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Analytic Models to Assess Terrorist Organizations and Their Determinants

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Abstract: In this paper, the criminality of terrorist groups is examined through the relationships between terrorist and organized crime groups. Based on the similarities or dissimilarities between terrorist groups and conventional criminal groups, the possible four models are suggested. The four models such as cooperation, alliance, self-creation, and conflict models are predicated on distinctive theories, which are conspiracy theories, business network theories, "in-house" criminality theories, and conflict theories. However, these models are not separate ones, but pose as a continuum.

Keywords: Analytic model, Terrorism, Terrorist organization, Determinant.

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I Introduction

The study of terrorism has emerged as one of the most crucial areas of social science research in recent years. Psychopathological approaches on the individual level were rampant among initial research, and are regarded as terrorist activities whose actions are executed by a group who are psychologically sick or pathological. However, not much empirical support has been given for the argument that psychopathological traits of individuals are the predisposition for terrorists compared to non-terrorists (LaFree & Ackerman 2009, McCormick 2003, Ruby 2002, Victoroff 2005). At the group level, organizational approaches were adopted in a way to identify and analyze terrorist organizations in terms of organizational structure and intergroup networks (Arquilla & Ronfeldt 2001, Asal & Rethemeyer 2008, Jackson 2006, Krebs 2001, Yang & Sageman 2009). In particular, Asal & Rethemeyer(2008) found that the lethality of terrorist groups is predicted by factors of organizational structure such as size, territorial control, and alliance connectedness.

While researchers have focused on individual, group-level, and macro-level factors of terrorism in disciplines such as political science and social psychology, few studies have addressed the organizational behaviors of terrorist groups through the spectrum of criminal justice (Lafree & Dugan, 2004). One of the reasons would be that terrorism has been the subject dominated by political scientists in that terrorism has been characterized as "political" issues. Also, the tendency that terrorist attacks are captured as political violence rather than crime has driven governments and politicians to be the main actors to deal with terrorism. However, few people dispute that terrorists groups contain criminality and that terrorist organizations and criminal groups are not totally separate entities. Researchers have argued that the relationships between terrorism groups and organized criminal groups have been increasing over time after 9/11(Hutchinson & O'Malley, 2007, Rollins & Wyler, 2010). To reflect the criminality of terrorist organizations, we frame and analyze terrorist organizations by using

theoretical concepts of criminal justice. In this paper, two research questions are examined to analyze terrorist organizations. (1) What is the relationship between terrorist groups and organized criminal organizations? (2) What are the determinants of the relationships?

This paper starts from the definition of terrorism and crime which is followed by analytic models to frame terrorist organizations based on the four distinctive theories. The next section draws on the three external factors that determine the voluntary choice of a terrorist organization of one of the four models.

II Definition of Terrorism and Crime

No single definition of terrorism exists until now, as scholars give different weight to the elements of terrorism, such as the nature of perpetrator, act, target, and intent. The broadest definition we can think of would be the actual or the threat of violence directed against human and nonhuman objects and the narrowest definition would be the actual violence directed against civilians by non-state actors for political purposes.

When it comes to the nature of perpetrators, some scholars (McCormick 2003, Gibbs 1989) do not consider it as an element for broad definitions, while Asal & Rethemeyer(2008) limit it to "political actors" and LaFree & Ackerman (2009) to "nonstate actors". According to a broad perspective of perpetrators, state and social actors such as Animal-liberationist organizations and Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty (SHAC) are also defined as perpetrators. Though there is not much disagreement that the natures of actions are actual violence, two issues can be brought up here: [1] whether or not violence has to be characterized as illegal (LaFree & Ackerman 2009, Gibbs 1989) (here, the illegality of violence might be disputable in that there is no agreed international law to define which violence is illegal), and [2] whether the threat of violence needs to be included for a broad meaning of terrorism (McCormick 2003,

LaFree & Ackerman 2009, Gibbs 1989). Researchers who include the threat of violence in their definitions understand threatened violence as a psychological attack and ongoing violence before actual attacks. The majority of scholars define the nature of targets as civilians or non-combatants. This definition distinguishes terrorism from military war or conflict by excluding soldiers as targets. However, Gibbs (1989) broadened this scope to include "human" and "nonhuman objects". The last element we need to examine is the intent. Some scholars (McCormick 2003, LaFree & Ackerman 2009) limit it to political purpose, while others (Gibbs 1989, Metraux 1995, Jackson et al. 2005a,b) include religious, environmental, and animal rights issues as other purposes of terrorist groups. For example, PETA, or People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, is known for inflicting fear and violence against other civilians. These intents distinguish terrorism from organized crime which seeks profits.

Based on these issues, I develop the following definition: Terrorism is the actual or the threat of violence directed against civilians by non-state actors for socio-political goals. Here, "socio-political" refers to political, religious, and other societal meanings. With this definition, we successfully distinguish terrorism from military action and organized crime, while including various forms of terrorism that are not necessarily political.

In terms of the definition of "organized crime", I adopt the definition of Hutchinson and O'Malley(2007), which is "illegal activities that have as their overriding purpose the accumulation of money or valuable material resources". Their definition corresponds to the distinction between terrorism and organized crime that I suggested above. In this sense, "criminality" refers to the state or quality of committing the "organized crime" in this paper.

III Analytic Models to Conceptualize Terrorist Groups

As a way to theoretically capture terrorist organizations in a criminal justice sense, I look at the relationship between terrorist and criminal groups rather than directly focusing on terrorist groups themselves. Are they separate entities? Are they interrelated? Or are they in a strategic alliance? Through the examination of the relationships, we can identify whether terrorist groups are assimilated into criminal groups as having more criminality or dissimilated from criminal groups. I admit that this type of analysis might not be direct conceptualization on terrorist groups, but it can be a starting point to broaden the understanding of the criminality of terrorist groups in the criminal justice sense.

The four models that conceptualize the dynamics between terrorist groups and criminal organizations and their continuum will be a theoretical framework in this paper. Criminologists for a long time have addressed the interaction of terrorist groups with criminal groups. The previous arguments by criminologists are clarified and further developed to inspect possible relational changes between terrorist and criminal groups over time. The four models such as cooperation, alliance, self-creation, and conflict models are predicated on distinctive theories, which are conspiracy theories, business network theories, "in-house" criminality theories, and conflict theories (Saab & Taylor, 2009).

1 Dependent Model

The first type of models that we can think of is derived from the assumption that terrorist and criminal groups are dependent upon each other due to consensual goals that may be for the short term or in the long haul. This assumption is based on the conceptual similarity between terrorism and crime, which is "both terrorism and crime are social constructions" (Lafree & Dugan, 2004). It means that terrorism and crime are conceptual constructions formed by social interactions among people and do not contain absolute properties. The fact that both sets of groups are designated as "deviant"

entities by state laws makes them share some fundamental characteristics such as clandestinity, broad networks, and high exit costs. There are two models that criminal justice researchers and criminologists have suggested.

1) Cooperation model

Some criminologists advocating this model emphasize that there are fundamental commonalities among criminal and terrorist organizations such as criminality, goals, tactics, and skills, contending that most convergence between the two sets of groups is a long-term marriage. They argue that terrorist and criminal groups are predisposed to get together in the long haul rather than a short-term marriage of convenience. Gathered for the achievement of the common goals, criminal and terrorist groups form an alliance in a clandestine way, not to be revealed by state actors. For example, in Colombia illegal drug cartels and political insurgents created a cohesive entity that outweighs the Colombian government in the aspects of military, resources, sometimes morality (Manwaring, 2002). According to Perri and Brody (2011), the nexus between criminal and terrorist groups has been increasing due to overlapping networks, especially in fraud cases. This argument is interesting in that the two sets of groups are more likely to interact each other over time because networks of those groups expand naturally. Organizations struggling to survive are apt to expand their networks in order to get more support and expertise, even though other entities possess different type of goals (Rollins & Wyler, 2010). Rollins and Wyler (2010) suggest Hizballah's reliance upon Mexican narcotics syndicates to easily transfer drugs and humans from Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil.

However, this model does not explain that what are their common goals which motivate the distinctive two sets of groups cooperate with each other. The argument that the two sets of groups are bounded together simply because of their "deviant" characteristics does not provide further support of this model.

2) Alliance model

According to the alliance model, criminal and terrorist groups create short-term alliances only when more than two groups reach a consensus on a particular issue. It takes the form of "a convergence of convenience". This model is different from cooperation model in that, based on this model, criminal and terrorist groups can be an alliance for certain and specific goal or agenda with a time limitation. Linkages with other sets of groups are supposed to be disconnected when the mutual goal is attained or the goal is not mutual any more. Most of the time, this model is facilitated in order to increase organizational efficiency when it comes to organizational achievement. It means that the allied groups can minimize costs by dividing the total amount of necessary resources by the number of allied groups, while they can maximize benefits by synthesizing resources and through international network of the allied groups. Terrorist and criminal groups in the Middle East, Eurasia, and Latin America in 1970s and 1980s formed strategic alliances to sustain an environment which is favorable for them (Makarenko, 2004). Mullins(2009) uses the term, "business-like" strategic alliances between terrorist groups and criminal groups and addresses similarities and differences of the two sets of groups in the social psychological perspective.

2 Independent Model

The following models postulate that there are the inherent limitations such as incongruent organizational goals, disparate social identities that prevent terrorist groups from being associated with criminal groups. The argument that terrorist groups have political-driven goals, while criminal groups strive to gain maximum profits, implies that cooperation or an alliance among the two sets of groups is not a possible choice. Another argument would be that criminal groups are against the authorities and ordinary citizens, while terrorist organizations are directly against the authorities, but

not necessarily ordinary citizens. Actually, in many places, terrorism is more likely to get regional supports from the public. This is because aggregate grievances that are widespread in an overall region, not individual hatred, are the primary basis for causing terrorism (Crenshaw, 1981). Thus, terrorist groups intend to face and fix problems concerning deprivation or discrimination rather than procuring material gains. Based on these arguments, two models are suggested: the first is "self-creation" model and the second is conflict model.

1) "Self-creation" model

This model assumes that terrorist and criminal groups are not likely to cooperate due to different motivations and objectives. Instead, terrorist organizations transform their organizational structures to pursue economic gains, which is the main goal of criminal groups. They become to be characterized both as terrorist groups and as criminal groups. It does not necessarily mean that their political goals as a terrorist group are substituted with monetary goals as a criminal group. By building criminal capabilities within their organizational structures, terrorist groups try to tap into black markets to make profits in order to raise the chances of their political success. This type of transformation entails the structural change on the organizational level by creating fund-raising subgroups that commit organized crimes internationally. In other words, terrorist groups are cultivating their "in-house" capabilities to pursue political and economic gains (Dishman, 2001).The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia(FARC), The Kosovo Liberation Army(KLA), Hizballah, Hamas, and al-Qaeda that used to be politically-oriented terrorist groups have been operating subgroups that involve in drug trafficking and hostage-taking (Stanislawski, 2005). Makarenko(2004) argues that the main reason for building "in-house" capabilities is to keep away from innate problems such as different goals, strategies, and distrust between terrorist and criminal groups.

Some researchers take this model further into acknowledging that it is hard to distinguish terrorist groups from criminal groups and that any distinction is not impossible and meaningful any more (Radu, 2002). There would be two possible scenarios: (1) Terrorist groups start to show interests in profits, incorporating tactics and methods of criminal groups. (2) Criminal groups represent political motivations. In other words, the two sets of distinct groups converge into one group that encompasses components of both terrorist and criminal organizations. This phenomenon is captured by "convergence thesis" of Makarenko (2004). The structural evolution into a hybrid group which contain both traits of terrorist and criminal groups will "lessen the risk that accompanies cooperation with ideologically distinct groups such as organized crime syndicates" and strengthen organizational capability (Hutchinson & O'Malley, 2007).

2) Conflict model

This model also draws on the different motivations between criminal and terrorist groups in that the top priority of criminal groups is to make profits while terrorist groups are supposed to attain their political goals first. Due to their fundamentally distinct objectives, the two sets of groups are in constant competition and conflict. Another argument that requires attention is that criminal organizations might get unwanted attentions from law enforcement agencies if they are known to have been connected with terrorist groups. On the contrary, terrorist groups in many cases publicly claim their responsibility for some attacks to get media and government attentions. This different predisposition toward the public exposure makes the two sets of groups in parallel without convergence. The third supporting argument of this model is that organized criminal groups want government system and the corresponding status quo to be maintained, while terrorists try to overturn the governing system (Saab & Taylor, 2009). A well-maintained governmental system is the fundamental element

for organized criminal groups to do their illicit business. The obvious example would be that chaotic environment will be favorable for terrorists, but not for organized criminals.

3 A Continuum of the Models

These models above are classified by the criteria that how much terrorist and criminal groups are assimilated. Conflict model is the least assimilated, while self-creation model is the most assimilated among the four. Self-creation model is considered the most assimilated form in that a terrorist group incorporates criminality within its group structure when convergence occurs by accepting goals and perspectives of criminal entities.

An organization does not entirely take one model during its survival time. Depending on situations, a terrorist group can change their relationship with criminal groups. For example, FARC that used to be a politically motivated guerrilla organization now involves drug trafficking for profits. It is regarded as transitioning from conflict model to self-creation model. From this continuum, we can also think about the degree of criminality that a terrorist organization represents. There would be no criminality if a terrorist group takes the conflict model and the criminality will gradually increase as the group takes the transition toward the self-creation model. Thus, this continuum casts another question: Which factors drive terrorist groups to change their relationships with criminal groups? Or which factors motivate terrorist groups to inch up or down their criminality?

IV Determinants of the Models

To have a deep understanding of the voluntary choice of terrorist groups among the analytic models, we need to examine determinants that cause terrorist groups to prefer one model to the other models. The determinants may range from organizational

factors to social factors. The determinants that we suggest below are limited to external factors outside of the groups (i.e. behaviors of other terrorist groups, environments). We can consider the external factors as the given conditions that propel terrorist organizations to adopt one of the models wittingly or unwittingly. There should be various internal factors on the group level, but it will require another long discussion. In this paper, internal factors in terms of determinants are beyond the scope of the discussion.

1 Stability of States

The first determinant factor is state-level stability which has a direct influence on the activities of both terrorist and criminal groups. The fact that a state maintains the stability within the territory can be translated into the argument that a state has substantial power to control terrorist or illicit groups. It implies that abiding by law and recognizing the legitimacy of the authorities are accepted as norms in a society rather than ignoring the state law and gaining easy access to criminal groups. Hutchinson and O'Malley (2007) argue that "weak" or "transitional" states that have attenuated social control systems could create a favorable atmosphere for cooperation among organized terrorist and organized criminal groups. The inability of a state to detect and prosecute illicit activities of terrorist and criminal groups is nothing more than opening up illegal opportunities that those groups can think of for their organizational efficiency and survivability. It is more possible that terrorist groups in a "failed" state will have more chances to freely have interactions with criminal groups when they need to. Another theory is that "weak or failed states foster the convergence between transnational organized crime and terrorism, and ultimately create a safe haven for the continued operations of convergent groups" (Makarenko, 2004). Using the term, 'black-hole', Makarenko (2004) argues that the convergence into a single entity is the most likely to

happen in countries such as Afghanistan, Angola, Myanmar, North Korea, Sierra Leone, and Tajikistan.

2 Behaviors of Peer Groups

Decisions of a terrorist group that are products of the internal decision-making process may be affected by organizational ideologies or philosophies or precedents. Besides these internal factors, outside groups in a peer relationship might become a crucial factor on deciding to choose a type of relationship with criminal groups. This idea is largely based on two theories: different association theory and social learning theory. It can be easily explained by an example of delinquency. Youths are more likely to be delinquents when they are associated with friends who have high tendency toward deviant behaviors. Also, youths usually learn more from their most frequent contacts. The same logic might be applied to terrorist groups. When peer groups of a terrorist group show a specific type of the relationship with organized criminal groups, the terrorist group is more likely to follow the suit of its peer groups (Mullins, 2009). One more thing that needs to be pointed out is that the frequency of social interactions that terrorist groups can have is closely related to geographical boundaries that terrorist groups operate or the leadership of those groups is located in. Also, the number of peer groups in a territory might be another factor that determines the frequency of social interactions. In this regard, the function between the scope of a geographical boundary (G) and the number of peer groups (P) will influence the number of social interactions (S) that a group can expect. Simply put, it can be denoted as, [G x P = S].

3 Local Support from the Population

Having political motivations, one of important assets of terrorist organizations is support from the population within a territory where a terrorist group operates (Greenhill & Staniland 2007, Mesquita & Dickson 2007, Trager & Zagorcheva 2005).

Some power nations that did not understand the significance of the local support had a hard lesson from historical experiences. For example, in the Algerian War, France was defeated by Algerians due to the collective movement of Algerians for the independence, even though the military capability of France heavily outweighed that of Algeria. The lack of social support from the population implies that terrorist groups do not have reasonable legitimacy which is the fundamental element for political movements. On the contrary, organized criminal groups mostly at odds with the public do not contain legitimacy derived from the local population. Given the fact that terrorist and criminal groups have the different predispositions toward the public, cooperation or alliance with criminal groups will seriously undermine the legitimacy of terrorist groups. It does not lead to the fact that all terrorist groups want to keep their distance from criminal groups. Legitimacy from the public might matter much more for some terrorist groups than other groups. Or there might be a certain period when legitimacy needs to be emphasized. If local supports are crucial for a terrorist group in terms of organizational survivability, the group will be less likely to grab hands with criminal groups.

V Conclusion

There should be various ways to theoretically conceptualize terrorist groups in criminal justice domain. In this paper, the criminality of terrorist groups is examined through the relationships between terrorist and organized crime groups. Based on the similarities or dissimilarities between terrorist groups and conventional criminal groups, the possible four models are suggested. These models are not separate ones, but pose as a continuum. Even though this paper does not deal with internal factors, dealing with internal factors as determinants will be more interesting research.

Addressing the extent of criminality of a terrorist group by examining the interactions between terrorist and criminal groups is necessary to figure out how to

disentangle terrorist groups from organized criminal groups. Possible implications for counter-terrorism policies might be derived from the discussion of the three determinants above. As a broad one, we can think that states with strong capabilities and peer groups in conflictual relationships with other criminal groups might be conditions that keep the two entities apart. Another implication is using community policing which will engage community members to induce a backlash against terrorist organizations (Stohl, 2008).

The interactions between terrorist groups and criminal groups are still evolving. In addition, the contemporary trend concerning the relationship between the two sets of groups is changeable. Thus, there should be no absolute answer for this research question, but requires constant examination of researchers.

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