

POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY IN UNDERSTANDING AL-QAEDA: WHY AND
HOW?

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ABSTRACT

POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY IN UNDERSTANDING AL-QAEDA: WHY AND HOW?

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This thesis is concerned with political psychology as an academic field with regard to the explanatory power of political psychology accounts in understanding the al-Qaeda network. Understanding al-Qaeda as a network of cells dispersed worldwide and in cooperation with local militant Islamist groups requires analysis at individual and group level, a multidisciplinary and multimethod research and focus on context and process. In this sense, political psychology accounts appear to have explanatory power to understand the al-Qaeda network, utilizing the defining characteristics of the field. Analyzing al-Qaeda through the lenses of political psychology, it can be concluded that psychoanalytically based approaches may not be very relevant to approach al-Qaeda. In this regard, this thesis promotes the study of the al-Qaeda network by concentrating on the group level of analysis. In this context, sociological accounts, social psychological framework of moral disengagement mechanisms, developmental psychology approach of social learning theory and large group in its own right provide us with powerful frameworks to study the causes, process and effects of al-Qaeda's terrorist activities.

Keywords: al-Qaeda, political psychology, international terrorism

ÖZ

EL-KAİDE'Yİ ANLAMAKTA POLİTİK PSİKOLOJİ: NEDEN VE NASIL?

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Bu çalışma, el-Kaide'yi anlamakta politik psikoloji yaklaşımlarının açıklayıcı gücünü incelemektedir. El-Kaide, Dünya çapına yayılmış hücrelerden oluşan ve yerel militan İslamcı gruplarla işbirliği içerisinde faaliyet gösteren bir ağıdır. Bu özellikleriyle el-Kaide'yi anlamak, birey ve grup düzeyinde analizleri, disiplinler arası ve çok yönlü bir araştırmayı ve süreç ve kapsam odaklı bir çalışmayı gerektirir. Bu bağlamda politik psikolojinin sunduğu yaklaşımlar el-Kaide'yi anlamakta önemlidir. Politik psikolojinin sunduğu yaklaşımlara bakıldığında, psikanaliz temelli yaklaşımların el-Kaide'yi anlamakta çok açıklayıcı olmadığını görmek mümkündür. Psikanalitik yaklaşımlar ışığında el-Kaide gibi uluslararası bir ağın mensuplarına dair ortak yönler bulmak zorlaşmaktadır. Bu nedenle, bu çalışma grup düzeyinde analizlerin daha faydalı olacağını savunmaktadır. El-Kaide'nin eylemlerinin nedenlerini, sürecini ve sonuçlarını anlamakta sosyolojik yaklaşımlar, sosyal psikolojiye ait ahlaki çözülme mekanizmaları yaklaşımı, gelişim psikolojisine ait sosyal öğrenme teorisi ve geniş grup psikolojine ait kavramsallaştırmalar açıklayıcı olacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: el-Kaide, politik psikoloji, uluslararası terör

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACLU	American Civil Liberties Union
ADC	American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee
AQAP	Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
AQIM	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
ETA	Euskadi Ta Askatasuna / Basque Homeland and Freedom
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
HRWR	Human Rights Watch Report
US	United States
USA	United States of America

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

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. What had happened was more than terrorist attacks on the world superpower in its own soil; it was a challenge to the tenets of the international system. Al-Qaeda has been challenging the rules of international society and the fundamental authority structure of the international order that is defined by the interaction of modern nation-states and nations with each other. It has been a challenge to this order in the sense that following the September 11 attacks a coalition of nations declared war on a non-state actor within the context and environment of a system created for nation-states. In this sense, al-Qaeda has appeared as an actor in international politics that we need to understand to give meaning to the changes in international politics in the last decade.

It is interesting to note that al-Qaeda is an actor in international politics that is difficult to approach through the traditional theories of international relations scholarship. Contrary to the realist assumptions, its activities originate neither from the dynamics of alliances and polarity nor the rise and fall of great powers. It is not a representative of a voting public, a multinational cooperation, labor union, or any of the other agents influencing foreign policy in the eyes of liberals. It is a non-state actor, but not one of the single-issue networks well-known in the literature. It is motivated by ideas but not economic, strategic or liberal ones. It does not use nuclear, biological or chemical weapons. As a matter of fact, it conducted the September 11

attacks by using “nothing more complicated than box cutters, flying lessons and elaborate planning.”¹

Rather, Al-Qaeda is a network of cells dispersed worldwide and in cooperation with local militant Islamist groups. There were very few full-time paid staff members of al-Qaeda. Rather, partisans coming from different countries received training in Afghanistan, Malaysia, the Philippines or the Sudan and financial and logistic support to go and carry out their own activities in their home countries or other parts of the world. Each of the cells and local groups in the al-Qaeda network has its own aims and main figures on the one hand, and a shared vision of the world and a collective identity with other cells and local groups in the network that allow them to place their activities in the same broader perspective, on the other. They do not necessarily agree on everything but believe in the same ideology in its general lines. It is due to this network structure that the destruction of the training camps in Afghanistan, the halt of financial transfers, the detention or death of key personnel, and even the killing of its vanguard, Osama Bin Laden, were severe blows to al-Qaeda, but not its end.

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 requires looking well beyond the traditional approaches in international relations scholarship. In such an attempt, this thesis is concerned with political psychology as the academic field concerned with the influence of psychological factors, such as perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, values, motives, personality, cognitive

¹ Daniel Philpott. “The Challenge of September 11 to Secularism in International Relations,” *World Politics* 55 (October 2002): 66.

styles, dynamic processes, group membership, group characteristics, structure and performance, and ways of social influence, on political beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of individuals and groups alike, on the one hand, and with the influence of political culture, systems, movements, parties, ideologies, mechanisms of political socialization, and intergroup relations on the human repertoire, on the other², with regard to the explanatory power of political psychology accounts in understanding al-Qaeda. Rather than providing the psychological examination of al-Qaeda as an international network, the thesis will address the issues of why we need political psychology in understanding al-Qaeda and how we should study it in this sense.

The al-Qaeda network is associated with terrorism and throughout the thesis will be referred to as conducting terrorist activities and operations in the sense that it employs politically motivated violence intended to bring feelings of terror and helplessness in a civilian population in order to influence decision making and to change the behavior of its target. There is a huge discussion in the literature on the definitions of “terrorism” and “terrorist” and on the “one person’s terrorist is another person’s freedom fighter” argument. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to focus on the details of such discussion. Yet, it seems proper to note that different governments and different political actors use the term “terrorist” as only a political weapon in a way that “our guys” are always freedom fighters and simply “their guys” are the terrorists. No matter how the different governments and different political actors define the acts, if it shoots like a terrorist, explode bombs like a terrorist, crashes

² Daniel Bar-Tal, “The (Social) Psychological Legacy for Political Psychology,” in *Political Psychology* ed. Kristen R. Monroe (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 2002), 174-175.

planes into buildings like a terrorist, then it is a terrorist act regardless of who conducts it.³

Especially 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." We have information that may be more than we can possibly catch up with; however, we lack conceptual and theoretical frameworks to interpret this information on al-Qaeda.⁴ In this sense, this thesis chooses to focus on the questions of why there is need for political psychology accounts and how they need to be applied in studying the al-Qaeda network. Accordingly, separate chapters are not devoted to explanations of al-Qaeda with regard to its history, ideology, structure, activities and impact. Rather, they are integrated throughout the chapters wherever they are relevant, driven by the fear of drowning in the oceans of information.

The first main chapter of the thesis is concerned with explaining the need for political psychology accounts to approach the al-Qaeda network with regard to the causes, conduct and consequences of its terrorist activities and operations. First, structural, facilitator and motivational factors that thought to underlie the roots of terrorist activities associated with al-Qaeda are clarified. Then, the process 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-

³ Fathali M. Moghaddam. *From the Terrorists' Point of View: What They Experience and why They Come to Destroy* (Oxford: Greenwood International [Imprint], 2006), 10.

⁴ Fathali M., Moghaddam. "The New Global American Dilemma and Terrorism." *Political Psychology* 30 (2009): 373.

Qaeda. Next, the effects of these operations and actions on their perpetrators and audiences are covered. In this sense, the September 11 events are taken as the example with regard to the great reaction they created. Once the causes, process and effects of al-Qaeda's terrorist activities are discussed, the need for the study of interaction between psychological and political processes in interpreting and giving meaning to them is discussed.

After the need for political psychology accounts in understanding al-Qaeda is well established in the first chapter, the second chapter concentrates on drawing a theoretical framework for political psychology research on al-Qaeda. Initially, psychoanalytically based approaches to the study of terrorism are explained and their explanatory power in clarifying the roots of terrorist behavior is discussed. In the following parts, the possible contribution of sociological, social psychological and developmental approaches to understanding the roots and process of terrorist activities, and of large group psychology on its own right in understanding the effects of al-Qaeda terrorism is discussed.

The thesis ends with a concluding chapter throughout which not only the main assumptions of the thesis are restated and main conclusions reached are outlined, but also a theoretical framework to approach al-Qaeda is drawn.

CHAPTER 2

POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY IN UNDERSTANDING AL-QAEDA: WHY?

Terrorist behavior just like other forms of political behaviors has its own causes, process and consequences. Studying terrorism by ignoring one of these aspects will not be able to provide us with a complete picture. In this sense, a theoretical inquiry on terrorism might center on, respectively, the causes, conduct and consequences of terrorism.⁵ Accordingly, this chapter is concerned with the question of why we need the study of the relationship between psychological and political processes to understand the al-Qaeda network by focusing on the roots of terrorist behavior, conduct of terrorist activity and its consequences.

2.1. UNDERSTANDING THE ROOTS OF TERRORIST BEHAVIOR

Many scholarly works in the social sciences literature on terrorism and terrorist organizations and networks seem to search for the roots of terrorist behavior upon the assumption that understanding terrorist motivations behind terrorist behavior is the key to understand terror, terrorist organizations and networks, and to make terror unprofitable. Accordingly, in an attempt to explore the root causes of terrorism, Bjorgo organizes the factors that are thought to constitute the roots of terrorist behavior into groups according to their levels of causation to include structural causes, facilitator (or accelerator) causes, and motivational causes.⁶ Inspired by such a framework, this part will search for the structural, facilitator and motivational

⁵ Martha Crenshaw, "Questions to Be Answered, Research to Be Done, Knowledge to Be Applied," in *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Theologies, States of Mind*, ed. Walter Reich (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, c1998), 249.

⁶ Tore Bjorgo, Introduction to *Root Causes of Terrorism: Myths, Reality and Ways Forward*, ed. Tore Bjorgo (London; New York: Routledge, 2005), 3.

factors that underlie the roots of terrorist behavior with regard to the al-Qaeda network.

2.1.1. Structural Roots of Terrorist Behavior

A considerable number of the studies on terrorism focus on structural factors in their attempt to explain the roots of terrorist behavior. The assumption which gives way to such a tendency is that people engage in terrorist activity as they think they have no other alternative to achieve their ends in the present context. That is, individuals who feel themselves trapped in the present socio-economic and political conditions act as if they have no choice other than violence to get what they want.⁷

Studies examining the socio-economic roots of the terrorist behavior mostly take poverty and low level of educational attainment as their primary focus point and search for the relationship between these factors and terrorism. Here, it is useful to make a distinction between domestic/separatist terrorism and international terrorism. In domestic and/or separatist cases, terror may be a preferential weapon at the hands of the dispossessed and powerless against an all-powerful state; however, this does not seem very relevant as far as international terrorism is concerned.⁸ As a matter of fact, if poverty lied at the root of terrorist behavior at the international level, “Haiti would be the godhead of international terror, and upper-class Italians would never have joined the Brigade Rosse during the 1970s.”⁹

⁷ David Patrick Houghton, *Political Psychology: Situations, Individuals, and Cases* (London; New York: Routledge, 2009), 207-208.

⁸ Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 73.

Al-Qaeda as the most international of the international terrorist networks is not an exception to this; the primary concerns of al Qaeda are far from being economic both at the individual and group levels. Considering the individual level of analysis, scholarly studies on the profiles of al-Qaeda militants and especially those who carried out the September 11 attacks clearly show that the majority of the group members are divided between upper-class and middle-class. Based on his research on a 102-person sample he thought to form “global Salafi mujahedin,” Marc Sageman concluded that three-fourths of his sample came from the upper and middle-classes.¹⁰ Sageman, again, underlines that the al-Qaeda members responsible for the September 11 events belonged to a cell known as the Hamburg cell that was composed of nine expatriates coming from the upper-middle class.¹¹ Indeed, Osama Bin Laden himself as the wealthy descendant of a construction empire in Saudi Arabia was a member of the upper class. Likewise, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Laden’s top associate and his successor now, is the son of one of the prominent families in Egypt.¹²

The research on the profiles of al-Qaeda members further depict that the group members are generally composed of well-educated adults. Contrary to the belief that young people engage in terrorist activity as a result of ignorance and their weak, vulnerable minds, Sageman points out that sixty-two percent of his sample had a university education. He further notes that those who fought in the Afghan War were the best-educated, and those who joined during the 1990s had attended college but

⁹ Richard Whelan, *Al-Qaedaism: The Threat to Islam, The Threat to the World* (Dublin: Ashfield Press, 2005), 117.

¹⁰ Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, 74.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 103.

¹² Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 49.

some dropped out upon joining al-Qaeda. Indeed, as opposed to the general bias that the jihadists are highly educated in religious studies, a considerable number of jihadists in Sageman's sample studied technical fields such as engineering, medicine and physics.¹³

In the light of these it can be concluded that people do not join or follow the al-Qaeda network primarily because they are trapped by poverty and/or a low level of education. In other words, poverty and a low level of educational attainment as socio-economic structural factors do not constitute the roots of terrorist behavior for al-Qaeda at the individual level, neither do they at the group level. As a matter of fact, in his 1996 fatwa entitled "Declaration of War against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places," Bin Laden addresses socio-economic issues as well as political and religious ones. He refers to the hundreds of thousands of unemployed graduates as the widest section of the society, deterioration of the economy, inflation and increasing government debts.¹⁴ However, this does not indicate that al-Qaeda has carried out its acts due to the poor socio-economic conditions of the time; rather this is vicarious poverty. That is to say, bin Laden and his group claim to carry out their acts on behalf of their poor brethren. They intend to justify their acts in terms of economic justice and fairness and on behalf of the less fortunate- not from their own destitution.¹⁵ In addition, this does not mean that all al-Qaeda members belong to the middle or upper classes and they are all well-educated. Rather, they mean that since we know that at least the senior leaders of the group, the perpetrators of the most

¹³ Ibid, 58-59.

¹⁴ "Bin Laden's 1996 Fatwa," *PBS Newshour*, August 1996, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/international/fatwa_1996.html (25 December 2011).

¹⁵ Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*, 48.

destructive acts and a considerable number of other foot soldiers are not driven by socio-economic concerns, we need to look beyond the socio-economic concerns to understand al-Qaeda.

Essentially, the concerns of al-Qaeda are political. Indeed, it will not be wrong to say that the al-Qaeda idea has build on the legacy of Maktab al-Khidamat (Office of Services), which was created in 1984 by the Palestinian scholar Abdullah Azzam with financial support from Osama bin Laden. Maktab al-Khidamat was established to gather the Arab fighters or mujahidin and send them to Afghanistan to fight against the Soviet forces there.¹⁶ As is evident in its name, “qaeda” meaning “base” in Arabic, the idea behind the formation of al-Qaeda was the desire to establish a base that would gather various Islamic fundamentalist groups together and coordinate their actions. That is, the decision of local jihadist groups to affiliate their movement with al-Qaeda was driven by the belief that a common external enemy prevented Islamic fundamentalist groups within their individual states from carrying out any significant change. As is specified in the 1996 “Declaration of War Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places” and the 1998 fatwa issued under the banner of the World Islamic Front for Combat Against the Jews and Crusaders¹⁷, the stated goals of al-Qaeda are removing Americans and American

¹⁶ Peter Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know: An Oral History of Al Qaeda's Leader* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 29.

¹⁷ In August 1996 Osama Bin Laden issued a document entitled “Declaration of War against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places.” For Bin Laden’s 1996 Fatwa see http://www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/international/fatwa_1996.html Almost two years later, on February 23, 1998, Bin laden and four other representatives of specific Islamist groups issued another document declaring a holy war, jihad, against the West and Israel. The signatories other than Bin Laden were Ayman al-Zawahiri as the leader of the Islamic Jihad group in Egypt, Ahmed Refai Taha as the representative of al- Jamaat al-Islamiyya in Egypt, Mir Hamzah as the secretary of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistani and Fazul Rahman as the head of the Jihad Movement in Bangladesh. They identified themselves as the World Islamic Front. For 1998 fatwa and its signatories see <http://www.fas.org/irp/world/para/docs/980223-fatwa.htm> Since then, these two documents have been

influence from Muslim communities, especially Saudi Arabia; destroying Israel; and toppling the pro-Western dictatorships in the Middle East.¹⁸ That is to say, the perception of the situation in the Muslim communities in general, and in the Middle East in particular, from the political frame constitute the basis of al-Qaeda's concerns.

At this point, it is clear that one must consider the Afghan War, the Gulf War and following US military presence in Saudi Arabia, the suffering of Muslims in Bosnia, Chechnya, Kashmir and the Philippines, and the dynamics of Arab-Israeli and US-Israeli relations to understand al-Qaeda's concerns. Without referring to the political context marked by these events, neither the motives behind the formation nor the evolution of al-Qaeda can be fully grasped, nor the motivations of its members and followers. Yet, these political structural factors alone are not sufficient to understand terrorist motivation in the case of al-Qaeda. Taking them alone will leave us with the famous unanswered question of most terrorism studies: Why does only a minority of people experiencing the same political context engage in terrorist activity? At this juncture, rather than political factors themselves, the process in which the surrounding political situation is interpreted, how this interpretation is shared and what impact and appeal such an interpretation has on the audience should be focused on.

2.1.2. Facilitator Factors

As once stated, facilitator causes of terrorism refer to the factors that make terrorism possible or attractive. In this regard, the news media and the internet can be

referred as "fatwas", juristic ruling concerning Islamic law, although they were not issued by Islamic scholars.

¹⁸ "Al-Qaeda's Fatwa," *PBS Newshour*, 23 February 1998, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/international/fatwa_1998.html (25 December 2011).

defined as the most facilitating of facilitator factors in determining the causes of terrorism. The news media, especially television, can play the role of propaganda machine through broadcast of the ideas and actions of terrorist organizations and networks. Government officials are occasionally “complicit by broadcasting about their arrests, usually elevating unknowns to the status of heroes.” Sympathizers may copy the successful actions and young people may be inspired by spectacular actions. Knowing about these ideas and actions, those people who apt to think in that way become aware that they are not alone; their demands and complaints are shared by others as well. Internet dissemination provides further opportunity for the distribution of propaganda of successful actions. A martyr’s action in the case of religious extremist terrorism, for instance, can be kept alive forever by the power of the internet and traditional media as an inspiration to potential new members.¹⁹

In this context, global, regional, national and local news organizations and their ability to utilize them as well as the internet make it easier for the al-Qaeda network to meet its need for communication, publicity and, of course, propaganda. Bin Laden and al-Qaeda carried their media operations forwards over years and adopted the means of communication in accordance with the changing conditions.

In the 1990s, bin Laden mostly conducted interviews with Western news organizations such as CNN and NBC News in order to get the attention of the foes in the USA and other parts of the Western world. Both the 1996 fatwa and the 1998 fatwa were made available to world public opinion through print media. They first appeared in the Arabic-language London newspaper al-Quds al-Arabi and reached the newspaper by fax. Gaining the attention of his foes was not the sole intent; such

¹⁹ Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*, 122.

news was thought to be the showcase of the al-Qaeda brand for followers and potential recruits. To this end, bin Laden's interviews with the news organizations became a part of the materials used in the camps in Afghanistan in an attempt to introduce the recruits to al-Qaeda ideology. Once al Jazeera emerged as a global television network, the al-Qaeda leadership started to send faxes and tapes to al Jazeera and gave interviews to it. Al Jazeera shared these faxes, tapes and interviews with the visual and print media all over the world.

In addition to the release of statements and interviews through which ideas and concerns were shared, the news concerning al-Qaeda-associated attacks contributed to facilitating terrorist behavior since they served as propaganda by action in the eyes of potential new members. The attacks on the USA targets were the most typical examples of this. These striking acts of defiance have three primary intentions: boosting the extremists' morale; inviting new recruits to the banner of al-Qaeda; and shaking the political system which relies on the belief that individuals cannot alter the status quo. Accordingly, actions such as the bombing of the East African embassies and the attack on the USS Cole give an eminent message: We radicals do not give up fighting; we will be victorious eventually as the USA is a paper tiger, just like its accomplices ruling in the Middle East.²⁰ That is to say, even if al-Qaeda fails to achieve its political goals, its attacks on the targets serve to generate new recruits and strengthening the motivation and morale of its followers. The news media and the internet, some consciously and some unconsciously, serve this message and tactic by the means of their facilitator roles.

²⁰ Michael, Doran. "The Pragmatic Fanaticism of al-Qaeda: An Anatomy of Extremism in Middle Eastern Politics." *Political Science Quarterly* 117 (summer, 2002): 183.

Correspondingly, the websites released the statements from bin Laden and senior leadership of al-Qaeda and following their release, stacks of reports and newsletters appeared in the media considering and commenting on the statements.²¹ The internet forums host debates over the relative merits of various strategies and tactics. Participants actively post and share their ideas concerning their goals, perspectives and hopes. These may encourage participants of the forums to become more active; promote images of inspirational heroes for them, and may trigger their radicalization. All in all, the internet has begun to emerge as “the true marketplace of ideas guiding this form of terrorism.”²²

What all these show us is that without communication and media al-Qaeda will neither be able to appear as a global actor nor reach a considerable number of sympathizers, supporters and actual recruits. In other words, media and the internet dissemination make al-Qaeda activities attractive in the eyes of potential members and sympathizers. Yet, these facilitator factors must be put within a broader framework in order for us to be able to understand the al-Qaeda network in a full sense.

2.1.3. Motivational Factors

Motivational factors refer to the factors that motivate individuals to act. To put it more clearly, they function to encourage the activation or mobilization of adherents. In this sense, ideology and its rhetoric to persuade people to take action constitute the fundamental motivational factor for most of the time.

²¹ Brigitte L. Nacos, “Mediated Terror: Teaching Terrorism through Propaganda and Publicity.” in *The Making of a Terrorist: Training* Vol. 2 of *The Making of a Terrorist: Recruitment, Training and Root Causes*, ed. James, J. F. Forest (Westport, Conn: Praeger Security International, 2006), 99-101.

²² Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*, 121.

The ideology of al Qaeda is what Kepel terms as Salafi Jihadism. Salafi is derived from the word “Salaf”, meaning “ancient one” and referring to the companions of the Prophet Muhammad, and is used to define those who want to restore the authentic Islam. Jihad, on the other hand, literally means “to exert”, “to strive” or “to struggle”. When it is used before the phrase “fi sabil Allah” (in the path of Allah) it connotes struggling in the path of Allah. Accordingly, Salafi Jihadism is an Islamist ideology that combines respect for the sacred texts in their most literal form and the indispensability of jihad against the enemies of the faith in order to restore the glorious days of Islam.²³

Ideology plays a significant role in the target selection of terrorist organizations and networks; it is a source of motivation and a window to view events and the acts of others.²⁴ It serves for the formation of the moral and political vision that inspires the violence of terrorist organizations and networks, shapes the way in which they see the world, and defines how they judge the actions of people and institutions.²⁵ So, it is correct to state that Salafi Jihadism gives shape to the worldview of al-Qaedaists; defines the boundaries within which they give meaning to the behavior of other actors, and motivates them to act in the light of such worldview and understandings. With regard to this, it is necessary to take a brief look at the roots of Salafi Jihadism as a system of thought.

²³ Gilles Kepel, *Cihat: İslamcılığın Yükselişi ve Gerilemesi*, trans. Haldun Bayrı (İstanbul: Doğan Kitapçılık AŞ, 2001), 257-258.

²⁴ Randy Borum, *Psychology of Terrorism* (Tampa: University of South Florida, 2004), 40.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 45.

Ibn Taymiyyah, a 13th-14th century Islamic scholar and theologian, has been highly championed by the Salafi groups and the influence of his ideas is present today. He strongly defended Sunni Islam based on strict adherence to the Quran and the practices of the Prophet Muhammad, the Sunna. Having witnessed what is generally referred as the most destructive times in the history of the Muslim community, the conquest of Muslim lands by the Mongols who had previously converted to Islam, Ibn Taymiyyah asserted that although they had been converted to Islam the Mongols were not true Muslims as they acted contrary to Islamic law and live in jahiliyya, the state of barbarism and ignorance that prevailed in the Arabian Peninsula before the Prophet Mohammed's revelations. Accordingly, he concluded that to engage in jihad against the Mongols was a duty for every Muslim. Today's Salafists cite Ibn Taymiyyah as an authority for their argument that contemporary Muslim rulers are apostates if they fail to impose sharia, Islamic law, exclusively, and that jihad should be waged against them.²⁶

Building on Ibn Taymiyyah's thought, Mawdudi, a 20th century Pakistani revivalist Islamic thinker, founder of al-Jamaat al-Islamiyya and an important figure in the development of Salafi Islam in his time, raised his complaint that Islam was detached from its original intentions and sources; the governments in Muslim countries implemented man-made laws of their own rather than the Islamic law. These governments, according to Mawdudi, were apostate and lived in jahiliyya, and he called for jihad against these governments as an obligation of true believers.²⁷

²⁶ Christopher Henzel. "The Origins of al-Qaeda's Ideology: Implications for US Strategy." *Parameters* (spring 2005): 71.

²⁷ Carl L. Brown. *Religion and State: The Muslim Approach to Politics*. (New York; Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2000), 148-153.

Sayyid Qutb, who has influenced many generations of Islamists, combined Ibn Taymiyyah's notion of "the duty to wage jihad" with the jahiliyya perception of Mawdudi and adopted them to the political and social conditions of his time. Qutb witnessed the secular policies of the Nasser regime in Egypt and blamed these secular policies for the worsening political and social order in his country.²⁸ For Qutb, humanity had deviated from the principal values that were vital for healthy development and real progress. These values, he believed, are present only in Islam and real progress will be possible only if the Muslim community, the umma, is restructured in its original form. He advocated jihad as "the defense of man against these elements which limit his freedom. These elements take the form of beliefs and concepts, as well as of political systems, based on economic, racial or class distinctions. When Islam came into existence, the world was full of such systems, and the present jahiliyya also has various kinds of such systems."²⁹

Building on this legacy of the past, Salafi Jihadism is concerned with the social and political ills of Muslim societies created by the infidel policies of their local Muslim governments and links the notion of jihad in the path of Allah to the struggle against these governments. At first, the enemy was near and local. Once the Gulf War brought to the military presence of the USA to the Arabian Peninsula, Salafi Jihadism started to shift its focus to the global power of the United States as the primary source of local Muslim governments' policies. They declared the US as the number one enemy of the faith since it was exploiting the Arabian Peninsula politically and economically, and the governments that have friendly relations with

²⁸ Phillip Margulies. Introduction to *The Rise of Islamic Fundamentalism*. ed. Phillip Margulies (New York: Greenhaven Press, 2006), 17.

²⁹ Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, 8-16.

the US as apostates since they were allowing the enemy to exploit their people. Now, the enemy was far and global. It became necessary to fight the far enemy first to strike at the root of evil. Consequently, Salafi Jihadism gained a global dimension by declaring its target global.

It is now the conventional wisdom that this ideology of global Salafi Jihadism is the fundamental motivational factor constituting the root of al-Qaeda's terrorist conduct. However, to simply state that ideology motives does not explain much at all. What we need to focus on to discover the role of ideology is the way it affects behavior. To put it more clearly, we need to go beyond the descriptive explanation of ideology and examine it from an analytic perspective.

2.2. UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS OF TERRORISM

Not only is understanding the process 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.³⁰ The process of terrorism identifies the forms terrorism takes, primary determinants of which are the operations of terrorist groups and terrorist actions unfold.³¹ Based on the operations and actions conducted, the process of al-Qaeda terrorism can be categorized as demonstrative, destructive and suicidal terrorism.

³⁰ Crenshaw, "Question to be Answered," 249.

³¹ Ibid, 253.

2.2.1. Demonstrative Terrorism

As was previously mentioned, 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.³² 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)³³, 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)³⁴ are examples of such conduct.

2.2.2. Destructive Terrorism

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. 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

³² Robert A. Pape. "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism." *The American Political Science Review* 97 (August, 2003): 345.

³³ Dario Cristiani and Ricardo Fabiani, "AQIM Funds Terrorist Operations With Thriving Sahel-Based Kidnapping Industry," Jamestown Foundation, *Terrorism Monitor*, 28 January 2010, http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=35963 (20 March 2012).

³⁴ "Al-Qaeda Organization in the Arabian Peninsula," *Global Security.org*, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/al-qaida-arabia.htm> (20 March 2012).

the devil's supporters allying with them.³⁵ 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.³⁶

2.2.3. Suicide Terrorism

Suicide attacks is an operational method in which the very success of the attack is based on the death of the perpetrator, such as planting a car bomb, wearing a suicide vest, or ramming an airplane into a building.³⁷ 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.³⁸ Suicide attacks as a method are critically important for al-Qaeda operations in tactical and symbolic terms.³⁹ 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.⁴⁰

³⁵ "Al-Qaeda's Fatwa"

³⁶ 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.

³⁷ Pape, 345.

³⁸ Yoram Schweitzer and Sari Goldstein Ferber. "Al-Qaeda and the Internalization of Suicide Terrorism." *The Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies*. Memorandum no: 78 ed. Judith Rosen (November 2005), 9. <http://studies.agentura.ru/english/library/memo78.pdf> (20 January 2012).

³⁹ David Patrick Houghton, *Political Psychology: Situations, Individuals, and Cases*, (London; New York: Routledge, 2009), 211.

⁴⁰ 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

2.2.4. Internal Barriers to Coercive/Violent Conduct

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/or violence. It is for this reason that in order to understand the process of al-Qaeda type terrorism, the mechanisms through which internal barriers to violence are broken need to be uncovered.

At this point, suicide terrorism is crucial in the sense that the perpetrator needs not only to break his internal barriers to violence but also barriers to taking his own life. It is regarded that the essential factor that motivates and allows the perpetrators to break the internal barriers to taking his own life is the reward associated with the behavior: martyrdom. According to the Islamic conception of martyrdom, those who die in the path of Allah and for the sake of Allah are offered rewards in heaven. In the 154th verse of the Bakara Sura in the Quran it is stated that “And say not of those who are killed in the path of Allah “They are dead”; rather they are alive, but you perceive [it] not.”⁴¹ By adapting this message of the Quran, Bin Laden addressed the potential suicide bombers: “Nobody who dies and finds good from Allah in the Hereafter would wish to come back to this world, even if he were given the whole world and whatever is in it, except the martyr who, on seeing the superiority of

Yemen for refueling. The attack resulted in the death of seventeen American sailors and the injury of 39 others.

⁴¹ Surat al-Bakarah (2:154) *Quran*. <http://quran.com/2> (20 January 2012).

martyrdom would like to come back to the world and get killed again in the cause of Allah.”⁴²

At this juncture, martyrdom carries a meaning beyond dying and killing.⁴³ It is exclusivity and heroism in the sake of a sacred cause; it is equal to eternity.⁴⁴ In addition to the rewards in heaven, martyrdom is associated with the feelings of heroic sacrifice. The death of those who die for the cause of Allah gives more strength to the cause, which keeps on thriving on their blood. Their impact on those they leave behind also grows and spreads. Consequently, they remain an active force shaping the life of their community and giving it direction even in the aftermath of their death,⁴⁵ the best example of which is the death of Osama Bin Laden. After Bin Laden had been killed in Pakistan on May, 2011 in a CIA-led operation, he was described as al-Qaeda’s “number one martyr” by his followers and his death was thought to fulfill his wish: to die as martyr.⁴⁶

⁴² Christina Hellmich. “Al-Qaeda- Terrorists, Hypocrites, Fundamentalists? The View From Within.” *Third World Quarterly* 26 (2005): 50.

⁴³ Martha Crenshaw.”Explaining Suicide Terrorism: A Review Essay.” *Security Studies* 16 (January-March 2007): 153.

⁴⁴ Maha AZZAM , “Political Islam: Violence and the Wahhabi Connection” in *The Making of a Terrorist: Recruitment* Vol. 1 of *The Making of a Terrorist: Recruitment, Training and Root Causes*, ed. James, J. F. Forest (Westport, Conn: Praeger Security International, 2006): 242.

⁴⁵ Whelan, 90-91.

⁴⁶ For further discussion on on Bin Laden’s “martyrdom” see “May Allah Grant Sheikh Osama Martyrdom.” *Anjemchoudary.com* (2 May 2011) <http://www.anjemchoudary.com/press-releases/may-allah-grant-sheikh-usama-martyrdom> (14 April 2012) , see “Afghans Describe Bin Laden as al-Qaeda’s No 1 Martyr.” *Reuters* (2 May 2011) <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/05/02/us-binladen-afghanistan-reaction-idUSTRE74120A20110502> (14 April 2012), see also Abdel Bari Atwan. “Osama Bin Laden’s Death: A Leader’s Wish Fulfilled.” *The Guardian* (2 May 2011) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/may/03/osama-bin-laden-martyrdom-al-qaida> (14 April 2012).

However, it is necessary to look deeper than the martyrdom and the associated feelings of heroic sacrifice as the primary driving force for suicide bombers. A suicide attack cannot be realized merely through an intention to die for the sake of a sacred cause and from a readiness to kill for the greater good of the community; neither can demonstrative and destructive forms of terrorism. The critical point in all forms of terrorist conduct is ensuring the continuity of this intention and/or motivation. At this point, identifying the sociopsychological mechanisms through which the demonstrative, destructive and suicidal acts are justified and unfold is absolutely required for full and real understanding of the process of al-Qaeda terrorism.

2.2.5. 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.⁴⁷ 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 process of terrorism.

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

⁴⁷ Martha Crenshaw. "The Psychology of Political Terrorism," in *Political Psychology: Key Readings*, ed. John T. Jost, Jim Sidanius. (New York: Psychology Press, 2004), 422.

of the environment in which they are struggling⁴⁸ Different from individual identity, collective identity is shared with a group of other people, so it is more inclusive.⁴⁹ 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.⁵⁰ As a result of group forces, the collective identity begins to contain the individual identity; “an overarching sense of the collective consumes the individual.”⁵¹ 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

⁴⁸ Alberto Melucci. “The Process of Collective Identity.” in *Social Movements and Culture* Vol. 4 of *Social Movements, Protest and Contention* ed. Hank Johnston and Bert Klandermans (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 44.

⁴⁹ Bernd Simon and Bert Klanderman. “The Politicized Collective Identity,” in *Political Psychology: Key Readings*, ed. John T. Jost, Jim Sidanius (New York: Psychology Press, 2004), 451.

⁵⁰ William C. Banks. “Alternative Views of the Terrorist Threat.” *International Studies Review* 7 (December 2005): 678.

⁵¹ Jerrold M. Post, Ehud Sprinzak and Laurita M. Denny. “The Terrorists in Their Own Words: Interviews with 35 Incarcerated Middle Eastern Terrorists.” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 15 (2003): 176.

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”?”⁵²

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.”⁵³ 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 process of terrorism will be able to drawn.

2.3. THE EFFECTS OF TERRORISM

Terrorism literature appears to be dominated by research on the causes of terrorism and conduct of terrorist activities. As a matter of fact, there is a need to understand the effects of terrorism both to figure out what is happening on the ground and to be able to contain the political, economic, social and psychological

⁵² Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*, 87-88.

⁵³ Melucci, 44.

damage in its aftermath.⁵⁴ While dealing with the consequences of terrorism, it is appropriate to make a distinction between the effects of terrorism on its practitioners and the effects of terrorism on its target.

2.3.1. The Effects of Terrorism on Its Practitioners

Indeed, the discussion on the process of terrorism to a certain extent considers the psychological effects of terrorist behavior on its perpetrators. The individuals break their internal barriers to coercive and/or violent conduct in the process of terrorism. Perpetrators of suicidal acts overcome their internal barriers to take their own lives as well. Moreover, during the process of terrorism, individual identity begins to be contained by the collective identity. As a result of group forces, the values of individuals are transformed.

In short, inter-group relations within the al-Qaeda network influence the individual repertoire of its members and political socialization in regard to terrorism as a form of political behavior gives shape to their attitudes. Furthermore, they are mostly encouraged by their own actions. In the light of these, it can be concluded that making sense of the process of terrorism will automatically shed light on the effects of terrorism on its practitioners.

2.3.2. The Effects of Terrorism on Its Target

Shifting the attention from the psychological effects of terrorism on its practitioners to the ones on its audience means concentrating on the attitude, cognition and behavior changes in the audience in the aftermath of the terrorist

⁵⁴ Crenshaw, "Questions to Be Answered," 249.

operations and actions. As a matter of fact, few terrorist organizations actually attain the long-term ideological objectives they claim to seek. The reason terrorism continues in the immediate is that extremist organizations frequently achieve their tactical objectives, namely publicity and recognition.⁵⁵ In this sense, the political efficiency of terrorism depends predominately on psychological impact it creates on its audience. It is a threat to the self-image and prestige as much as to physical security.⁵⁶ With regard to this, exploring the psychological effects of terrorism on its audience at the public and elite level is fundamental. Such an exploration will pave the way for a broader understanding of the political and economic effects of terrorism in the sense that it is the psychological reaction terrorism creates that determines the extent of counter-terrorist measures and what directs public opinion in relation to these measures and policies.

The impact of terrorist operations and actions on the behavior, attitudes and cognitive processes of its audience are not difficult to list: increase in ethnocentrism, xenophobia, close-mindedness, threat related thought content and perceptual hypersensitivity to information concerning threats. At the elite level, on the other hand, a terrorist threat combined with time pressure has been found to intensify polarization and to lessen consideration of policy alternatives.⁵⁷

There is no doubt that considering the impact of al-Qaeda terrorism on its audience, the special case of the September 11 events will be the best incident to consider with regard to the great reaction it created. By hitting at the symbolic heart

⁵⁵ Martha Crenshaw. "Theories of Terrorism: Instrumental and Organizational Approaches." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 10, no.4 (December 1987): 15.

⁵⁶ Crenshaw, *The Psychology of Political*, 426.

⁵⁷ Leonie Huddy, et al. "The Consequences of Terrorism: Disentangling the Effects of Personal and National Threat." *Political Psychology* 23, no. 3 (2002): 486.

of the USA, al-Qaeda succeeded in making American citizens experience a sense of fear and insecurity previously unknown to them.⁵⁸ One of its obvious impacts on the general public was stereotyping and xenophobia. Since the perpetrators of the attacks were Muslims claiming to be acting in the path of Allah and were Arabs⁵⁹, the logic followed that all Arabs and Muslims were violent and abusive. Arab Americans living in New York frequently complained that as they were perceived to be all violent and abusive, the mental health professionals they visited and social workers in their children's schools accused them of beating their children whenever they saw a small scratch on their children's faces. They underline that this increased considerably in the aftermath of September 11.⁶⁰

The increasing stereotyping of Arabs and Muslims naturally resulted in xenophobia. With regard to the religious affiliation of the perpetrators of the attacks, this xenophobia was most of the time identified in the form of Islamophobia. A year after the attacks, in 2002, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) and the Human Rights Watch Report (HRWR) made public in their reports that the number of hate crimes against people who had been perceived to be Arabs or Muslims increased 17-fold following the September 11 events.⁶¹ In a similar manner, the Federal Bureau of

⁵⁸ Beverly Milton-Edwards, *Islam and the Politics in the Contemporary World*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), 181.

⁵⁹ Data presents that all of the nineteen hijackers of the September 11 events were Arab. Fifteen of them were Saudi; two were from the United Arab Emirates (UAE); one was Egyptian and one had Lebanese origin.

⁶⁰ Wahiba Abu-Ras and Soleman H. Abu-Bader. "The Impact of the September 11: Attacks on the Well-Being of Arab Americans in New York City." *Journal of Muslim Mental Health* 3 (2008) : 232.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 220.

Investigation (FBI) released its annual report in 2002 that there had been a 1600 percent increase in the incidents of hate crimes targeting people, institutions, and businesses identified with the Islamic faith in the aftermath of the attacks.⁶²

When powerful, peculiar events that result in the death of a large number of people and are given place in the news broadly are in question, the risks are exaggerated.⁶³ These events cause exaggeration of risks as they are more readily available in memory since they are unique and thus have few distractions. They are more likely to store the necessary material and emotional resources and attention that result in memorial.⁶⁴ These perceptions and changes are not only reflections of the nature of terrorism; they result mostly from media depictions and counter-measures of governments as well as writings and articles of writers with an eye to current anxieties of the reading public.⁶⁵ The effects of terrorism on its audience cannot be studied without taking the media into consideration since all public information about terrorist operations and actions are communicated through commercial news networks in our era of instantaneous mass communications and transnational terrorism.⁶⁶ So, the media has a significant role in determining the impact of terrorism on its audience in addition to its role as a facilitator of terrorism.

⁶² Wendell Bell. "How Has American Life Changed Since September 11?." *Journal of Future Studies* 8, no:1 (August 2003): 77.

⁶³ Leonre Huddy, et al. 487.

⁶⁴ Kelly R. Damphousse, Kristen S. Hefley, and Brent L. Smith. "Creating Memories: Exploring How Narratives Help Define the Memorialization of Tragedy." in *Media Representations of September 11*. ed. Steven Chermak, Frankie Y. Bailey, and Michelle Brown. (Westport; Conn.: Praeger, c2003), 135.

⁶⁵ Fred Halliday. "West Encountering Islam: Islamphobia Reconsidered," in *Islam Encountering Globalization*. ed. Ali Mohammadi (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002), 14.

⁶⁶ Crenshaw, "Questions to Be Answered," 257.

Media coverage is generally regarded as having a destabilizing role. Media attention most certainly promotes a common belief that terrorist attacks are both more common and more dangerous than is really the case. Though there has not been any terrorist attack in the US since September 11, 2001, terrorism has never lost the public's attention and has continued to be a high profile political and public issue. This is a direct consequence of the enormous debate and coverage given to the issue of terrorism.⁶⁷ In addition, the picture books and the filmed documentaries have appeared to be first-hand experiences and eyewitness accounts of September 11. These promise to make everyone feel as if they were there, in the Twin Towers.⁶⁸

Moving to the elite level, the clear effects of terrorism on the elite level are a lessening of policy alternatives and intensification of group conformity pressures. As a matter of fact, examining the effects of terrorism on decision-making elites is complicated by the issue of drawing limits to the research. When the subject of decision-making and decision-makers become involved in political psychology research on terrorism, there appears the risk that the focus of attention may shift to the psychological dynamics of decision-making processes, which will immediately draw us away from the essence of the matter, understanding al-Qaeda.

With regard to this, the effects of terrorism on the decision-making elites can be depicted briefly by referring to US President Bush's speech on September 20,

⁶⁷ Andrew Silke. "The Psychological Impact of Continued Terrorist Threat." *The National Strategy Forum Review* 17, no: 1 (winter 2007).
<http://www.nationalstrategy.com/NSFReview/PastNSFRIssues/Winter2007NSFRV171/Winter2007NSFRPsychologicalImpactofTerrorism.aspx> (24 March 2012).

⁶⁸ Fritz Breithaupt, "Rituals of Trauma: How the Media Fabricated September 11." in *Media Representations of September 11*, ed. Steven Chermak, Frankie Y. Bailey, and Michelle Brown. (Westport, Conn: Praeger, c2003), 73.

2001, nine days after the September 11 attacks, where he explained that “we will direct every resource at our command –every means of diplomacy, every tool of intelligence, every instrument of law enforcement, every financial influence, and every necessary weapon of war- to the destruction and to the defeat of the global terror network.”⁶⁹ This statement is a clear sign of belief in the lessening of policy alternatives. It implied that there was no other option than mobilizing all resources including military and weaponry to put an end to global terrorism. In the following remarks of his speech, Bush further explains that “we will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism. Every nation in every region now has a decision to make: Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists.”⁷⁰ His adoption of the phrase “you’re either with us or against us” was the reflection of intensifying polarization. It indicated that not joining the team is equal to allying with the enemy. There is no grey area. How this was justified in the eyes of the public; what factors other than the psychological ones play role in such decision-making; and the kind of questions, as underlined before, is the subject of another discussion. What is undeniable is that all the effects discussed here have their explanations in the study of the interaction of psychological and political processes, perhaps more than other fields.

2.4. RELEVANCE OF POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY ACCOUNTS

Understanding the al-Qaeda network in regard to the roots of terrorist behavior, process of terrorism and effects of terrorism seems not to be possible without

⁶⁹ Steve Jones. “US Foreign Policy After 9/11: Obvious Changes, Subtle Similarities.” <http://usforeignpolicy.about.com/od/defense/a/Us-Foreign-Policy-After-9-11.htm>. (24 March 2012).

⁷⁰ Ibid.

providing answers to the following questions: How are the structural problems interpreted? How are the Islamic concepts adapted to surrounding structural conditions? How the role of the media and the internet in facilitating terrorism be put into a broader framework? How does the global Salafi jihadist ideology affect behavior? Through which mechanisms are internal barriers to coercive and/or violent conduct broken? What is the role of the sense of collectivity in this process?

It is clear enough that the task of providing answers to these questions begs for analysis at the individual and group level; for a multidisciplinary and multimethod research; and for focus on context and process. With regard to this, we need political psychology to understand the al-Qaeda network, utilizing the defining characteristics of the field.

First, political psychology draws upon individual and group level of analysis. It tries to provide explanations, descriptions, and predictions by putting the individual before organizational, bureaucratic, domestic institutional, economic, or, international levels of analysis. Although the individual constitutes the base of its analysis, it should be noted that political psychology research is directed towards the group level as well.⁷¹ Not only does it study how groups come to share a psychological past, but also it examines relations between the individual and the group and between different groups.

Second, it has a multidisciplinary and multimethod nature of inquiry. Its multidisciplinary nature is already evident in its name; it is about the interaction of psychology and politics. Yet, the scope of political psychology reaches beyond this

⁷¹ Rose McDermott, *Political Psychology in International Relations* (Ann Arbor: the University of Michigan Press, 2004), 3.

interaction as each discipline has more extensive frontiers with other fields - political science with economics and history, psychology with sociology and anthropology.⁷² As a matter of fact, this multidisciplinary attribution naturally culminates into the multimethod nature of inquiry in political psychology; the incorporation of disciplines automatically brings about incorporation of different methods.

Last, but not least, besides the individual and group level of analysis and multidisciplinary and multimethod nature of inquiry, political psychology is identified by its focus on context and process. Many political psychology analysts believe in the significance of contextual influence in discovering the phenomena of interest. Contextual factors are believed to play a determining role in the political impact of individuals, in attitudes, values, political agendas, policies, rationales, institutions. This belief directs political psychology towards employing a conditional approach; therefore, research is conducted with regard to a particular time and a particular situation.⁷³ Together with its focus on context, political psychology concentrates on process. That is to say, it searches for explanations to the question of “how” rather than “what”: How do members of the electorate decide for whom to cast their vote; how can political conflict be avoided, managed, and resolved; how do leaders mobilize followers; how do young people become politically socialized; how do political ideas become shared and evolve into norms

⁷² Janise Gross Stein, “Political Learning and Political Psychology: A Question of Norms,” in *Political Psychology*, ed. Kristen R. Monroe (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 2002), 108.

⁷³ Adela Garzon Perez, “Political Psychology as Discipline and Resource,” *Political Psychology* 22, no.2 (2001): 350.

or social constructions of reality, and so on.⁷⁴ Therefore, political psychology searches for the process giving way to an outcome much more than the outcome itself.

As a matter of fact, the task of providing answers to these questions is complicated by the issue of inaccessibility to direct research on terrorists and to data. Terrorists, in general, believe, for good reason, that any initiative to give information about their motivations in psychological terms lessens the validity of their ideas, their actions, and their existence. If they are seriously committed to their cause and have no prospects that the researcher who requests a meeting with them can be converted to their views, they are likely to turn down to the researcher's demand to meet. In most cases, the researcher is regarded as a representative of the external group against which they have directed their activities.⁷⁵ In some other cases, governments have an interest in not sharing information that has national security implications.

Since terrorism studies suffer from the inaccessibility to direct research on terrorists and terrorist groups, paying the attention to the statements that they issue appears to be the only way to understand them.⁷⁶ In this regard, statements and pronouncements of leading figures in the al-Qaeda network can be evaluated in connection with dominant beliefs, symbols, myths, ideological references, scripts,

⁷⁴ Margaret g. Hermann, "Political Psychology as a Perspective in the Study of Politics," in *Political Psychology* ed. Kristen R. Monroe (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 2002), 50.

⁷⁵ Walter Reich. "Understanding Terrorist Behavior: The Limits and Opportunities of Psychological Inquiry." *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind*, ed. Walter Reich (Washington D.C. Woodrow Wilson Center Press, c1998), 274.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 277.

metaphors, views of history, and images. Since the al-Qaeda network is a relatively long-lived network, the changes in expressed beliefs with the passage of time can be analyzed.⁷⁷ It is impossible to approach al-Qaeda without referring to Bin Laden's 1996 Declaration of War against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places and the 1998 fatwa of the World Islamic Front for Jihad against Jews and Crusaders. Video clips and training materials available online are other sources for analysis. Although these statements, pronouncements and materials may be self-serving, this does not mean that they are not also, in some important way, revealing.⁷⁸ Analyses of the biographical profiles of terrorist are valuable as well. Moreover, prominent events like the crucial case of the September 11 events on which much data with regard to the process of terrorism is available and the effects of which on its audience are not difficult to observe can be taken as cases for research.

Hence, considering the inaccessibility to direct research on terrorists, the attention should be paid to the statements that they issue and the prominent cases on which much data and observation is available. This requires the tools of the content analysis method, which diverges from other methodological strategies by its focus on texts, images, and symbolic matter in the context of their uses. In the general sense it is the study of what these mean to people, what they enable or prevent, and what the information conveyed by them does. It is applied to political psychology inquiry based on the assumption that such an analysis may contribute to the explanation of past behaviors or the prediction of future behaviors of political actors.

⁷⁷ Crenshaw, "Questions to be Answered," 252.

⁷⁸ Reich, "Understanding Terrorist Behavior," 277.

Following this assumption, it attempts to draw psychological conclusions on politically pertinent parts of personality of political actors based on their written and oral expressions.⁷⁹

Focusing on the prominent events like the crucial case of the September 11 events to draw some commonalities, on other hand, necessitates the case study method for research. The primary feature of case studies as a method of inquiry is its focus on a person or an event. Case studies for the most part investigate a certain person, event or process and analyze that person, event or process in the light of historical documents, speeches, letters, memoirs, diaries and oral histories.⁸⁰

Therefore, the inaccessibility to direct research on terrorists, in this case, al-Qaeda militants, direct us to benefit from the methodological tools of political psychology, namely content analysis and case studies. That is not to say that these methods are only applied in political psychology; on the contrary, they are applied in other fields as well, perhaps more effectively than in political psychology. It worth to underlining further that claiming the efficiency of political psychology research in studying al-Qaeda does not necessarily mean that al-Qaeda can only be understood through the lenses of political psychology. On the contrary, political psychology is *a* field rather than *the* field whose theoretical approaches and research methods can be applied to the study of al-Qaeda.

⁷⁹ McDermott, *Political Psychology*, 31-34.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 21-22.

CHAPTER 3

POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY IN UNDERSTANDING AL-QAEDA: HOW?

A significant number of works in the field of political psychology have their disciplinary bases in psychoanalysis, developmental psychology, and social psychology; they are considered to constitute the roots of political psychology research. In addition to these psychological approaches, political psychology benefits from sociological accounts. Although theoretical approaches are grouped with regard to the disciplinary bases they come from for the sake of clarity, it seems that there exists a conceptual overlap between approaches within and between disciplinary bases.⁸¹

3.1. PSYCHOANALITICALLY BASED APPROACHES

Psychoanalytic theory was introduced to psychology literature through the seminal work of Sigmund Freud. According to Freud, every behavior has energizing and directing forces behind it, and these forces are not external to an individual, but rather they are conscious and unconscious inner forces.⁸² Freud's theory was integrated into political psychology by Lasswell. Drawing on Freud's theory, Lasswell pointed out that since motives for political action are obscure to political actors themselves as well as to observers, there is a need to go beyond the face value of specific reasons for political action.

⁸¹ Jeff Victoroff. "The Mind of The Terrorist: A Review and Critique of Psychological Approaches." *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49, no:1 (February, 2005): 11.

⁸² Daniel Bar-Tal. "The (Social) Psychological Legacy for Political Psychology," in *Political Psychology* ed. Kristen R. Monroe (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002), 179.

Early studies on terrorism attempted to understanding terrorist behavior largely through a psychoanalytic framework. Reflecting Freud's influence, these works took terrorism to be the product of early abuse and mistreatment and stated motives for it to be largely unconscious and arose from hostility toward one's parents.⁸³ Analysts who favor a psychoanalytic approach to understand terrorist behavior have mainly benefited from narcissism-aggression theory, identity theory and paranoia theory.

3.1.1. Narcissism-Aggression Theory

Narcissism-aggression theory argues that if the exalted self-image of an individual is not shared by others or this individual experiences major setbacks in his/her personal life, this narcissistic defeat can produce rage and aggression. Some analysts explain terrorist activity to be the culmination of such aggression and the trait of narcissism to be a defining and driving factor. They point out that the rage of terrorists against their targets is indeed rage against the damaged-self. It is reflected at the target as if the target is the cause of this rage.⁸⁴

3.1.2. Identity Theory

Different from characteristic and personality, identity, in psychoanalytic tradition, defines the self model processing internal to the individual and the integration of his/her own past, present and future into the smooth continuity of remembered, perceived and expected presence.⁸⁵ According to this, the individual

⁸³ Borum, *Psychology of Terrorism*, 18.

⁸⁴ Houghton, 203-204.

⁸⁵ Vamık D. Volkan, *Körü Körüne İnanç: Kriz ve Terör Dönemlerinde Geniş Gruplar ve Liderleri*, trans. Özgür Karaçam (İstanbul: Okuyan Us, c2009), 43.

focuses on similarities evident in himself/herself and at this point this perception of identity provides the individual with the sense of consistency and uniformity. Identity theory as a psychoanalytic approach in the study of terrorism proposes that young people lacking self-esteem and/or having strong needs to consolidate their identities constitute candidates for terrorism. That is, for individuals prevented from developing autonomy and consequently having an identity crisis and identity confusion, violent struggle become irresistible. This seems to be consistent with Freud's belief that the principle of self-determination may be inseparable from the impulse for destruction.⁸⁶

3.1.3. Paranoia Theory

Paranoia, in psychoanalytic terms refers to a thought process characterized by delusion, incredulity, distrust and contentiousness. It is accompanied by false accusations and general distrust of others.⁸⁷ Applying the phenomenon of paranoia in his study of terrorism, Post argues that a distinctive feature of terrorist psychology is projection, an infantile defense that assigns intolerable internal feelings to an external object when an individual with a damaged self-concept idealizes the good self and splits out the bad self.⁸⁸ Group paranoia refers simply to a manifestation of the leader's pathology. Accordingly, the followers suffer from a deprecation of their

⁸⁶ Victoroff, 23.

⁸⁷ Selçuk Budak, *Psikoloji Sözlüğü*, (Ankara: Bilim ve Sanat Yayınları, c2009), 570.

⁸⁸ Victoroff, 24.

blemished personalities and represent a readiness to hate, to imitate, to uncritically believe, in order to flee from the self.⁸⁹

3.1.4. The Explanatory Power of Psychoanalytic Approaches

These psychoanalytically based approaches; narcissism-aggression theory, identity theory, and paranoia theory have their own strengths and weaknesses in explaining the roots of terrorist behavior in general and in the case of al-Qaeda in particular. Psychoanalytic approaches may be right in their acknowledgement that individual developmental factors probably influence adult behavioral proclivities, in their recognition that unconscious thought has an enormous power to influence conscious thought and in their observation that covert psychodynamic forces of groups may subsume individuality.⁹⁰ However, the explanatory power of psychoanalytically based approaches in the study of al-Qaeda network seems to be overshadowed by their attributing abnormal dispositions to terrorists, their reductionism on the one hand, and overgeneralization on the other, and the fundamental attribution error they make.

3.1.4.1. The Problem of Attribution of Abnormal Dispositions

Psychoanalytic theories seem to assume that who engage in terrorist behavior have abnormal dispositions and/or weak identities driving them. By attributing narcissistic, paranoid and identity defect related psychological features to terrorists, these approaches indicate that terrorists have a distinctive psychological make-up from non-terrorists.

⁸⁹ Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, 88.

⁹⁰ Victoroff, 26.

Indeed, there is no systematic evidence in the literature that terrorists are psychologically different from non-terrorists. On the contrary, carefully conducted empirical research on the German Red Army Faction, the Italian Red Army Brigades, the Basques ETA and various Palestinian organizations did not determine any particularly striking psychological feature of those associated with terrorism.⁹¹ McCauley explains that the results of these investigations are easy to summarize. He continues:

The terrorists did not differ from the comparison group of non-terrorists in any substantial way; in particular, the terrorists did not show higher rates of any kind of psychopathology. ... Indeed terrorism would be a trivial problem if only those with some kind of psychopathology could be terrorists. Rather we have to face the fact that normal people can be terrorists, that we are ourselves capable of terrorist acts under some circumstances. This fact is already implied in recognizing that military and police forces involved in state terrorism are all too capable of killing non-combatants. Few would suggest that the broad range of soldiers and policemen involved in such killing must all be suffering some kind of psychopathology.⁹²

Hence, personality traits do not constitute the unique psychological determinants of terrorism, though they may not be totally irrelevant. The al-Qaeda network is not an exception in this sense. Sageman conducted a research on al-Qaeda in an attempt to collect information about the network. He first took the nineteen men who carried out September 11 as his central focus and built up a large sample of people who had links to them. He gathered his data from trial transcripts, press accounts worldwide, and corroborated information on the internet. One conclusion Sageman drew out of his research is that he saw little evidence for any personality disorder including narcissism and paranoia. He was able to gather some short

⁹¹ Arie W. Kruglanski and Shira Fishman, "The Psychology of Terrorism: 'Syndrome' versus 'Tool' Perspectives." in *Psychology of Terrorism: Key Readings*, ed. Jeff Victoroff and Arie W. Kruglanski (New York; Hove: Psychology Press, 2009), 36-37.

⁹² Clark McCauley, "Psychological Issues in Understanding Terrorism and the Response to Terrorism," in *The Psychology of Terrorism*, ed. Chris Stout (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing, 2004), 36-37.

descriptions of the childhoods of sixty-nine Salafi mujahedin. The vast majority was positive or neutral labels; recurrent descriptors were shy, introverted, serious, quiet, bright, excellent student, loner, pleasant, easy-going, happy, and gentle. Rather than indicating any antecedents of a narcissistic personality disorder, the data pointed out that these were good children who liked to go to school and were often overprotected by their parents. It seemed that the loner slightly-outnumbered the outgoing children. Sageman convincingly specifies that if anyone had pathological narcissism, it should have been the leader, Osama bin Laden. However, on the contrary, one of the most attractive features about him was his lack of narcissism, indicated by his choice to live simply, among his mujahedin while he had the means to live luxuriously.⁹³ Likewise, he did not detect a pattern of paranoid personality disorder or lifestyle before joining the jihad.

In line with Sageman, Silke explained that analysis of transcripts of legal proceedings against 180 members of al-Qaeda proved it false that terrorists are isolated, vulnerable young men with paranoid or borderline personality disorders.⁹⁴ Following the events of September 11, Walter Laqueur wrote that “madness, especially paranoia, plays a role in contemporary terrorism.” He makes it clear that not all paranoiacs are terrorists, but all terrorists believe in conspiracies by powerful, hostile forces and suffer from some form of delusion and persecution mania.⁹⁵ There

⁹³ Sageman, *Understanding terror Networks*, 85-86.

⁹⁴ Andrew Silke, “Wrong to Call Terrorists ‘Madmen’,” BBC News, 9 July 2004 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/3880777.stm> (31 March 2012).

⁹⁵ Walter Laqueur, “Left, Right and Beyond: The Changing Face of Terror.” *How Did This Happen? Terrorism and the New War*, ed. J. Hoge, Jr. and G. Rose (Oxford: Public Affairs, 2001), 80 quoted in Andrew Silke. “Courage in Dark Places: Reflections on Terrorist Psychology.” *Social Research* 71, no:1 (spring 2004): 179.

is no doubt that terrorist organizations and networks are concerned with security and secrecy for mere survival and that any politically violent group, regardless of its ideology, demonizes its opponent and stockpiles weapons for the fight. This is realistic and the nature of the organization and network; it is not an implication of paranoia.⁹⁶

One particular characteristic of terrorist activities, once again in the crucial case of suicidal acts, brings to minds the possibility of problematic psychological dispositions in the first place. Many people can understand and make sense of dying for the sake of a cause, like the army and police. Yet, for many of them suicide is beyond the call for duty and it is for this reason that they perceive it to be a sign of pathological disorder. The global Salafi Jihadists, however, regard this as a source of honor and are respected by their counterparts in the same manner since what they do is a sacrifice in the path of Allah.⁹⁷ Hence, it is neither a sign of abnormality nor an act of irrationality. It has its own rationality, which does not mean that it is irrational.

Indeed, it is specified in what is referred to as the training manual of al-Qaeda that members who specialize in the special tactical operations need to be mature. It states that “the requirements of military work are numerous, and a minor cannot perform them. The nature of hard and continuous work in dangerous conditions requires a great deal of psychological, mental, and intellectual fitness.”⁹⁸ Therefore, far from being composed of individuals with abnormal dispositions, al-Qaeda wants

⁹⁶ Understanding Terror Networks, 89.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 82-83.

⁹⁸ “Al-Qaeda Training Manual Second Lesson: Necessary Qualifications and Characteristics for the Organization’s Members”, *Federation of American Scientists* <http://www.fas.org/irp/world/para/manualpart1.html> (16 February 2012).

its members to be psychologically and mentally healthy for the success of its operations; that is to say, it excludes unpredictable or uncontrolled behavior.

Attributing narcissistic or paranoid features to those who engage in terrorist behavior does not explain the behavior; neither does taking terrorists as people with a lack of self-esteem and weak identities. Linking terrorism to a lack of self-esteem and weak identities makes the subject under consideration pathologic and dysfunctional. As discussed in the preceding paragraphs, such an approach does not seem to make sense. What is more is that individuals do not engage in terrorist conduct because they search for an identity. That is not to deny the fact that terrorist organizations and networks provide its members and followers with a sense of identity; however, this does not necessarily mean that these people are in desperate need for an identity. Indeed what terrorist may be called as solidarity seekers rather than identity seekers in psychoanalytic terms. There is empirical evidence that individuals participate in terrorist organizations to develop strong effective ties with fellow terrorists.

This seems to be the case with al-Qaeda network as well. Analysts who study al-Qaeda are increasingly coming to the conclusion that European Muslims who are unassimilated in their host countries represent a core constituency of al-Qaeda, whereas Muslims in the US who are comparatively assimilated are detached from the network.⁹⁹ Sageman's study with his sample is a clear illustration of this; he found in

⁹⁹ Max Abrahms. "What Terrorists Really Want: Terrorist Motives and Counterterrorism Strategy." *International Security* 32, no: 4 (spring 2008): 96-97.

This "Atlantic divide" with regard to the homegrown global Islamist terrorism is generally grounded on two main factors. First is that terrorist suspects in the States are arrested at a much earlier stage of the evolution of their plots than in Europe. Plots in America are detected at such an early stage that law enforcement agencies have the luxury of infiltrating these Networks with undercover informants. Second is that Europe excludes expatriates that do not apparently fit into its mythical essence that

his study of 172 global Salafi Jihadists that 80 percent of these people were cultural outcasts living at the margins of society as unassimilated first-or second-generation immigrants in non-Muslim countries. Being outcasts, being excluded from the economy, these people collectively drifted to religion to escape the hopelessness that permeated their lives. Their personal experiences resonated with the Salafi critiques of Western society and they became attracted to the global Islamist terrorist interpretations.¹⁰⁰

The other major trajectory in Sageman's sample was that of the young Muslim expatriates coming from the elite families of the Levant and were sent to Europe from the Middle East to study. Regardless of their true global citizenship, speaking three or four languages and being skilled in computer technology, many of them started to feel homesick and lonely since they became separated from their families, friends, and culture. In search for people like themselves, they drifted to the local mosque, where they became friends and radicalized over time.¹⁰¹ In brief, global Salafi jihadists in Sageman's sample were mostly hopeless and outcasts or seekers of companionship. Therefore, rather than a sense of identity in psychoanalytic terms, these people look for companionship and social solidarity. Their joining the global Salafi jihad was very much a social thing that cannot be explained through psychoanalytic theories.

3.1.4.2. The Problem of Reductionism and Overgeneralization

European nations are created around a defining essence. The United States' national myth, on the other hand, is based on the metaphor of a melting pot promoting the acceptance of foreigners and their eventual integration in society. For further discussion see: Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*, 89-108.

¹⁰⁰ Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*, 69.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 68.

Another problematic side of psychoanalytically based approaches in the study of terrorism in general and al-Qaeda in particular is their reductionism on the one hand, and overgeneralization on the other.

Actually, a great quantity of scholarly work on terrorism touches upon the difficulty of defining terrorism as a concept. They point out that terrorism is such a complex concept to define that there have been more than a hundred diplomatic and academic definitions of it in the current literature. The issue of agreeing on a single definition of terrorism is complicated by the different natures and types of terrorist organizations and networks ranging from social revolutionary to nationalist-separatist, from left-wing to right-wing, from religious fundamentalist to single-issue ones. These different types of organizations and networks have distinct characteristics of their own and responsibilities of their own. Likewise, members and followers within a terrorist organization or network assume different roles and responsibilities of their own in accordance with the organizational structure of the group.¹⁰²

When the structure and organization of al-Qaeda is the point at issue, it is seen that al-Qaeda organized itself from 1996 onwards through forming the committees responsible for military, finance, communications, Islamic studies, and media.¹⁰³ If roles and responsibilities within a terrorist structure are largely self-selected, then it can be clearly concluded that a sponsor with financial responsibilities in al-Qaeda structuring has different motives than that of a strategist in the military committee or the one whose responsibility is religious indoctrination. Consequently, although they

¹⁰² Victoroff, 5.

¹⁰³ Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*, 45.

share collective goals and ideals, individuals carrying out different roles and responsibilities under the banner of al-Qaeda are driven by different motives. What is more is that the heterogeneity of motives is valid not only for those with different roles and responsibilities but also for those within the same role.¹⁰⁴ With regard to this, psychoanalytic approaches are reductionist in that they attribute all or much of terrorist behavior to a single cause.

Clearly related to the problem of reductionism is the problem of overgeneralization. Even as it is problematic to attribute all or much of terrorist behavior to a single cause, so it is problematic to attribute certain characteristics to a wide range of terrorists. Psychoanalytic explanations attribute particular psychological characteristics, be it narcissism, having an identity defect or paranoia, to terrorists with the implication that all terrorists, of whatever variety, possess them.¹⁰⁵ Terrorists, like every person are psychologically extremely heterogeneous. Although individuals under the banner of al-Qaeda share a set of beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviors, each individual has his own complex of psychosocial experiences and traits. There is no reason to think that there is one terrorist mind-set, one prevailing terrorist psychology.¹⁰⁶

3.1.4.3. Fundamental Attribution Error

The explanatory power of psychoanalytically based approaches is further weakened by the issue of fundamental attribution error. Fundamental attribution error,

¹⁰⁴ Victoroff, 6.

¹⁰⁵ Reich, "Understanding Terrorist Behavior," 262.

¹⁰⁶ Victoroff, 35.

also known as correspondence bias or attribution effect, describes the tendency to overestimate the extent to which the behavior of the “other” is shaped by their dispositions and to underestimate the role of structural circumstances they face. In this regard, psychoanalytic explanations of terrorist behavior make fundamental attribution error that they overestimate the internal causes while ignoring the structural factors surrounding the individuals; they seem to reduce complex social and political phenomena of terrorist behavior to merely psychological formulae.¹⁰⁷

Even as the structural factors are necessary but not sufficient to explain terrorist behavior because terrorism results from the perception and interpretation of these conditions; just as dispositions internal to individuals by themselves cannot clarify the roots of terrorist behavior. The structural circumstances provide the general preconditions for terrorism. The tactics and agendas of these groups are products of structural factors as well as ideology and theological precepts.¹⁰⁸ This is evident political and religious concerns of al-Qaeda; these concerns provide the precondition and their interpretation and the appeal of such interpretation to individuals for various reasons and through various mechanisms constitute the roots of terrorist behavior for al-Qaeda network.

Additionally, the structural circumstances may not be underestimated in the sense that terrorist organizations and networks adopt themselves to changing conditions. Al-Qaeda’s increasing utilization of the internet as a type of virtual training camp is linked to the destruction of its training camps in Afghanistan in the

¹⁰⁷ Houghton, 205.

¹⁰⁸ John L., Esposito. “Political Islam and the West.” *Joint Force Quarterly* (spring 2000): 52.

aftermath of the September 11 events. So, they adopted themselves to changing political and environmental circumstances surrounding them.

Eventually, the underestimation of the structures is problematic in the regard that the decision to join a terrorist organization or network is a process. This process is an incremental one; it involves a series of steps and occurs in interaction with a larger social, economic and political environment. Likewise, risk for engaging in terrorism is the product of factors linked to the situation, setting, and potential target as well as the individual.

For these reasons, as a result of their mere concentration on the psychological dispositions to give meaning to terrorist behavior, purely psychoanalytic approaches may make us academic victims of fundamental attribution error.

Concluding that terrorism does not result from a single personality type or abnormal psychological dispositions does not mean that the decision to join and stay in a terrorist network has nothing to do with subconscious or latent psychological motives. The problem is finding out commonalities for a group composed of heterogeneous individuals, especially in the case of international terrorism.¹⁰⁹ In this regard, this thesis promotes the study of the al-Qaeda network by concentrating on the group level of analysis.

3.2. SOCIOLOGICAL ACCOUNTS OF POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY

Elsewhere in this work it is stated that the scope of political psychology reaches beyond the interaction of psychology and politics. Political psychology

¹⁰⁹ Crenshaw, "The Psychology of Political,"

draws benefit from sociology in an attempt to move beyond individuals and to analyze collective thoughts and identities of societies and their impact on individual and collective political action.¹¹⁰ Accordingly, by borrowing from sociological accounts, this work suggests that framing tasks allow us to explain the ideological construction of al-Qaeda more analytically on the one hand, and to explore the role of ideology by placing it within the mechanisms of moral disengagement context, on the other. Indeed, the conception of framing is a fluid one; it can be readily found in psychology, linguistics and discourse analysis, communication and media studies and political science and policy studies. Yet, it has been applied analytically and explored in sociology more than other areas; it is classified under the heading of sociological accounts.¹¹¹

3.2.1. Framing as Meaning Construction

Ideas and meanings play a significant motivational role in the emergence and presence of terrorist organizations and networks. Yet, terrorist groups are not simply carriers of existing ideas and meanings that develop automatically from structural arrangements or unanticipated events. On the contrary, they are actors actively producing and maintaining meaning for their constituents, antagonists, and bystanders or observers. This signifying work of meaning construction is conceptualized by social scientists as framing and the resultant products of this framing activity as frames. Frames contribute to the task of making events or

¹¹⁰ Janise Gross Stein, "Political Learning and Political Psychology: A Question of Norms," in *Political Psychology*, ed. Kristen R. Monroe (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 2002), 108.

¹¹¹ Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow. "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment." *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 611.

occurrences meaningful. They organize experience and guide action through intensification and deepening the aspects of the “world out there” in an attempt to inspire and legitimate activities.¹¹²

3.2.2. Core Framing Tasks

3.2.2.1. Diagnostic Framing

Diagnostic framing refers to the task of diagnosing, recognizing or identifying, some event or aspect of social life or system as problematic and in desperate need of restoration or change. It is problem identification and the attribution of blame and responsibility. Diagnostic framing addresses the issue of consensus mobilization by providing answers to the questions “What is or went wrong?” and “Who or what is to blame?”. The answers to such questions usually portray features of political or social life as intolerable injustices or abominations which have to be transformed.¹¹³

Bin Laden’s 1996 fatwa and the World Islamic Front’s 1998 fatwa are products of such diagnostic framing. Bin Laden and his group identified in the 1996 fatwa that the regime suspended the Islamic Shari’ah law and exchanged it with man-made civil law, which caused it to lose its legitimacy.¹¹⁴ It is further identified in the 1998 document that the Muslim people of the Arabian Peninsula were being humiliated

¹¹² Ibid, 613-614.

¹¹³ David A. Snow and Scott C. Byrd. “Ideology, Framing Processes and Islamic Terrorist Movements.” *Mobilization: An International Quarterly Review* 12, no: 2 (June, 2007): 124.

¹¹⁴ “Bin Laden’s 1996 Fatwa.”

and their riches plundered, and that the states of the region such as Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Sudan were fragmented into paper statelets.¹¹⁵

In the following paragraphs of the documents, the blame for these problems are laid the USA whose “crusader forces became the main cause of our disastrous condition” and on the local Muslim governments which were unable to prevent their countries from falling under US influence.

3.2.2.2. Prognostic Framing

Prognostic framing focuses on the stipulation of particular remedies or solutions to the problems identified through diagnostic framing. It contains the strategy determination for carrying out the plan as well as a proposed solution to the problem and a plan of attack. In this sense, prognostic framing addresses the question of “what is to be done?”

Following the diagnostic framing of problem identification and blame or responsibility attribution, the World Islamic Front presented their solution that as the source of all ills, the Americans should be killed and their money be plundered wherever and whenever available, and that their allies should be subjected to attack and be displaced. The process of al-Qaeda terrorism is determined out of prognostic framing. Demonstrative, destructive and suicidal forms of al-Qaeda activities are all products of prognostic framing through which solutions to the problem, plans to carry out and strategies for action are produced.

¹¹⁵ “Al-Qaeda’s Fatwa.”

A more detailed and specific illustration of prognostic framing can be found in a letter al-Zawahiri sent in 2005 to al-Zarqawi, the head of al-Qaeda in Iraq, which contained a prognostic list of what should be done: “first stage: expel the Americans from Iraq. The Second stage: Establish an Islamic authority or emirate, then develop it and support it until it achieves the level of caliphate. The third stage: Extend the jihad wave to the secular countries neighboring Iraq. The fourth stage: clash with Israel because Israel was established only to challenge any new Islamic entity.”¹¹⁶

3.2.2.3. Motivational Framing

Problem identification and blame attribution and solution articulation need to be complemented by motivational framing to culminate into action. Motivational framing encourages the activation or mobilization of ideological adherents, those who concur with the diagnostic and prognostic framing. It provides the rationale for action beyond the diagnosis and prognosis by constructing “vocabularies of motives” to lessen the fear of risks associated with the action.¹¹⁷ The construction of the link between the consequences of suicidal acts and the Islamic concept of martyrdom is a magnificently illustrative in regard to motivational framing. The vocabulary of motives describe the suicidal act as mean to reach the status of martyrdom and its associated feeling of heroic sacrifice, so it is “martyrdom” not “suicide”.

Consequently, sociological accounts of the core framing tasks provide us with sets of processes out of which ideas and meanings associated with the global Salafi

¹¹⁶ Lawrence Wright, *The Master Plan: For the New Terrorists of Jihad, Al-Qaeda is Just the Beginning*. *The New Yorker*, September 11: 28 quoted in David A. Snow and Scott C. Byrd. “Ideology, Framing Processes and Islamic Terrorist Movements.” *Mobilization: An International Quarterly Review* 12, no: 2 (June, 2007): 128.

¹¹⁷ Snow and Byrd, 128.

jihadist ideology are constructed. However, the core framing tasks need to be complemented by a social psychological account of moral disengagement in order to explain the process of al-Qaeda terrorism.

3.3. SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL ACCOUNTS AND MECHANISMS OF MORAL DISENGAGEMENT

Social psychology examines the social basis of human behavior. To put it another way, it is concerned with how individual thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and beliefs interact with the immediate social situations and institutions. Social psychology deals with individuals by examining them in their larger social environment and in the presence of others. Beyond intrapersonal phenomena, it is concerned with interpersonal phenomena, containing social influence, group dynamics, relations with others and interpersonal attraction.¹¹⁸ In this sense, social psychological accounts allow us to find commonalities among members of the al-Qaeda network. Albert Bandura's conceptualization of mechanisms of moral disengagement is one constituent of these social psychological accounts in political psychology.

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

¹¹⁸ John L. Sullivan, Wendy M. Rahn and Thomas J. Rudolph, "The Contours of Political Psychology: Situating Research on Political Information Processing," in *Thinking About Political Psychology* ed. James H. Kuklinski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 34-40.

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.¹¹⁹ In an attempt to explain how this occurs, Bandura examines the psychosocial mechanisms of moral disengagement and how they function in the process 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.¹²⁰

3.3.1. 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

¹¹⁹ Albert Bandura.” Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement.” In *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies Theologies, States of Mind* ed. Walter Reich (Washington D.C. Woodrow Wilson Center Press, c1998), 161.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 161.

dedicated combatants as an outcome of cognitively restructuring the moral value of killing rather than alteration of their personality structures or aggressive drives.¹²¹

3.3.1.1. Euphemistic Labeling

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.¹²²

Bandura refers to Gambino's work on the language of non-responsibility and refers to his identification of the different varieties of euphemism. Accordingly, palliative expressions are frequently used to make the reprehensible respectable. Terrorist behavior loses discrepancy thanks to the hygienic power of the words. Soldiers "waste" people rather than kill them, intelligence operatives "terminate (them) with extreme prejudice." In this sense, euphemistic labeling is closely similar to motivational framing.

3.3.1.2. 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.

¹²¹ Ibid, 164.

¹²² Albert Bandura, "Selective Activation and Disengagement of Moral Control." *Journal of Social Issues* 46 no.1 (1990): 31.

Contrasting them with conspicuous inhumanities can give self-deplored acts a righteous appearance.¹²³ 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.¹²⁴

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.¹²⁵

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.¹²⁶ 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

¹²³ Ibid, 171.

¹²⁴ “Al-Qaeda’s Fatwa.”

¹²⁵ “Bin Laden’s 1996 Fatwa.”

¹²⁶ Bandura, “Mechanisms of Moral”, 171.

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.¹²⁷

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.¹²⁸

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.

3.3.2. 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

¹²⁷ Whelan, 120.

¹²⁸ Hellmich, 51.

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.¹²⁹

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."¹³⁰ 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.

¹²⁹ Bandura, "Selective Activation and", 34.

¹³⁰ Ibid, 36.

3.3.3. 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.¹³¹ In this way, the sense of collectivity plays its role in the process 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

¹³¹ Bandura, "Mechanisms of Moral", 176.

group.¹³² This notion of joining the Salafi jihad as a group fits well into the idea of diffusion of responsibility.

3.3.4. Disregard for, or Distortion of, Consequences

Additional ways of breaking self-detering 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.¹³³

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

¹³² Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, 110-111.

¹³³ Bandura, "Mechanisms of Moral," 176-177.

state any sequential follow-up between the mechanisms of moral disengagement; they do not necessarily need to be all included in the process.

3.3.5. 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.¹³⁴

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.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 180-181.

3.4. DEVELOPMENTAL ACCOUNTS AND SOCIAL LEARNING

THEORY

The developmental approach in psychology is basically concerned with the discovery of physical, cognitive, psychological and social changes and developments of human beings from birth to death. Its application to political psychology refers to the study of the role of maturation and experience in the evolution of structure and content of political thought. The assumption behind the search for the explanation of such a role is that as political behavior and thought constitute a part of entire human behavior and thought, understanding of the development of political thought and behavior cannot be separated fully from understanding of general human development.¹³⁵

Social learning theory is mostly used in political psychology research as an important theory of development. Albert Bandura, who proposed the social learning theory, proposes the argument that most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling; from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action.¹³⁶ In the light of what Bandura proposed, political psychology research through lenses of social learning theory embraces the analysis of the impact of social learning on the acquisition of political behavior, attitudes, and beliefs.

The social learning approach has been employed by analysts in the study of terrorism. Such an approach assumes aggression to be a learned behavior. It follows

¹³⁵ Sullivan, Rahn and Rudolph, 32-33.

¹³⁶ Joan E. Grusec. "Social Learning Theory and Developmental Psychology: The Legacies of Robert Sears and Albert Bandura." *Developmental Psychology* 28, no: 5 (1992): 781-782.

that consequences of aggression, how to do it, to whom it should be directed, what provocation justifies it, and when it is appropriate are learned through observation. Drawing on this assumption, it is argued that terrorism, a specific type of aggressive behavior, can also be learned. From this perspective, terrorism is not a direct consequence of dysfunctional or defective personality traits, but rather it results from societal influences and learning experiences. These learning experiences generate the basis of functional behavioral tendencies.¹³⁷ Terrorism relies on the conviction that it is a proper, effective and even morally justified way of furthering political goals, and this conviction is learned one. To put it another way, people learn how to engage moral barriers to violent conduct, how to justify terrorist behavior to themselves and how to adapt to changing circumstances to make their coercive conduct more effective.

Potential terrorists bond together and learn skills and ideas in social learning environments. This constant proximity provides them for a perfect opportunity to be mutually influenced by group reinforcement.¹³⁸ For al-Qaeda network madrassas, mosques, training camps and internet are mostly referred social learning environments.

3.4.1. Madrassas (?)

Madrassa mean “school” in Arabic; they are institutions of education. A major misconception about the madrassas is that a considerable amount of the thousands of madrassas worldwide are recruitment centers for terrorists. Such a misconception

¹³⁷ Charles L. Ruby. “Are Terrorists Mentally Deranged? *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* (2002): 18.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

probably results from the situation that the education program in madrassas is determined by their own educational boards. The curriculum is not regulated and approved by government, so, the clerics are the most authoritative people. This situation culminates in the perception that madrassas are recruitment centers for terrorists. Yet, this perception is far from reality. Only a small number of madrassas worldwide are radical and teach radical ideologies and violent jihad.¹³⁹

It may be correct that al-Qaeda members trained in the madrassas are taught early to obey religious authority without question; however, this does not necessarily mean that madrassas are fundamental social learning environments for the al-Qaeda network. Nevertheless, as was mentioned before, a significant number of al-Qaeda members do not have an education in religious studies.

3.4.2. Mosques

Mosques afford individuals a similar converging structure for socialization and religion. The mosque is a social network in the sense that it provides a forum for religious discussion and social interaction as well as allowing people to worship together. According to Sageman, several mosques became prominent in the process of affiliation to the jihad: the Finsbury Park and the Baker Street Mosque in London; the Islamic Cultural Center in Milan; Abu Bakr Mosque in Madrid, al-Quds Mosque in Hamburg; al-Dawah Mosque in Roubaix, France; Assuna Annabawiyah Mosque in Montreal; al-Seqley Mosque in Khamis Mushayt, Saudi Arabia; and al-Faruq Mosque in Brooklyn, New York. Indeed, the mosque is a social network in the sense that it provides a forum for religious discussion and social interaction as well as

¹³⁹ Andrew Coulson, "Education and Indoctrination in the Muslim World: Is There a Problem? What Can We Do About It?" *Policy Analysis* March 11, 2004, 3.

communal worship. Around the mosques, friendship groups are generated, as was the case in the millennial plot and the Hamburg cell. Each new group became a “bunch of guys,” transforming its members into potential mujahedin, in an active pursuit of joining the global jihad. The intensification of religious sentiment takes place in mosques. The “bunch of guys” incubation makes dedicated political militants; however, it will not produce a religious fanatic, ready to sacrifice himself for the glory of God. This requires a religious dimension and places of worship fulfill to this function well.¹⁴⁰

Intensification of faith and beliefs is a stage demarcated by active learning about the new faith. New adherents listen to preachers and friends, question them, and finally reach some mode of synthetic understanding of their new faith, which they eventually prefer to embrace. In the course of this process, life, values, belief, and goals are reappraised. The seekers increasingly accept the new faith as it has meaning in their new interpretation of the world and their role in it, rather than just succumbing to preaching. This learning process includes social interactions, but intense introspection is required as well. Past biographical experiences are interpreted once again in the context of the new faith and ensure effective proof of its superiority. Sageman underlines that the discovery of a strong fit of past events with the new interpretation is essential to the acceptance of and stimulates long-term commitment to the new faith. Additionally, new events are fitted with the new ideology. This intensification of religious feelings and conversion to Salafi Islam

¹⁴⁰ Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, 114-115.

made the likely mujahed's religious affect, behavior, and thinking conform to that of his friends and kin.¹⁴¹

3.4.3. Training Camps

The skills needed to engage in terrorist-oriented activities are mostly learned in a paramilitary manner which intensifies the messages of hate and determination to impose harm on enemies. These paramilitary camps regularly train their members in weaponry, explosives, and information technologies as well as the usual rhetoric and ideology. In this regard, training camps constitute one form of learning environments in which intensification of militancy takes place.¹⁴²

Al-Qaeda training camps taught both terrorist skills and built confidence among friends, cementing their identities as global mujahedin.¹⁴³ Throughout this specialized training, techniques of surveillance and counter-surveillance, suicide bombings, encrypted internet communications, identity theft, credit card, and passport fraud are taught to individuals. In addition to the physical training, the new recruits were indoctrinated with the al-Qaeda view in training camps. The class notes of some of the trainees specified their goals to be establishing the rule of God on Earth, attaining martyrdom in the cause of Allah, and purification of the ranks of Islam from the elements of depravity. They watched jihad videos, including the ones

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 117-118

¹⁴² Coleen Ryan, Jeffrey Vanderlick, and Whitney Matthews. "A Paradoxical Analysis of Social Learning Theory as Applied to the Potential Reform of Terrorist Offenders." *Professional Issues in Criminal Justice* 2, no: 1. <http://picj.org/docs/issue3/A%20Paradoxical%20Analysis%20of%20Social%20Learning%20Theory%20as%20Applied%20to%20The%20Potential%20Reform%20of%20Terrorist%20Offenders.pdf> (25 March 2012).

¹⁴³ Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, 121.

celebrating al-Qaeda attacks on targets.¹⁴⁴ They learned through these video tapes how these attacks resonate in training camps and saw how the perpetrators of these attacks are applauded and honored as heroes and/or martyrs dying in the sake of their sacred cause.

3.4.4. Internet

As previously discussed, the internet as a communication tool plays a facilitator role in giving way to terrorist behavior. It functions as a facilitator by providing a social learning environment. Particularly, after the destruction of the al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan, the global Salafi jihadi movement has increasingly searched for new environments in which to flourish. The former leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, utilized the internet as a tool to mobilize computer-savvy allies who inspired extremists in Iraq and beyond with video clips of the bombings and beheadings his group carried out.¹⁴⁵ Through the utilization of online sources, supporters have begun to be gained, actions have begun to be coordinated and information has begun to be shared. The appeal of the internet has been increasing incrementally thanks to the lack of real borders and limits online.

3.5. LARGE GROUP PSYCHOLOGY IN ITS OWN RIGHT

Many analysts have applied theories of individual psychology to large group processes in order to understand individuals' perception of what their large groups

¹⁴⁴ Lawrence Wright. *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11*. (New York: Vintage Books, 2007), 341.

¹⁴⁵ Scott Shane, "Struggle for Iraq: The Internet; The Grisly Jihadist Network That He Inspired Is Busy Promoting Zarqawi's Militant Views," *New York Times*, June 9, 2006, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9D01E7DF1231F93AA35755C0A9609C8B63> (14 April 2012).

psychologically mean to them. By doing so, they seem to fail to recognize that large group processes have specific directions of their own. Building on such awareness, Vamik Volkan attempts successfully to draw a picture of large group psychology in its own right in times of crisis and terror by focusing on large group identity, large group regression and how political leaders can direct such regression. In this sense, large group psychology framework appears to have a great explanatory power in dealing with the effects of terrorism on its audience. Large group psychology framework in its own right draws on psychoanalytic approaches, but applies them to group processes rather than individual psychological processes. With regard to this, it is dealt with under a separate title from psychoanalytic and social psychological approaches.

3.5.1. Large Group Identity

Large group identity defines a sense of sameness in ethnic, national, or religious terms shared by thousands or millions of individuals, most of whom will never meet during their lifetimes.¹⁴⁶ Volkan offers a study of ethnic, national, religious or ideological large group psychology through what can be referred to as the “canvas model.” He imagines a canvas extending from a pole out over the people, making a huge tent. This canvas in his metaphor represents the large group identity. The pole of the tent is responsible for the task of keeping the tent’s canvas erect, in large group psychological terms, maintaining and protecting the large group identity. That is to say, maintaining and protecting the integrity of the large group identity lie at the center of the large group activities.

¹⁴⁶ Volkan, *Körü Körüne İnanç*, 14.

There are thousands or millions of people under this tent. Every one under the tent's canvas has his/her own garment (personal identity), but at the same time they share the tent canvas as a second garment, just like a common skin. In their routine lives members of the large group are not keenly aware of their shared garment, just like we are not usually aware of our permanent breathing. We notice each breath we take in cases like pneumonia or being in the middle of a burning building. In a similar manner, members of the large group become obsessed with their large group identity when the canvas of the huge tent shakes of parts of it are taken away.¹⁴⁷ Under common stress circumstances like economic crisis, social unrest, war, terrorist attacks or sudden and sharp political changes, individual identities of large group members become secondary to the large group identity; people become preoccupied with the large group identity.¹⁴⁸

3.5.2. Large Group Regression

The attempts of a group and its leader to maintain, protect, recast or repair their large group identity in times of common stress circumstances, in times that the canvas of the huge tent is shaken, is large group regression. Volkan clarifies typical signs and symptoms of large group regression occurring under the rule of a central authority. He lists that:

- Group members lose their sense of individuality.
- Group rallies around the leader.

¹⁴⁷ Vamik Volkan, "Large-Group Psychology in Its Own Right." *Vamik D. Volkan Personal Website* <http://www.vamikvolkan.com/Large-Group-Psychology-in-Its-Own-Right.php> (28 March 2012).

¹⁴⁸ Volkan, *Körü Körüne İnanç*, 50.

- Group is divided internally between “good” (those following the leader) and “evil” (those opposing the leader).
- There is a strict division between “us” and “them” (the enemy outside the regressed group).
- The shared moral system of group becomes increasingly absolutist and punitive against the enemy.
- A regression within large group stimulates massive introjections and projections.
- Group feels that it has the “right” to do something in order to maintain its large group identity.
- Group members experience magical thinking and blurring of the reality.
- Group experience new cultural phenomenon or adopt new types of traditional customs to maintain large group identity.
- Chosen traumas and chosen glories of group are reactivated with good or malignant consequences.
- Leadership dismantles the historical continuity of group and fills the resultant vacuum with “new” nation, ethnic feelings, fundamentalism or ideology.
- Group members start to take some common symbols of group as proto-symbols.
- Enemy is depicted as inferior or subhuman through common images.

- Group takes geographical or legal borders as a “second skin”.
- Group focuses on small differences between large group and enemy.
- Leadership destroys intra-familial trust and generates a new kind of intra-familial hierarchy, which cannot be seen clearly for most of the time.
- Group members become extremely interested in “blood” concept and common or absolute existence.
- Group adopts behaviors symbolizing purification.
- Group applause has difficulty in distinguishing fine from ugly.
- Group turns its environment to a grey-brown, formless structure.

As a matter of fact, Volkan underlines, there is no need for a large group to display all of these signs and symptoms to be regarded as regressed. How many signs are required to define large group regression depend on the situation and phenomenon under question.¹⁴⁹

This conceptual framework of large group identity and large group regression can be employed in understanding the effects of al-Qaeda terrorism on its audience. Taking the illustrative case of the September 11 events, it can be determined that in the aftermath of the events Americans felt their nation had been assaulted and its prestige destroyed in addition to their individual experience with the attacks. These events shook the canvas of their huge tent: the shared sense of being American. It was a prestige loss and traumatic assault on the US soil from another group.

¹⁴⁹ Volkan, *Körü Körüne İnanç*, 56-58.

American citizens started to rally around the leader, an indicator of which was the considerable amount of support for George W. Bush in the weeks and months following the attacks. In hours later the attacks, the memory of the Pearl Harbor was recollected to contribute to the generation of a common sense of identity. The slogan “United We Stand” was seen across the country, on car stickers and billboards; and the American flag appeared as a type of proto-symbol.¹⁵⁰

Bush’s famous speech of “Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists” is the sign of a harsh division between “us” and “them”, a sign of increasingly absolutist thinking. There is black and white; those who do not join the War on Terror and those who do their active part in this international military campaign. There is no place for grey; not taking part is equal to siding with global terrorists.

The image of September 11 and the sense of vulnerability it created have turned into a “mental reality” which cannot be left behind. The actualization of this kind of a severe and dramatic event and the following long and constant discussions made it difficult for many Americans to distinguish reality from fantasies.¹⁵¹ This can explain the increasing stereotyping and xenophobia among the American public towards the Arabs and/or Muslims in the aftermath of the attacks.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 245

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 249.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Al-Qaeda has appeared to be a network kind of a non-state actor in international politics especially in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. It is associated with terrorism with regard to the politically motivated violence it employs with the intent of bringing about feelings of terror and helplessness in a civilian population in order to influence decision making and to change the behavior of its target. There is no doubt that the redefinition of international politics as post-9/11 cannot be explained without understanding the al-Qaeda network, at least in its general features, but analytically through conceptual and theoretical frameworks beyond descriptive explanations.

A conceptual and theoretical inquiry on al-Qaeda, in this sense, might center on the causes, process and effects of its terrorism-associated activities. There are structural, facilitator and motivational factors that underlie the roots of al-Qaeda activities. Structural factors are primarily the perceptions of the political situation in Muslim communities in general, and in the Middle East and the Arabian Peninsula in particular. It is important to discover the process by which the surrounding political situation is interpreted and this interpretation is shared. Facilitator factors in determining the causes of al-Qaeda activities, on the other hand, are the news media and internet due to their role as propaganda machine through broadcast of the ideas and actions of the network. These factors must be put within a broader framework to understand al-Qaeda in a full sense. Moving to motivational factors, the ideology of Salafi Jihadism and its rhetoric constitute the fundamental motivational factors for

al-Qaeda activities. However, simply stating ideology motivates does not explain much; the way ideology affects behavior needs to be explored.

The process of al-Qaeda terrorism is identified by the forms its actions and operations take. In this sense, it can be categorized as demonstrative, destructive and suicidal terrorism. Each of these actions in one way or another involves the employment of coercive and violent means. As people do not engage in such reprehensible conduct unless they can justify to themselves the morality of such conduct, there is a prerequisite for breaking internal moral barriers to coercion and/or violence. Hence, explaining mechanisms through which internal barriers to violence are overcome should be uncovered.

Terrorist operations and activities leave their impact both on their perpetrators and their target. They influence the individual repertoire of its perpetrators and transform their moral values on the one hand, and cause changes in attitudes, cognition and behaviors of their target on the other.

Discovering the process in which the surrounding political situation is interpreted and this interpretation is shared, placing the role of the news media and internet into a broader framework and explaining changes in the individual repertoires of al-Qaeda militants and in the attitudes, cognition and behaviors of its targets require analysis at the individual and group level; multidisciplinary and multimethod research, and focus on context and process.

Early studies on 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 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 not 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 seems to serve better for the purpose of understanding al-Qaeda.

In this regard, the sociological accounts of framing and core framing tasks; social psychological explanation of mechanisms of moral disengagement, and the developmental approach of social learning theory provide us with a powerful framework to approach the causes and process of al-Qaeda's terrorist operations and actions. The conceptualization of large group psychology in its own right, on the other hand, can be employed in understanding the effects of al-Qaeda terrorism on its audience.

The sociological account of framing refers to groups' task of meaning construction and maintenance for their constituents, antagonists, and bystanders or observers. In this context, core framing tasks involve diagnostic framing, prognostic

framing and motivational framing. 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. The developmental account of social learning theory assumes terrorism to result from societal influences and learning experiences rather than dysfunctional or defective personality traits. Potential terrorists bond together and learn skills and ideas in social learning environments. Eventually, large group psychology in its own right framework benefits from psychoanalytic approaches but apply them to group processes. It covers the large group identity and large group regression at times of a shared stress.

In the light of all these, it will be convenient to draw the conclusion that the framing as meaning construction and core framing tasks of diagnostic, prognostic and motivational framing provide us with an explanation to how structural problems are interpreted and how Islamic concepts adapted surrounding structural conditions by the al-Qaeda network.

In addition to their shared interpretation of structural conditions, 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.

The developmental account of social learning theory, on the other hand, has explanatory power in understanding al-Qaeda's activities in the sense that potential members of the network learn consequences of their conduct, how to do it, whom it should be directed, what provocation justifies it, and when it is appropriate in social learning environments in which endless ideological discussions and social interaction take place and terrorist skill are taught.

All these framing, moral disengagement and social learning processes shape the individual repertoire of the perpetrators of terrorist behavior. The effects of terrorism on its target, on the other hand, can be analyzed with reference to large group regression. Accordingly, in the aftermath of terrorist attacks, the target audience becomes increasingly preoccupied with its large group identity, be it ethnic, national, ideological and religious, to maintain, protect or repair it following prestige loss, traumatic event and assault from the other group. The large group tendencies at these times of regression well explain the effects of terrorist events on attitudes, cognition and behaviors of the target.

Again, it should be made clear that the claiming the efficiency of a political psychology research in studying al-Qaeda and the framework provided here do not necessarily mean that al-Qaeda can only be understood through the lenses of political psychology. On the contrary, political psychology is *a* field rather than *the* field by which al-Qaeda can be studied through its theoretical approaches and research methods.

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APPENDIX: TEZ FOTOKOPİ İZİN FORMU

ENSTİTÜ

Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü

Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü

Uygulamalı Matematik Enstitüsü

Enformatik Enstitüsü

Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü

YAZARIN

Soyadı :

Adı :

Bölümü :

TEZİN ADI (İngilizce) :

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TEZİN TÜRÜ : Yüksek Lisans Doktora

1. Tezimin tamamı dünya çapında erişime açılsın ve kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla tezimin bir kısmı veya tamamının fotokopisi alınsın.
2. Tezimin tamamı yalnızca Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi kullanıcılarının erişimine açılsın. (Bu seçenekle tezinizin fotokopisi ya da elektronik kopyası Kütüphane aracılığı ile ODTÜ dışına dağıtılmayacaktır.)
3. Tezim bir (1) yıl süreyle erişime kapalı olsun. (Bu seçenekle tezinizin fotokopisi ya da elektronik kopyası Kütüphane aracılığı ile ODTÜ dışına dağıtılmayacaktır.)

Yazarın imzası

Tarih