



2024-25 SPRING

PSYCHOLOGY OF CRIME

WEEK 7

CRIME & TERRORISM

INTRODUCTION

- At the simplest level, we could suggest that **acts of terrorism are crimes** and their **perpetrators offenders**, and so open to the same issues relating to **police investigation, criminal prosecution, and custodial management**.
- In many areas, where there is research relating to **non-terrorist crime and offenders**, there is often a **parallel literature** in relation to **terrorists and terrorism**.
- However, there are also some **important differences** between terrorist and non- terrorist crimes.

INTRODUCTION

- There are **difficulties** of gaining **access** to **police investigations** and **prison records** for **'ordinary' offenders**.
- Requests to examine interrogation transcripts or to interview or assess **convicted terrorists** are **even difficult**.
- Problems with data access would also explain why there is **so little empirical work on terrorism** in general.

INTRODUCTION

- Whether an **act of violence** is terrorism or not depends on a host of disputed and constantly debated factors, including
- who the **victim** is,
- who the **perpetrator** is,
- the **motivation** for the attack,
- the nature of the **conflict** and
- ‘whose **side** you are on’.

INTRODUCTION

- There are similarities, where **principles of forensic psychology** can be, and have been, **applied to terrorist actions**.
- Terrorists probably do share some **similar characteristics** with the **‘average’ offender**, for example in terms of **mental stability** (as opposed to **mental instability**) and **demographic attributes** such as gender and age.

terrorists vs average offender

- Crucially, **terrorists strive for a distinctive set of goals**, and **utilise fear** through means of **threats and violence** in order to achieve these aims.
- Although **perpetrators of non-terrorist crimes** might be equally goal-oriented and rational, they generally **seek personal, individual benefits** rather than political change at a societal level.

**Terrorism is about one thing:
Psychology. It is the psychology of fear.**

Philip G. Zimbardo, personal communication, April
2004

Definitional Issues

- Terrorist acts are designed strategically to **incite terror and fright in civilian populations.**
- Terrorists in most instances are **neither crazy nor irrational**—though their acts may be evil in the extreme.
- Many authorities have also found that there is **neither a specific terrorist psychological profile nor a singular psychopathological condition.**

Contemporary Terrorism

- The **primary goal** of terrorism is to **disrupt society** by **provoking intense fear** and **shattering all sense of personal and community safety**. The **target** is an **entire nation**, not only those who are killed, injured, or even directly affected.

(Hall, Norwood, Ursano, Fullerton, and Levinson, 2002).

Contemporary Terrorism

- The key to have a better understanding is **not to profile** and **target** the individual but **to understand and undermine** the **organizational and institutional** appeal of terrorists' **motivations and networks**.
- As British prime minister Tony Blair has observed, **modern terrorists “have no moral inhibition on the slaughter of the innocent**. If they could have murdered not 7.000 but 70.000, does anyone doubt they would have done so and **rejoiced** in it?” (Blair, 2001).

Psychological Impact

- Military psychologists have long known that **fear, stress, and exhaustion cause more casualties than do bombs and bullets.**
- Psychology can also **contribute to our understanding of terrorist motivations and recruitment techniques,** which can provide a basis for **innovative tactical and strategic-level counterterrorism** programs.

Psychology and Terrorism

- Pape (2003) has argued that **terrorism** itself is **not a form of psychopathology** and, in fact, contends that terrorism—and in particular suicide terrorism—can be seen as **a logical strategic decision by organizations**.
- Suicide terrorism results in the **achievement of the desired outcomes** and that it is therefore a **mistake to assume** that suicide terrorism is **irrational**.

Understanding Terrorism

- People become terrorists in many **different ways** and for many **different reasons**.
- Terrorism is **not** to be understood as **pathology**.
- Terrorists emerge out of a **normal psychology** of **emotional commitment** to **cause and comrades**.
- Only someone **devoid of moral feelings** could do the **cold-blooded killing** that a terrorist does.
- Interviews with terrorists **rarely find any disorder** listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.
- Terrorists did **not show higher rates** of any kind of **psychopathology**.

Terrorists as Psychopaths

- Some have suggested that terrorists are **antisocial personalities or psychopaths**.
- Psychopaths can be **intelligent** and very much in **contact with reality**; their problem is that they are **socially and morally deficient**.
- They are **law breakers**, and they are **deceitful, aggressive, and reckless** in disregarding the **welfare of others**.
- They do **not feel remorse** for hurting others. Just as some people cannot see color, psychopaths **cannot feel empathy or affection** for others.

TERRORISM

- **The impact is greater than the event.** The effect of terrorism is measured **not by the damage** it makes, but by the **psychological response** it awakens. Terrorists shake public opinion with their flamboyant and exciting creative actions, but they also mobilize official authorities against themselves (Ergil, 1992).
- Terrorism is a **political violence** that is staged outside the victims (Tavas, 1999).



TERRORISM

- According to Brian Jenkins, **terrorism is a theater** because it targets its audience "and media is the best friend of the terrorist in advertising the theater.



TERRORISM

- Dutch political scientist Alex. P. Schmidt has identified 109 distinct definitions of terrorism and outlined the following indicators:
- There is **violence** and **force** in terrorism.
- A **political purpose** is driven.
- Creates **horror** and **fear**.
- Contains **threats**.
- There is an **expectation of a reaction** in the society by causing **psychological effects in third parties** (Aydinalp, 2011: 43).

TERRORISM

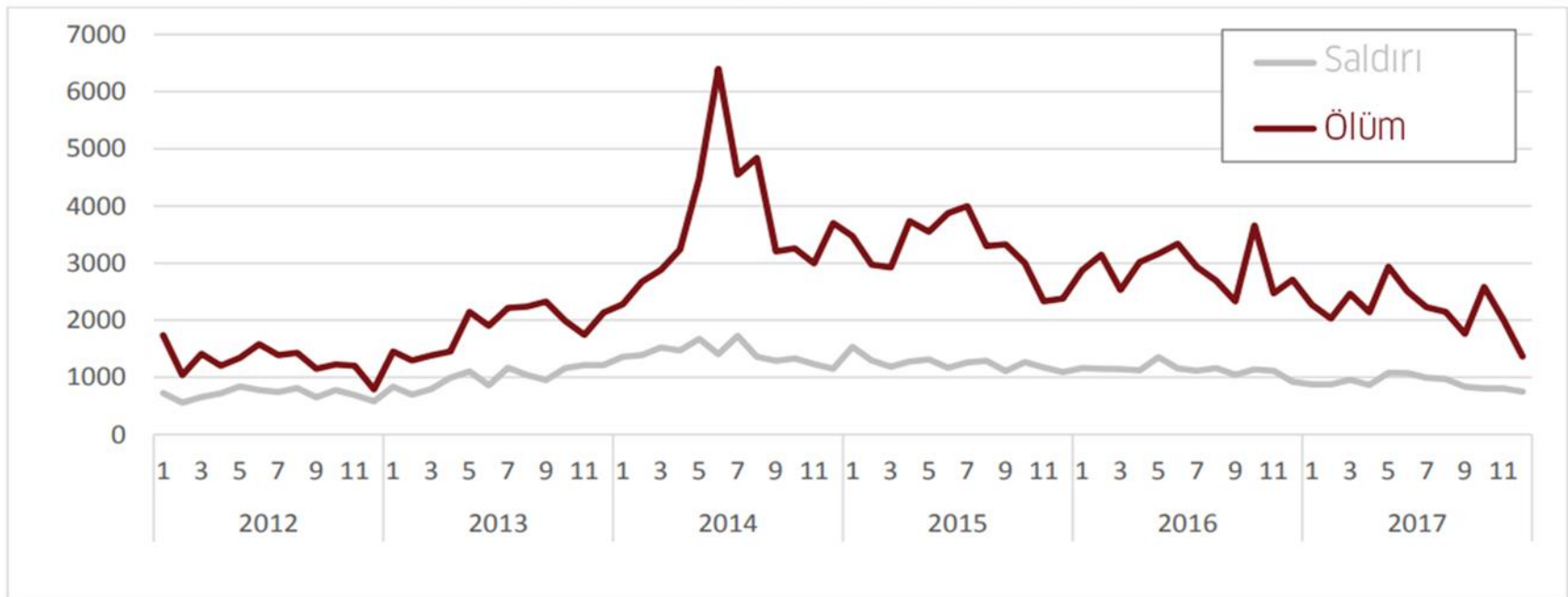
- Michael Kinsley (Washington Post): Terrorism can be controlled, suppressed; but it is a **chronic disease** that cannot be healed.



ELEMENTS OF TERRORISM

- **Ideology**
 - **Organization**
 - **Violence**
- Global Terrorism Database (GTD) report, which includes information on the 10,900 terrorist attacks in which more than 26,400 people were killed in the Global World in 2017.

2012-2017 ARASI SALDIRILAR VE ÖLÜMLER



PSYCHOLOGY OF SUICIDE BOMBERS

- the identification of the social profile of suicide bombers is **difficult**,
- suicide bombers do **not have an accepted profile** all over the world,
- this **personality profile changes** according to the structure of society, culture and organization in which the activist grows.

PSYCHOLOGY OF SUICIDE BOMBERS

- Hamas studies, **male, single and uneducated** persons **aged 18 to 27** years before the attacks of September 11, while like Muhammad Atta as an **educated and older** person (Sevinçok, 2012).
- In the studies, the activists were **weak character, traumatized, have personality disorders** and 19 terrorists who carried out the 9/11 attacks were **solid, violent and narcissistic** persons (Göka, 2002).

PSYCHOLOGY OF SUICIDE BOMBERS

- According to psychiatrist Vamik Volkan (2010), suicide bombers are described as **normal, out-of-sight** persons. With the recent scientific studies, it is concluded that these activists are terrorists in **normal psychological structure**.
- Ariel Merari, an Israeli psychologist at Tel Aviv University, explored the **social environment** of more than 50 suicide bombers. In the study, **neither a common character structure nor a pathological identity was identified**. The most important similarity in all these killers was that they did **not attract attention at all**.

psychology of the terrorist

- Whether **personality disorders are common** among terrorists is still a **matter of debate**. **Access** to terrorists **is difficult**, so the psychological status and personality structures have not been investigated. Post (2004).
- For the **negativity** of his life, the person who blames the others reflects the **weakness and hatred** on people and produces the enemies that will burden their **inner contradictions** (Post, 1992).

psychology of the terrorist

- Considering the general profile and psychological formations of terrorists; terrorism strives to create a **collective identity by eliminating individuality**. (Macit, 1995).
- **Weak family environment** is a disadvantage for children who have problems in family communication. Persons who cannot find a **place in the society** they live in, carry out their personalities in **illegal reference groups** and create a **collective identity** in terms of the organization (Arsan, 1980: 192-196).
- Studies suggest that there is **no serious psycho-pathological disorder** in terrorists. There is **no type of terrorist personality**. (Post, 1992).

psychology of the terrorist

- The concept of «**injustice**» for the terrorist is of key importance. Accordingly, terror is a reaction to injustice. If there was full political and social justice there would be no terror (ALTUĞ, Terrorism; p.123).
- **Young people** are inexperienced, honest, excited, and very sensitive to country problems. Young people **are seduced** by attractive ideologies and philosophies. (M. A. BAL, s.272)

psychology of the terrorist

- Terrorist organizations **cut their ties** with the outside world and thus establish **a new world** for **young people**. In this particular world, individuals **think uniformly**, perceive and interpret the events from a **narrow perspective** (ALKAN, Youth and Terrorism, p.186).

psychology of the terrorist

- Some individuals, who see themselves as belonging to a certain **sub-identity** in society, think that they have an **honor and superiority** to the **sub-culture group** to which they are affiliated, by showing **aggressive behaviors** and **acts of violence** in the terrorist organization they attend (KÖKNEL).



psychology of the terrorist

- Terrorist (brain-bathed), begins to see everyone who does not think and live like him, as **deviant** who waste time. He is a person who has **sacrificed his life** for **high purposes** and he believes that others are **narrow – minded** (ALKAN, p.198).
- It is quite natural that a terrorist, accustomed to this structure of thought, defines himself as **heroic, courageous, self-sacrificing**. Otherwise, it is **impossible to bear the pressure of his acts** (M.A.BAL, p.281).

psychology of the terrorist

- The terrorist acts as the **representative** of the people, the **most courageous leader** of his ideology, or the **hand of God**, and is thus consecrated, immortalized, and blessed.

psychology of the terrorist

- To think that they have the freedom to die and kill is the biggest lie that the terrorists say on their own.
- Taylor and Louis (2004) state that they look for **individual meaning** and participate in terrorist groups to **engage in meaningful behavior**.

the main theme of the scenarios

- The more dead, the more tears
- The harder the action happens , the more people cheer
- The more audience, the more fame
- The more pain, the more power

Terrorist Profiling

- a statistical explanation on al-Qaeda terrorist organization (Hohlov, 2005):
 - most of the members of al-Qaeda came from **middle and upper classes**:
 - ✓ 17.6% of upper class,
 - ✓ 54% middle class and
 - ✓ 27.5% lower class.
- **Education**
 - 16.7% did not complete secondary school education,
 - 12,1% secondary education,
 - 28,8% college education,
 - 33% college graduates and
 - 9% academic title.

Terrorist Profiling

- In spite of the idea that terrorists had widely graduated from Islamic schools, **only 9.4% had religious education** and others had normal education. Most of the members of the organization are **educated, professional** people.
 - 42.5% of them are physicians, lawyers, teachers,
 - 32.8% of them are intermediate experts,
 - 32.8% of them are non-professionals (Hohlov , 2005)
- In addition, terrorists can make very fine and detailed **calculations**, produce shrewd **strategies**, use the latest techniques including **information technologies at a good level** (Bal, 2006).

terrorist motives

- **Social motivations:** alcohol use, cultural exclusion, drug use / addiction, social alienation and absence of a case.
- **Economic motivations:** criminal activities, monetary problems, lack of motivation in the search for work, underemployment and unemployment.
- **Political motivations:** actions of the other countries, cultural imperialism, support of a country to a particular enemy, rejections to government policies, pressure on the identity group.

Heaven promises

- Terrorists desensitized with alcohol, opium, and cannabis are **persuaded that they will stay in heaven** when they take action.
- They believe that they will be a **martyr** or a **saint** when they die.

IDEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

- The terrorist sees himself and his group as **oppressed** and he has **grudge** against the oppressor. He meets the organization he believed to share the same goal and **becomes a part** of the organization.
- Individuals who do not meet with the organization on the same idea, **support or condemn** the activities of the organization **internally**.

MILITARY EDUCATION

- It includes **all activities** of the terrorist organization.
- In this way, the head of the terrorist forces create a **comfortable movement** area.
- Ideological education and military training are united by means of **direct organization membership**.

CONCLUSION

- There is a **consensus** that the terrorists are **psychologically normal** individuals rather than psychopaths even if they end their lives for the sake of their actions.
- **Forensic psychology principles** can be used to enlighten **terrorism** research.