

Mission displacement for violent groups

Faisal Warikat

Security Studies in National University of Public Service

Email: Faisal.Warikat@uni-nke.hu

Abstract: *This article discusses the value of mission displacement of armed, violent, and resistance groups to turn them to moderate groups who do not count on violence, the definition of mission displacement is the shift of the groups' means to replace their ends that they pursue, such change ultimately leads to a profound change in their violent nature by discrediting their credibility. The main argument is that groups lose their appeal whenever they are subjected to mission displacement; quite a few turns to become criminal groups rather than terroristic or resistance groups. This article takes the group of Abu Nidal as a case study of how a group was affected by state sponsorship and changed its focus upon the means more than the ends. This displacement degrades the pool of social support to their cause and changes their 'noble cause' to an illegitimate cause.*

KEYWORDS: MISSION DISPLACEMENT, TERRORISM, ARMED GROUPS, ABU NIDAL

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of mission displacement of violent non-state actors is a two-sided effect; it can be considered a means for counterinsurgency, and a harmful effect for the group's supporters, ultimately changing its identity.

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This article searches to investigate the effect of mission displacement upon Palestinian resistance groups, given that the primary factors that can displace the mission of any group are:

a) Engagement in illicit businesses, i.e., in drug trafficking or money laundering. Even though illegal funding is found to be essential for the survival of few groups, an example is the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People's Army (FARC); FARC occupied more land than other groups, which helped it profit from the drug trade on its territory in ways that other groups could not.

Because it was the biggest threat to the state in 1999, and to encourage it to start negotiations, President Andres Pastrana ceded the group a large piece of territory [1].

The illicit business engagement could be harmful to groups; groups sometimes shift their missions from purely political to more of an emphasis on group member enrichment, and getting into illicit business helps with this shift. This engagement is consistent with Merton's (1968) notion of "goal displacement," when an organization shifts its *raison d'être* to exclusively survival [2].

However, a substantial literature looks at the so-called crime-terror nexus [3,4] and suggests that criminal business generally helps terrorist groups prosper.

b) State-Sponsorship typically deviates from the group from its primary mission to execute missions for the sponsored state; an example is the Abu Nidal group (ANO).

The politicization process might turn the group's nature from resistance to a political entity that renounces violence as a means, its new identity has to conform to the international norms of denouncing violence. Examples of this process are the IRA in Ireland and FATAH movement in Palestine. The following is an explanation of these factors thereof mentioned.

2. The politicization of the movements

We must be clear about the fact that all ethically oriented conduct may be guided by one of two fundamentally differing and irreconcilably opposed maxims: conduct can be oriented to an 'ethic of ultimate ends' or an 'ethic of responsibility.'

Max Weber (1918) [5]

Max Weber's political engagement argues that a political group must maintain its values while maintaining its responsibilities. For the Palestinian nationalist groups, the violence against Israel demonstrates how it

attempts to achieve its values, while the group's responsibilities reflect its duties to its political commitments. Success or failure in meeting its responsibilities can be represented by popular support. FATAH started as a resistance militia OSLO agreement converted it to a political entity that uses its militia to maintain order alongside its archenemy 'Israeli security agencies.'

The politicization is fruitful if it relates to achieving the mission of the group, which is the ultimate cause of the group, but if politicization comes before attaining the objectives, it negatively degrades the allowed means and leaves the group unable to negotiate a solution that enjoys public support.

Responsibility elevated FATAH from a resistance group to a government. Inherent in the responsibility of governance is accountability to new citizens who form opinions of the group's quality of services i.e., rubbish collection, road construction.

Tzipi Livni made a similar description by saying that 'responsibility moderates.' She meant that political groups are in tension between responsibilities and values [6].

Palestinian groups who might desire calm cannot do so, without losing credibility for 'resistance,' periods of calm would cause militants to question or abandon a group for other groups committed to violent resistance.

Hamas took control of the government in Gaza in 2007 and became responsible for governance functions. The combination of the *da'wa* program and being the government in Gaza establishes the group as a Palestinian people's political leader. As such, Palestinians judge the group's performance and results, not only by its resistance attitudes about by its governance capabilities, which forced the group balance pursuit for political support with their desire to maintain the status of a leading resistance organization.

The other issue is that Palestinian groups pursue to gain the credentials of resistance, especially after failed peace processes, frustrated ordinary people change their support and their look to violence from time to time. The relationship between Support for Violence and Violence Frequency in the case of Hamas is evident in the historical tracking of Hamas's primary operations; Hamas followed the Palestinian public opinion.

Source: Data based on Davis (2014) [6].

The previous table clearly shows that Hamas maintains violence against public opinion; this conclusion motivated Arafat to engage in violence in Second Intifada, erupted in 2000 after the failure of Camp David., also it can be concluded from the above table that supports for violence is a result of peace failures and in response to violent Israeli campaigns. It shows that public support to Hamas decreases after the 2012 Israeli operations in contrast to the 2008 Cast Lead operation, the reason can be attributed to precision ammunition in the second operation.

Date	Violence Support	Hamas Support	Hamas Action
Sep. 1995	18.3%		
Before the second intifada 2000	51.6%	10.3%	
July 2001, after one year of Intifada	85.9%	16.7%	
March 2005	37.5	25.1	
June 2005	46.3	30.1	Mortar attack and killed one Israeli (June 9, 2005)
Dec 2005	40%	28%	3 attacks killed 7 and injured 11 after the poll by 2 weeks
March 2006	56.6	36.7	Attack and kidnap of Gilad Shalit
Jun 2007	50	21.9	After the assuming of authority, its popularity declined
Before cast lead 2008	59.7	26.1	Increase of support to violence due to the war
After Cast Lead 2009	66.7	25	
Gaza II war 2012 pillar of defence	62.6	20.8	
	66.3	30.6	
After the formation of the unity government in 2014	40.5 %	20.6% (29.2% in Gaza);	Kidnapping of a soldier happened

3. State-Sponsorship

State sponsorship terrorism is that a state or government has been actively engaged in terror against foreign and domestic enemies. Byaman describes state sponsorship as a government's *intentional assistance* to a terrorist group to help it use violence, bolster its political activities, or sustain the organization; state-sponsored terrorism usually occurs when a state provides political, military, or economic support to a specific terrorist group in order to aid them in achieving their goals. It comes with relatively little cost, i.e., all funding, weapons, and training provided by the state sponsor [7,8]. State-sponsored terrorism has been applied most violently in Northern Africa and the Middle East [9, p.8].

Currently, The US Department of State lists four countries as official state sponsors of terrorism: Iran, since 1984; Syria since 1979; Sudan since 1993; and North Korea since 2017. [10].

Carter's (2012) global study of terrorist groups between 1968-2006 shows that 19 percent of the groups had a state sponsor during at least one part of their existence. He says that such a thing can help terrorist groups survive, though with caveats.

Between 1979 and 1989, the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) trained and armed, perhaps 100,000 fighters, to resist the Soviet occupation [11]. Of the 17 groups operating in Pakistan during this period, only four groups ended, substantially different from the average failure rate for all countries.

It is no longer apparent that ISI exercises complete control over the proxies they have helped create, some of which are now openly talking about fomenting a fundamentalist revolution in Pakistan itself. About mission displacement, it can be argued that that groups who are dependent sponsors control the agenda of terrorist groups, paying them to attack targets they otherwise would not, and to some degree, turning them into mercenaries. It can reduce the group's original (political) support base. The Japanese Red Army and the Abu Nidal Organization are examples of this phenomenon. Both groups were paid by Libya to carry out attacks on US interests worldwide, particularly during the 1980s. [12].

3.1 Abu Nidal Organization (ANO)

ANO is a good example of mission displacement; it lasted more than 20 years, was on the list of US foreign terrorist organization (FTO) until 2017; Abu Nidal's small, radical group, the Fatah Revolutionary Council, has been linked with the killing and wounding of more than 900 people in 20 countries since 1974; in 1989 the US Defense Department called it "the most dangerous terrorist organization in existence." [13].

ANO was founded by Sabri al-Banna, also known by his nom de Guerre Abu Nidal, in 1974. Abu Nidal, whose name in Arabic, means 'father of struggle' was born in 1937, the youngest of seven children of a prosperous citrus farmer in Jaffa.

His first start was in the Ba'ath party, which had an office in Amman; his membership in the Ba'ath party was expelled from Saudi Arabia. After his success in Amman's own business, he linked himself with Abu Iyad (Salah Khalaf), who helped him represent PLO in Sudan in 1969 and then asked to move to Iraq.

He was encouraged by PLO's leadership to make connections within the Iraqi government. Ironically, by exploiting his Iraqi intelligence service connections, he began to build his independent power base. Nidal possessed strong convictions against negotiations with Israel, which led to a predisposition toward violence for any group who would negotiate with Israel.; in 1974, Abu Nidal broke with PLO's Chairman Yasser Arafat over Arafat's tactical decision to start diplomatic efforts in their struggle against Israel, then PLO accused Abu Nidal of plotting to kill Abu Mazen and sentenced him in absentia to death.

He started with Iraq from 1974 until 1982 for eight years; Iraq provided him with two training camps in Hit and Ramadi, offices, money, passports for his recruits, and scholarships.

Iraq's main interest in using him against Syria, Arafat, and a focus against Iraqi communists, his relations with Iraq, worsened by Saddam's advent, who did not like Nidal's behavior. In 1980 Nidal started to persuade Syria to accept him, Hafiz al-Assad agreed to use him primarily against the Muslim Brotherhood and against Jordan.

In Libya from 1985, ANO built an excellent relationship with Qadhafi, Nidal was in partial control of Libyan intelligence, he improved their data collection on the 'stray dogs,' the primary target for Libya was the exiles who oppose Gadhafi, and to keep Arafat in check.

He died at the age of 65 in Baghdad's apartment by a shot in his head; many believe that he committed suicide because of Leukemia sickness; some believe that the Iraqi intelligence killed him after Fatah's information about his involvement with the Israeli Mossad. ANO was removed from the FTO on January 7, 2017, because of its demise after Nidal's death in 2000. Deputy U.S. State Department spokesman Philip Reeker told reporters:

"Abu Nidal is a craven and despicable terrorist, and the world would certainly be a better place without people like Abu Nidal"[14].

4. Conclusions

State sponsorship is vital for terrorist groups, but if the group is not conscious of its disadvantages, it can lead to the group's full subjugation to the sponsor orders and become a bullet in its arsenal. Some groups acquire new limits on their activities as a result of state support. State sponsors fear risking all-out war or other punishments and thus want their proxies to limit their attacks [8]. Pakistan modulated various Kashmiri groups' activities in response to US pressure and the growing danger of an all-out conflict with India. Some groups lose touch with their constituents due to state sponsorship, making them far less effective over time.

The relationship between states and their proxies is a dynamic one, and the result often harms both the terrorist group and its cause. In general, state support almost always increases the capabilities of individual terrorist groups. However, it often forces the group to restrain its activities to accord with the sponsoring state's interests.

Arab states, Israel, foreign intelligence agencies like CIA often look to infiltrate Palestinian factions for many reasons, among them to keep abreast of their intentions; another factor is out of the Palestinian ordeal, Arab leaderships want to be seen champions in the advocacy of the Palestinian cause, the other reason is that to use Palestinian in the inter-Arab feud by using them against their rivals. Hafiz al-Assad once told Arafat

You do not represent Palestine as much as we do. Never forget this only point: there is no such thing as a Palestinian people, there is no Palestinian entity, there is only Syria. You are an integral part of Syrian people, Palestine is an integral part of Syria, therefore it is we, the Syrian authorities who are the true representatives of the Palestinian people [15]

ANO manifested the model for a resistance organization that became a terrorist group in the hand of states like Iraq, Syria, and Libya.

Abu Nidal and his Fatah Revolutionary Council found protection and sponsorship successively with Iraq, Syria, and Libya since 1987 has received considerable support, including haven, training, logistic assistance, and financial aid from Iraq, Libya, and Syria (until 1987) and close support for selected operations. ANO was used mainly against Jordanian diplomats, FATAH leaders, defected Libyans, Iraqi opposition.

Abu Nidal established a trade and investment company in Warsaw until 1988; it sold Eastern Bloc armaments to Iraq and Iran. His engagement in illicit trade with more than 500 Million, some come from Arab Gulf states like Kuwait, UAE mainly by extortions and intimidation, these actions transformed the means of ANO to ends [16].

FATAH also suffers from mission displacement, but for a different reason, politicization is the main factor that impacted FATAH and turned it into a political entity, its engagement in governance without proper infrastructure and before restoration of its objectives, raised the corruption inside the group to a level that deviated it from its revolutionary line

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