qaeda is a network of cells dispersed worldwide and in cooperation with local militant Islamist groups. Since it has characteristics and dynamics of its own that are distinct from traditional actors in international politics, an attempt to understand al-Qaeda as an actor and conduct of its terrorist behavior requires looking well beyond the traditional approaches in international relations scholarship as well as group level analysis, interdisciplinary research and focus on context and process. In this sense, social psychology accounts appear to have explanatory power to understand the al-Qaeda network and conduct of its activities. The article takes the idea of collectivity and moral disengagement from coercive action as two main social psychological dynamics of the terrorist conduct and primarily argues that al-Qaeda affiliated groups morally disengage from detrimental conduct through Bandura's disengagement mechanisms and within a collective context.

Keywords: International Terrorism, Terrorist Behavior, al-Qaeda, Social Psychology, Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement, Idea of Collectivity.

El-Kaide'nin Terörist Faaliyetlerine Sosyal Psikolojik Bir Yaklaşım

Öz

Bu makale temel olarak el-Kaide'nin terörist eylemlerini ifade eden sürecin sosyal psikolojik bir açıdan incelenmesi ile ilgilenmektedir. El-Kaide dünya çapında yayılmış ve yerel militan İslamcı gruplarla işbirliği içinde olan bir ağdır. Onu uluslararası politikadaki geleneksel aktörlerden ayıran kendisine has karakteristik özellikleri ve dinamikleri dolayısıyla el-Kaide'yi anlama girişimi, uluslararası ilişkiler literatüründeki geleneksel yaklaşımların ötesine geçmeyi, grup düzeyinde analizleri, disiplinlerarası araştırmayı ve sürece odaklanmayı gerektirmektedir. Bu açıdan, sosyal psikolojik yaklaşımların el-Kaide ağının ve terör sürecinin anlaşılması noktasında açıklayıcı güce sahip olduğu düşünülmektedir. Bu makale, kolektiflik fikrini ve şiddet eyleminden ahlaki olarak çözülmeyi terör sürecinin iki ana sosyal psikolojik dinamiği olarak ele almakta ve el-Kaide bağlantılı grupların kolektif bir çerçeve dahilinde, Bandura'nın ahlaki çözülme mekanizmalarına paralel olarak zarar verici eylemlerin ahlaki yükümlülüğünden kurtulduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Uluslararası Terör, Terörist Davranış, el-Kaide, Sosyal Psikoloji, Ahlaki Çözülme Mekanizmaları, Kolektiflik Fikri.

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1 Makale geliş tarihi: 23 Ekim 2015   Makale kabul tarihi: 15 Ocak 2016
2 R.A., Gazi University, FEAS, Department of International Relations,
e-mail: betulozyilmaz@gazi.edu.tr

TESAM

Introduction[3]

The planes crashing into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001 shocked not only American public and decision-making elites but the international community as a whole. Though more than a decade has passed after the events and though the training camps in Afghanistan destructed, financial transfers were halted, and even its vanguard, Osama Bin Laden, was killed, these have been severe blows to al-Qaeda, but not its end. Al-Qaeda continues to make its power and impact felt especially in the Middle East and North Africa. It becomes a current issue with regard to its attempts to create control points and power in Yemen. Its branch al-Nusra front has been active and fighting against Syrian government in the Syrian civil war. Some of its founders have been fighting in the same front with al-Nusra. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb destructs historical artifacts and cultural heritage in the North Africa. Due to this state of being active, al-Qaeda continues to be a current research topic that is important to grasp.

As Moghaddam puts it rightly, despite the fact that since the September 11 events, articles, books, reports, news and discussions on the origins, performance and impact of al-Qaeda as what may be the perpetrator of the greatest assault on the world's superpower may be since its founding have generated an international "terrorism studies industry" and that we have information that may be more than we can possibly catch up with, we lack conceptual and theoretical frameworks to interpret this information on al-Qaeda (2009, p. 373). In addition to the problem lack of conceptual and theoretical frameworks causes, there is another issue while studying al-Qaeda that since it has characteristics and dynamics of its own distinct from traditional actors in international politics, an attempt to fill this theoretical gap in the literature requires looking beyond the traditional approaches in international relations scholarship. Moving from these, this article tries to examine the conduct of al-Qaeda terrorism within a social psychological conceptual and theoretical framework.

Early studies on psychological side of terrorism attempted to understand terrorist behavior for the most part through a psychoanalytic framework building on the assumption that such behavior is the product of early abuse and maltreatment or unconsolidated self-identity, and the motives

3   This article is collected and updated from the master thesis "*Political Psychology in Understanding al-Qaeda: Why and How?*" (2012) defended before the Middle East Technical University Institute of Social Sciences.

for the behavior are largely unconscious and result of hostility toward one's parents or damaged self-image. Although they may have their own strengths, the explanatory power of psychoanalytically based approaches in the study of the al-Qaeda network seems to be overshadowed by their attribution of abnormal dispositions to terrorists, by their reducing all or much of terrorist behavior to a single cause on the one hand, and their overgeneralizing certain psychological characteristics to a wide range of terrorists on the other hand, and by the fundamental attribution error of exaggerating the role of individual dispositions at the expense of structural factors. These do no mean that the decision to join and stay in the al-Qaeda network has nothing to do with subconscious or latent psychological motives; however, there is a problem of concluding commonalities for an internationally dispersed group of heterogeneous individuals. Therefore, concentrating on the group level of analysis and social psychological dynamics seems to serve better for the purpose of understanding al-Qaeda.

The first part of the article is concerned with al-Qaeda terrorism with regard to the conduct of its terrorist activities and operations. The conduct of terrorism, which is identified by the forms of terrorism takes, is focused on in the context of the demonstrative, destructive and suicidal operations and actions of al-Qaeda. The following parts concentrate on drawing a social psychological theoretical framework to study the conduct of al-Qaeda terrorism. In this sense, the idea of collectivity and moral justification of terrorist behavior are analyzed as psychological dynamics of terrorist behavior. The second part of the article focuses on the idea of collectivity and the last part examines how terrorist behavior is morally justified and applies Albert Bandura's mechanisms of moral disengagement to al-Qaeda case.

Understanding the Conduct of Terrorism

Crenshaw proposes that theoretical inquiry on terrorism might focus on the causes, conduct and consequences of terrorist behavior (1998, p. 249). Inspired by this classification and building on the awareness that not only is understanding the conduct of terrorism the keystone in the theoretical analysis of terrorism, but it is also required for the task of the management of certain terrorist incidents and campaigns in an attempt to affect contiguous outcomes (Crenshaw, 1998, p. 249), this article concentrates on the conduct of al-Qaeda terrorism. The conduct of terrorism refers to the forms terrorism takes, primary determinants of

which are the operations of terrorist groups and terrorist actions unfold (Crenshaw, 1998, p. 253). Based on the operations and actions realized, the conduct of al-Qaeda terrorism can be categorized as what Pape defines to be the most important forms of terrorism: demonstrative, destructive and suicidal terrorism (2003, p. 345).

Some terrorist operations and actions result from the desire to recruit more activists, focus attention on grievances from soft-liners on the other side, and get the attention of third parties who might put pressure on the other side. In short, they search for publicity (Pape, 2003, p. 345). This form of terrorism is demonstrative terrorism and hostage-taking and kidnapping constitute the two most popular means of it employed by al-Qaeda affiliated groups. The kidnapping of contractors, tourists and other foreign nationals by al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) (Cristiani and Fabiani, 2010), the kidnapping and hostage-taking of American specialists and other third-country nationals in Saudi Arabia by the al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) ("Al-Qaeda Organization in the Arabian Peninsula", 2012) are examples of such conduct.

Destructive terrorism is more aggressive than the demonstrative terrorism in the sense that it seeks to inflict real physical harm on members of the target audience (Pape, 2003, p. 345). Al-Qaeda's intent to employ destructive means were signaled in the 1998 fatwa of the World Islamic Front that called on every Muslim who believes in God and wishes to be rewarded to comply with God's order to kill the Americans and on Muslim leaders, the ulama, the youth and soldiers to launch raids on US troops and the devil's supporters allying with them ("Al-Qaeda's Fatwa", 1998). The al-Qaeda network engages in destructive terrorism primarily by means of bombing. The 1992 bombings in Yemen, 1993 World Trade Center Bombing, and 1998 East African embassies bombings are several of these incidents. [4]

Moving to suicide attacks, it is an operational method in which the very success of the attack is based on the death of the perpetrator, such as

4   The bombings in Yemen on a hotel where the US troops on the way to Somalia were staying were the first al-Qaeda attacks. On February 26, 1993 al-Qaeda affiliates parked a van equipped with explosives in the parking area under the World Trade Center, which resulted in the death of six people and the injury of over one thousand others. 1998 East African bombings refer to the bombings of the US embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Tanzania by al-Qaeda operatives. The incident caused more than 200 deaths and more than 5000 injuries.

planting a car bomb, wearing a suicide vest, or ramming an airplane into a building (Pape, 2003, p. 345). Although suicide attack as a form of terrorist conduct first appeared in the terrorism repertoire decades earlier, it has evolved from a tactic employed in local conflicts into an international phenomenon with al-Qaeda (Schweitzer and Ferber, 2005, p. 9). Suicide attacks as a method are critically important for al-Qaeda operations in tactical and symbolic terms (Houghton, 2009, p. 211). The September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were coordinated suicide attacks and the 2000 USS Cole attack was a suicidal act conducted by al-Qaeda militants.[5]

The primary characteristic of terrorist operations and actions discussed here is definitely their employment of coercive means such as hostage-taking and kidnapping, and violent means including bombings and suicidal attacks. Ordinarily, people do not engage in such reprehensible conduct as it is difficult to justify to themselves killing or causing the death of others. That is, conducting terrorist operations, be it demonstrative, destructive or suicidal, has as a prerequisite for the breaking of internal barriers to coercion and violence, which may not be achieved in the absence of the idea of collectivity. It is for this reason that understanding the al-Qaeda network in regard to the conduct of terrorism seems not to be possible without providing answers to the following questions: Through which mechanism are internal barriers to coercive and violent conduct broken? What is the role of the sense of collectivity in this process? Subsequent parts deal with these questions.

The Idea of Collectivity

A terror network is the association whose members share a common fate; their future and the attainment of the goals of the group are bound together. Members have to trust each other so that the group will not be endangered (Crenshaw, 2004, p. 422). As terrorist operations and actions, most of the time, are conducted collectively, this trust of each other in terms of cohesion and loyalty to the sense of collectivity is essential in the conduct of terrorism.

Collective identity is supposed to play a significant role in the cohesion

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5 On October 12, 2000, al-Qaeda conducted a suicide attack against the US Navy destroyer USS Cole by approaching the destroyer with a small craft when the destroyer was docked in Aden harbor in Yemen for refueling. The attack resulted in the death of seventeen American sailors and the injury of 39 others.

maintenance and loyalty management in terrorist organizations and networks. Collective identity can be defined as the generation of interactive and shared emotional and cognitive perceptions by several individuals or a group in the context of the environment in which they are struggling (Melucci, 1995, p. 44). Different from individual identity, collective identity is shared with a group of other people, so it is more inclusive (Simon and Klanderman, 2004, p. 599). Once individuals join an organization or network, group dynamics set in. From that movement on, the group begins to transform the values of its members (Banks, 2005, p. 678). As a result of group forces, the collective identity begins to contain the individual identity; "an overarching sense of the collective consumes the individual" (Post, Sprinzak and Denny , 2003, p. 176). It is generally shown that it is this cohesion and loyalty to the sense of collectivity that ensures the continuity of the intention and motivation to engage in terrorist conduct.

In an attempt to illustrate this sense of collectivity, Sageman looks at what happened in the aftermath of the 2004 Madrid bombings associated with al-Qaeda. The perpetrators of the bombings were not suicide bombers; they planted thirteen bombs in a total into four trains, as a result of which more than a hundred people died and more than a thousand were injured. Three weeks after the event, the police surrounded some of the perpetrators in an apartment building. The police evacuated the district and attempted to negotiate with the perpetrators. The perpetrators replied by shouting in Arabic, singing jihadi songs and swearing that they would die in the fire of glory. Once the police broke the lock and threw a tear gas bomb into the room, an explosion took place and all seven of the perpetrators died. The point Sageman makes here is that: Even if one of the terrorists did not want to die, in that situation he was stuck. Around him were six of his best friends. He could not abandon them even if he disagreed with them. What could he say? "Brothers, you go ahead, I'll join you later" (2008, pp. 87-88).

What this implies is that there is a strong link between collective identity and collective action. Collective identity has never been completely negotiable since collective action is endowed with meaning and all along mobilizes emotions. Indeed, collective identity is the process of constructing an action system. It is "concerned with the orientations of action and the field of opportunities and constraints in which the action takes place" (Melucci, 1995, p. 44). Out of this process, people can do

collectively what they cannot dare individually. Yet, how does collective identity determine collective action? What role does it play in making people disengage with moral barriers to coercive and/or violent conduct? Only when the answers to these questions are provided, a full picture of the role of collectivity in the conduct of terrorism will be able to drawn.

Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement

As already stated before in this article, the idea of collectivity is essential in the cohesion maintenance and loyalty management in terrorist organizations and networks. It performs this task by providing appropriate context and environment to break barriers to cohesion and violence. Within this collective environment members of terrorist networks and organizations morally disengage from detrimental action. This part analyzes how this occurs in the light of Albert Bandura's conceptualization of mechanisms of moral disengagement.

One commonality of al-Qaeda operatives, those who actually engage in or contribute to the conduct of demonstrative, destructive and suicidal activities, is that moral reactions associated with such behavior are disengaged from the conduct. Bandura explains that self-sanction has a primary role in the regulation of reprehensible conduct. People do things that provide them with a sense of satisfaction and self-worth. They avoid as much as possible behaving in ways that violate their moral standards since such behavior would result in self-condemnation. People engage in terrorist activity when these moral reactions are disengaged from destructive conduct (Bandura, 1998, p. 161). In an attempt to explain how this occurs, Bandura examines the psychosocial mechanisms of moral disengagement and how they function in the conduct of terrorism throughout his noteworthy work "Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement." He outlines that self-sanctions and self-condemnation can be disengaged by reconstructing conduct as serving moral purposes, by obscuring personal agency in detrimental activities, by disregarding or misrepresenting the injurious consequence of one's actions, or by blaming and dehumanizing the victims (Bandura, 1998, p. 161).

Moral Justification

People do not engage in reprehensible conduct unless they can justify to themselves the morality of their actions. By way of portraying it in the service of moral purposes, what is reprehensible can be made personally

and socially acceptable and even honorable. Once it is portrayed to be in the service of moral purposes, people see themselves as fighting cruel oppressors who have an insatiable desire for conquest, defending their cherished values and ways of life, preventing an evil ideology from subjugating humanity. Therefore, socialized people turn into dedicated combatants as an outcome of cognitively restructuring the moral value of killing rather than alteration of their personality structures or aggressive drives (Bandura, 1998, p. 164). This may happen mainly through euphemistic labeling and advantageous comparison.

Language gives shape to thought the patterns on which people ground many of their actions. The way they are called can provide certain activities on a very different appearance. In this sense, euphemistic language can be used in the service of masking reprehensible activities and attributing a respective status on them (Bandura, 1990, p. 31). Palliative expressions are frequently used to make the reprehensible respectable. Terrorist behavior loses discrepancy thanks to the power of hygienic words. Soldiers "waste" people rather than kill them, intelligence operatives "terminate (them) with extreme prejudice" (Bandura, 1998, p. 170, quoted from Safire, 1979, p. 13).

Considering advantageous comparison, once events occur or are presented contiguously, perception and judgment of the second one is colored by the first one. Based on this contrast principle, advantageous comparison as a device of moral judgment refers to the influence of the expedient structuring of what is compared against on moral judgments of conduct. Contrasting them with conspicuous inhumanities can give self-deplored acts a righteous appearance (Bandura, 1990, p. 171). It is raised in the 1998 fatwa that:

> *"The Arabian Peninsula has never –since God made it flat, created its desert, and encircled it with seas- been stormed by any forces like the crusader armies spreading in it like locusts. … for over seven years the United States has been occupying the lands of Islam, the holiest of places, the Arabian Peninsula, plundering its riches, dictating to its rulers, humiliating its people, terrorizing its neighbors"* ("Al-Qaeda's Fatwa", 1998)*.*

In a similar manner, Bin Laden called out to the USA in the 1996 fatwa that:

"The youths hold you responsible for all of the killings and evictions of the Muslims and the violation of the sanctities, carried out by your Zionist brothers in Lebanon; you openly supplied them with arms and finance. More than 600,000 Iraqi children have died due to lack of food and medicine and as a result of the unjustifiable aggression (sanction) imposed on Iraq and its nation. The children of Iraq are our children. You, the USA, together with the Saudi regime are responsible for the shedding of the blood of these innocent children" ("Bin Laden's 1996 Fatwa", 1996).*

Violent struggle is adopted and presented as the only defensive weapon they have in order to terminate the cruelties inflicted on the Muslim world in general and the Arabian Peninsula in particular. This occurs through the conspicuous contrasting of their struggle with the bloody and humiliating policies of the USA.

Advantageous comparisons can be also drawn from history to justify violent struggle (Bandura, 1998, p. 171). Al-Qaeda chose the years 622 to 632, the period when the Prophet was essentially forced by Meccan society, which considered him a dangerous threat to them, to leave Mecca. He left Mecca for Medina, which is referred as hijra in Islamic history, and set up a city-state. In the first ten years based in the city of Medina, the Prophet waged war against the enemies of Islam, defensive at times and offensive war at other, and accomplished to unify the peninsula. These ten years are often compared to the contemporary struggle with against the number one enemy of Islam, the US, and its collaborators (Whelan, 2005, p. 120).

Similarly, in one of the discovered videos through which he addresses his audience, Bin Laden cites from the Quaranic version of the biblical account of David and Goliath, a giant famous for his battle with David. This is as study of how a small numbers of believers were able to defeat decisively an overwhelming enemy with the help of Allah. The final lines of the story go as the following:

"But those who knew certainly that they were going to meet Allah said 'How often a small group overcame a mighty host by Allah's leave! And Allah is with As-Sabirun. And when they advanced to meet Goliath and his forces, they invoked: 'Our Lord! Pour forth on us patience, and set firm our feet and make

> *us victorious over the disbelieving people.' So they routed them*
> *by Allah's leave and David killed Goliath and Allah gave him the*
> *kingdom and taught him of that which He willed"* (Hellmich,
> 2005, p. 51).

By quoting the battle of David against Goliath and his victory, Bin
Laden intended to make his audience confirm that righteousness will
be victorious over evil and have faith in Allah even under the most
intimidating circumstances. In this context, his message is clear: obeying
God is the duty of every believer, which is equal in the present time to
protecting his favored community against the aggression of the USA and
its collaborators.

Displacement of Responsibility

Displacement of responsibility as a practice promoting moral
disengagement has its basis in the conviction that people engage in
injurious behavior they ordinarily refuse if the consequences of their
conduct is taken on by a legitimate authority. In other words, under
conditions of displaced responsibility, people regard their actions as
coming out of the dictates of authorities. By obscuring personal agency
they refrain from self-prohibiting reactions (Bandura, 1990, p. 34).

The global Salafi jihadists are motivated by a divine command; they fight
in the path of Allah and for the greater good of the Muslim community.
They are dedicated to the belief that their struggle against the enemies of
Islam is divine will. The legitimacy of the authorizers is a significant factor
in determining the ease with which responsibility for one's actions can be
surrendered to others. "The higher the authorities, the more legitimacy,
respect, and coercive power they command and the more amenable are
people to defer to them." (Bandura, 1990, p. 36). At this point, a distinction
between two levels of responsibility is required: duty to one's superiors
and accountability for the results of one's actions. Individuals will be
aware that they are responsible before an authority on the one hand, and,
they will overcome the obsession with the idea of personal responsibility
for their coercive and/or violent conduct on the other. Since al-Qaedaists
believe to act in the light of the orders from a sacred authority, they
eliminate personal responsibility for their conduct by declaring their
coercive and/or violent activities to be in the path of Allah. Yet, they act
with a consciousness that the jihad against the enemies of Islam is a duty
for every Muslim, on the other hand.

Diffusion of Responsibility

Diffusion of responsibility has its role in breaking the internal moral barriers to the terrorist conduct. People feel themselves less responsible or defective for the harm their activities may cause when they act in the presence of or on behalf of a group. Diffusion of responsibility can be possible through various means. At this point, the importance of group dynamics and sense of collectivity come to the surface. When the decision is made as a group, the responsibility of the collectively adopted behaviors and attitudes are collectively shared as well. That is to say, individuals do not accept the responsibility that their behavior brings by themselves. When everyone is responsible no one is actually responsible (Bandura, 1998, p. 176). In this way, the sense of collectivity plays its role in the conduct of terrorism by diffusing responsibility.

One form of joining the al-Qaeda network is joining as a group. Formal affiliation with the global Salafi jihad appears to be a group phenomenon; friends decided to join as a group rather than as isolated individuals. At the East African embassy bombings trial L'Houssaine Kherchtou, an early initiate in al-Qaeda who had been arrested while trying to leave Nairobi four days after the bombings, testified that he had joined the jihad together with four friends from Milan. The Kelkal group that carried out the 1995 bombings in France was composed of friends who had grown up together and participated together in the bombings. Likewise, the Lackawanna Six referred also as the Lackawanna cell consisted of six close Yemeni American childhood friends who underwent training at an al-Qaeda camp as a group (Sageman, 2004, pp. 110-111). This notion of joining the Salafi jihad as a group fits well into the idea of diffusion of responsibility.

Disregard for, or Distortion of, Consequences

Additional ways of breaking self-deterring barriers operate through disregard for or misinterpretation of the consequences of action. When people choose to engage in activities that are harmful to others for reasons of personal gain or social inducements, they refrain from facing or they minimize the harm they cause. They remember prior information given to them about the potential benefits of the behavior, but are less prone to recall its harmful effects. Once the detrimental results of one's conduct are ignored, minimized, distorted, or disbelieved, self-censure is not activated readily (Bandura, 1998, pp. 176-177).

Scholarly accounts and data available in regard to the al-Qaeda network seem not to provide us with a concrete illustration of such kind of disregard for, or distortion of, the consequences of terrorist conduct. As coercive and/or violent action is masked and has lost its cruelty by the hygienic power of the words, which is through motivational framing or euphemistic labeling, the conduct is now something honorable. Hence, for al-Qaeda militants killing the enemies of Islam and dying in the path of Allah is a matter of honor. The more the harm they cause the enemy, the more honorable and respectable they are regarded. In this context, there is doubt that disregard for, or distortion of, harmful effects constitute a moral disengagement mechanism in the case of al-Qaeda. As a matter of fact, Bandura does not explicitly state any sequential follow-up between the mechanisms of moral disengagement; they do not necessarily need to be all included in the process.

Dehumanization

Dehumanization as the final set of moral disengagement practices focuses on the targets of the terrorist behavior. How the perpetrators of terrorist acts views the people toward whom their behavior is directed matters significantly in the strength of self-censuring reactions to conduct. In this regard, dehumanization describes the task of pretending the enemy to deserve being badly-behaved by intimidating their human features (Bandura, 1998, pp. 180-181).

Dehumanization as a mechanism of moral disengagement is instructive especially in order to explain how al-Qaeda justifies the killing of innocent non-combatants though it is forbidden in Islamic law. From this perspective, dehumanization takes the form of "infidelization" in the case of al-Qaeda. This is evident in al-Zawahiri's interpretation of individual duties according to Islamic law. The logic he follows is that every Muslim who supports these un-Islamic regimes brings himself/herself out of the banner of Islam. The citizens of these countries serve the presence of these governments by voting for them or paying taxes to them. By doing so, they lose their innocent non-combatants status as determined by Islamic law. They become infidels and targets of the al-Qaeda network.

Conclusion

Al-Qaeda engages in demonstrative, destructive and suicidal terrorist activities. All these forms of terrorism have social psychological as well

political, economical and ideological aspects. In line, they require breaking internal barriers to coercive and violent act may be more than they require financial resources, weapons and etc. At this point, identifying the socio-psychological mechanisms through which the demonstrative, destructive and suicidal acts are justified and unfold is absolutely required for full and real understanding of the conduct of al-Qaeda terrorism.

The social psychological account of conceptualization of mechanisms of moral disengagement identifies the psychosocial processes through which internal control is selectively disengaged from detrimental conduct. These mechanisms include moral justification through euphemistic labeling and advantageous comparison, displacement of responsibility and diffusion of responsibility, disregard for, or, distortion of, consequences, and dehumanization of victims. All these occur within a group structure and a collective environment. The idea of collectivity plays an important role in displacing and diffusing responsibility; therefore, it is crucial in the cohesion maintenance and loyalty management in the network.

One commonality of al-Qaeda operatives, those who actually engage in or contribute to the conduct of demonstrative, destructive and suicidal activities, is that moral reactions associated with such behavior are disengaged from the conduct. Mechanisms of moral disengagement shed light on how such disengagement occurs. Accordingly, first moral justification occurs through euphemistic labeling or advantageous comparison of the act with conspicuous inhumanities and examples from history, or both. Once individuals are motivated and the coercive and/or violent conduct is morally justified, there is need to ensue the continuation of motivation and loyalty. At this point, displacement of responsibility and diffusion of responsibility promote to the maintenance of motivation and loyalty. Eventually, target of the conduct are presented to deserve being behaved in this way through intimidation of their human features.

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Özet

Finansal transferlerinin kesilmesi, eğitim kamplarının yok edilmesi ve hatta lideri Usame bin Ladin'in öldürülmesine rağmen el-Kaide, güncel bir çalışma alanı ve konusu olmaya devam etmektedir. Yemen'de kontrol noktaları oluşturma girişiminde bulunmakta; el-Kaide uzantılı el-Nusra, Suriye iç savaşında Suriye hükümetine karşı savaşmakta; el-Kaide'nin kurucularından bazıları el-Nusra ile aynı safta savaşmakta; İslami Mağrip el-Kaidesi Kuzey Afrika'da tarihi kalıntıları ve kültürel mirası yok etmektedir. Söz konusu bu ve benzeri eylemler göz önünde bulundurulduğunda el-Kaide, tutarlı bir kuramsal çerçevede incelenmesi gereken güncel bir araştırma konusu olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır.

El-Kaide üzerine yapılan çalışmalar, örgütü uluslararası politikadaki geleneksel diğer aktörlerden ayıran kendisine has karakteristik özelliklerin ve dinamiklerin farkında olarak, el-Kaide'yi ele alırken uluslararası ilişkiler literatüründeki geleneksel yaklaşımların ötesine geçmelidir. Bu gereklilikten hareketle, bu çalışmada el-Kaide'nin terörist faaliyetleri, geleneksel uluslararası ilişkiler kuramlarının ötesinde, sosyal psikolojik bir bakış açısından incelenmiştir.

El-Kaide gösteri nitelikli, yıkıcı ve intihar nitelikli terörist faaliyetlerde bulunmaktadır. Bu terör çeşitlerinin tümü, siyasi, ekonomik ve ideolojik olduğu kadar sosyal psikolojik yönlere sahiptir. Zira, bu tür eylemler normal şartlarda bireylerin kendilerine ahlaki olarak açıklayamayacakları şiddet kullanımını içermektedir. Dolayısıyla, bu eylemleri gerçekleştirmek için finansal kaynağa, silaha vb. duyulan ihtiyaçtan daha öte, şiddet eyleminde bulunmayı engelleyen vicdani bariyerlerin kırılmasına ihtiyaç vardır. Bu noktada, gösteri nitelikli, yıkıcı ve intihar nitelikli terör eylemlerinin vicdanen haklı gösterildiği, doğrulandığı ve ortaya çıktığı sosyal psikolojik mekanizmaların anlaşılması, el-Kaide terörünün anlaşılması için gereklidir.

Albert Bandura'nın bahsi geçen sosyal psikolojik mekanizmalarına işaret eden ahlaki çözülme kavramsallaştırması, iç ya da vicdani kontrolü, şiddet içerikli eylemden seçici olarak ayrıştıran psikososyal süreçleri tanımlamaktadır. Bu sürecin ev sahipliği yaptığı mekanizmalar, örtmeceli isimlendirme ve avantajlı karşılaştırma yöntemleriyle ahlaki haklı çıkarmayı, sorumluluğun kaydırılmasını ve yayılmasını, olayın sonuçlarının önemsenmemesini ya da çarpıtılmasını ve son olarak kurbanların insanlıktan uzaklaştırılmasını içermektedir. Kolektiflik fikri

bu mekanizmalardan sorumluluğun kaydırılması ve yayılmasında önemli bir rol oynamakta, dolayısıyla terörist ağda bütünlüğün sürdürülmesinde ve sadakatin sağlanmasında oldukça önemlidir.