Countering Terrorist Identity Building

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1. Objectives & Relevance

TERRORISM

DISCOURSE

COMMONLY, ANALYSIS OF MAINSTREAM MASS MEDIA COVERAGE

(RELIGIOUS) TERRORIST GROUPS

GROUP IDENTITY BUILDING → RECRUITMENT

IDENTITY

COUNTER NARRATIVES ?
2.1 Terrorism

- “Kill one, frighten one thousand” - an old Chinese saying

- terrere (verb. lat.) – to bring someone to tremble through great fear

- “Propaganda of the deed” - Bakunin

- The perspective of communication sciences: Terrorism as a communication strategy of sub-state actors, which include unpredictable violence against certain targets and creates a mood of extreme fear in civilian population (cf. Schmid, 2011, p. 780)

## 2.1 Terrorism

**Figure 1: Waldmann’s (2000, 2001) typology of terrorism**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>social-revolutionary</th>
<th>ethnic-nationalistic</th>
<th>religious</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major issue</strong>: social and political revolution</td>
<td><strong>Major issue</strong>: national and ethnic</td>
<td><strong>Major issue</strong>: religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal</strong>: an equal opportunities post-society based on Marxist ideals</td>
<td><strong>Goal</strong>: liberation/autonomy of/for a territory</td>
<td><strong>Goal</strong>: millenarian/utopian visions of society based on religious principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Counterparts</strong>: radicals, changers of culture, politics, economy and administration</td>
<td><strong>Counterparts</strong>: members of minority groups (self-perception: suppressed, dominated by majority)</td>
<td><strong>Counterparts</strong>: religious conservatives, widespread mostly in Islam → islamists</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The (two) Testimony(ies): "There is no god but God, Muhammad is the messenger of God"
2.2 Discourse as Strategic Communication

Terrorist and extremist organizations are increasingly present online and able to communicate their own stories (cf. Chen, 2010):

- 2006 ≈ 5,000 web sites
- 2010 ≈ 100,000
- 2014 ≈ ?

In the course of mediatization/digitalization, terrorist groups strategically communicate...

- via web sites, blogs, forums, social media
- targeted information transfer
- own framing of messages
- no censorship
- no regulation
- no gatekeepers

→ Deutungshoheit (DE)

≈ interpretational sovereignty; prerogative of interpretation (EN)
2.2 Discourse as Strategic Communication

“[A]ll social phenomena and objects obtain their meaning(s) through discourse, which is defined as a structure in which meaning is constantly negotiated and constructed” (Laclau, 1988, p. 254).

- Discourse strategies are the techniques of choice for legitimisation, especially when it comes to persuasion. They reproduce unequal power relations or produce new ones by means of representation and depiction of social actors and their actions (cf. Jørgensen & Philips, 2002, p. 63).
2.3 Identity

"[T]hrough discourses, social actors constitute objects of knowledge, situations and social roles as well as identities and interpersonal relations" (Wodak et al., 2009, p. 8).

"[I]dentity [... is] the process of construction of meaning on the basis of a cultural attribute, or related set of cultural attributes, that is/are given priority over other sources of meaning." (Castells, 1997, p. 6)

→ religion, gender, nationality, race, sexuality...

+ three forms of identity marked by an omnipresent context of power relations: (1) legitimising, (2) resistance & (3) project (Castells, 2010)

DISCOURSE → CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY (FORM)
STRATEGIC USE OF DISCOURSE → EMPHASIS ON PARTICULAR FORM
DISCOURSE ANALYSIS → WHICH IDENTITY (FORM)?
2.3 Sampling

The starting point - the list of **groups defined as terrorist organizations by the EU** - renewed at least every six months (11 persons & 25 organisations).

Version dated **July 2013**; Pages: **About Us, Mission Statements & Press releases** (13 Text units)

We have developed a **Glossary** of figures of speech in order to facilitate strategies detection

The sample includes the following terrorist groups:

**Social-revolutionary terrorism:**
- Fuerzas armadas revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – FARC)
- Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan (Kurdistan Workers’ Party – PKK)

**Ethnic-nationalistic terrorism:**
- International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF)
- Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)

**Religious terrorism:**
- Gama’a al-Islamiyya
- Hizballah Military Wing (and all units reporting to it, including the External Security Organization)
3.1 CDA (MaxQDA)

Fairclough (1995) describes CDA as a tool “to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relationships and processes” (p. 132).

CDA as “a problem-oriented interdisciplinary research movement, subsuming a variety of approaches. What unites them is a shared interest in the semiotic dimensions of power, injustice, abuse, and political-economic or cultural change in society” (Fairclough, Mulderrig, & Wodak, 2011, p. 357).

Discourse analysts should be “actively involved in the topics and phenomena they study” and “focus on relevant social problems.” (Van Dijk, 1997, p. 22 f.).
## 3.2 Discourse Strategies/Coding Scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>This is...</th>
<th>Examples (Text snippets)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Justification and Relativisation</td>
<td>Who/what <strong>WE</strong> are/do (related to <strong>OTHERS</strong>)</td>
<td>Reasoning consonant with own ideologies and related to &quot;enemies&quot; e.g. Shift of Blame: &quot;The Israeli invasion of 1982 provided the catalyst for Shiite radicalism.&quot; (Hezbollah)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>Who <strong>WE</strong> are</td>
<td>Establishing community spirit, unification and solidarity with target audiences: WE, OUR, US...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perpetuation</td>
<td>What <strong>WE (don't) want</strong></td>
<td>Pro &amp; contra continuation: + &quot;The current armed Jihad will continue against them with more momentum&quot;); − &quot;[continuation of] peace and other such nonsense&quot; (IEA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformation</td>
<td>what <strong>WE want</strong> (related to PAST/NOW)</td>
<td>Proposition of already conceptualized change: &quot;It is necessary that the Afghans join hands with each other and make concerted efforts...&quot; (IEA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demontage/Dismantle</td>
<td>Who <strong>THEY</strong> are</td>
<td>Discrediting the &quot;enemies&quot;: &quot;the Invasions, machinations and brutal activities of the enemies are continuing against the Ummah, the diseases of internal frictions, evasions, dispersion, betrayal and entanglement in the cobwebs of the enemies&quot; (IEA)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 4.1 Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Terrorist group</strong></th>
<th><strong>Strategy of discrediting opponents (demontage and dismantling)</strong></th>
<th><strong>Strategy of positive self-presentation (constructive strategies)</strong></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FARC</strong></td>
<td>What a miserable president do we have in Colombia. Only a machine acts like you capitalists do, oligarchs, pipi Yankees or whatever your name is.</td>
<td>Democratic and revolutionary opposition We are a belligerent force, a political, revolutionary organization with a project for our country the ones that keep up the banners of change and social justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PKK</strong></td>
<td>The new implementers of genocide policies against Kurds State suppression policies of massacre, oppression, torture, genocide and assimilation; backward and antidemocratic mentalities; racist-chauvinist Unionists</td>
<td>Martyrs of the revolution; the revolutionary movement; democratic solution project of the people; a beacon for socialism and internationalism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<tr>
<td>LTTE</td>
<td>The Sinhala state oppression and discrimination unfolded in its ugly forms threatening the national identity; high-handed tactics of terror; a repressive racist state adopting the methods of brutal violence; tyranny; Sinhala chauvinistic forces; attacking everything that defined the Tamils as a nation</td>
<td>Struggle for freedom and dignity Collective Tamil aspirations for identity, homeland and nationhood A national liberation organization with the overwhelming support of the Tamil masses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KZF</td>
<td>The systematic violation of riparian rights of Punjab, the Sikh holocaust, the genocide of the Sikhs, Khalistan is yet another reminder of malice and hate of Indian government and radical hindu organizations towards the Sikhs</td>
<td>Peaceful, democratic and righteous struggle to liberate Khalistan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<td>Hizballah</td>
<td>Pressuring threats pactised by the foreign Zionist entity</td>
<td>Islamic freedom fighting movement; correct beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Islam rejects violence as a method to gain Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAI</td>
<td>Lie propagators; the unbelievers' crusades, the</td>
<td>Muslims have to concert their efforts and try to affect a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hypocrite's dubiousness and the phony's fabrications in</td>
<td>renaissance in these countries so as to become the way they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>religion; the mortal enemies; foreign invaders; hegemony of</td>
<td>used to: strutting in glory and grandeur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>one superpower on the international arena</td>
<td>a close-knit community; one righteous path</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 4.1 Findings

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Justification / Legitimization (trigger event)</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>FARC</td>
<td>“As commander Alfonso Cano said: the FARC were born to resist to the oligarchic violence, which systematically uses political crime to annihilate the democratic and revolutionary opposition.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PKK</td>
<td>“Democrats of the West, the communists of the East and the national liberationist movements across the world made a new anti-capitalist movement a priority for revolutionary youths. This was the birth of the 1968 youth movement.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LTTE</td>
<td>“Foreign colonialism laid the foundation for the present national conflict.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KZF</td>
<td>“Operations “Bluestar” and “Woodrose” were massive acts of state terrorism.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hizballah</td>
<td>“The Israeli invasion of 1982 provided the catalyst for Shiite radicalism; Hizbullah is an Islamic freedom fighting movement founded after the Israeli military seizure of Lebanon in 1982.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAI</td>
<td>“Religion was and is still the major motive of all revolutions and popular uprisings in the Muslim countries till they could gain their independence from the foreign invaders.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1 Findings

Approximate text structure (themes) and line of argumentation:

1. "WHO/WHAT/WHY WE are/do GOOD"
   → occasionally supported by "THEY are/do BAD"
   → supported by "WE want resp. WE DON'T want" (usually related to what THEY are/do)

2. "WE want CHANGE"
   → supported by "because THEY are/do BAD"
   → supported by "because WE don’t WANT it to continue"
   → occasionally supported by "because WHO/WHAT/WHY WE are/do GOOD"

Leading roles: WE are/do and WE want CHANGE
Supporting roles: THEY are/do and WE DON'T want
4.2 Counter-narratives

5 different approaches to counterterrorism (according to Crelinsten 2014):

coercive, proactive, **persuasive**, defensive, and long-term

“involves understanding and dealing with the ideas that underpin the use of terrorism in social and political life. This has ideological, political, social, cultural and religious aspects” (Crelinsten, 2014: 6)

e.g. anti-communist frame for PKK (using constructivist strategies)
4.3 Conclusion & Outlook

**Conclusion**
A strong to very strong emphasis constructive and destructive strategies
WE/US/OUR-perspective is dominant
Trying to justify / legitimize their actions
Different Context → Similar strategies

**Outlook**
Enlarging the sample for each type of terrorism
Analysis of changes over time
Inclusion of social media
References


References


Thank you for your attention!

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