

## Negotiating with Terrorists: Challenge of Structure

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*(Received 11 January 2014 Accepted 10 March 2014)*

While for a long time, negotiating with terrorists was limited to very limited numbers of contexts. After the Good Friday agreement, literature on negotiation with terrorist groups rises. According to this literature, negotiation could be used as means of counterterrorism. This part of conflict resolution literature argues that negotiating with terrorist groups and organizations would culminate in isolating the hardliners and thus reduce the tension and consequently increases the security.

This paper would examine the applicability of this argument in Middle East. The paper studies the organizational structure of terrorist groups and then takes Irish Republican Army(IRA) and Al-Qaeda(AQ) as its case studies. With a comparative organizational structure study of IRA as a hierarchical organization and AQ as a network organization, it suggests that using negotiation as counterterrorism measure would be useful when state is facing a terrorist organization with hierarchical structure.

**Keywords:** Negotiation, Terrorism, Counterterrorism, Organizational Structure.

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## **NEGOTIATING WITH TERRORISTS: CHALLENGE OF STRUCTURE**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In terrorist conflicts there are two disputants: state and a terrorist group, states seem to tend to transform this kind of violent conflict to a non-violent one. These conflicts could be mitigated through various conflict resolution methods, mainly negotiations. When we are talking about negotiation, we use it with its broader meaning which is a direct or indirect communication between two parties to achieve their goals via non-violent means.

The main challenge of using negotiation as a means of counterterrorism rises from the terrorist group's organizational structure. Since any negotiation is a waltz of two, the state needs to

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*International Studies Journal (ISJ)*, Vol. 11, No. 3, Winter 2015, pp. 125-146.

has to deal with a capable interlocutor who can represent the terrorist group and has influence in the group's decision making process. It seems terrorist groups with hierarchic organizational structure are more easy to deal with rather than those with network structure. Here I would like to address this challenge with a comparative study between IRA and Al-Qaeda.

This paper starts with short review of the concept and definition of terrorism, then with a short a short literature review it will answer the question about if the state should negotiate with terrorists or not? It will continue to typology of terrorist groups and defines network and hierarchy structure. Then it will study the challenges that are imposed by the terrorist organizational structures on states negotiation with terrorists. At the last part,with presenting organizational structure of Irish Republican Army and Al-Qaeda as the case studies of this paper, it shows that negotiation with groups of hierarchical organizational structure is more prone to be productive.

### **DEFINITION OF TERRORISM:**

Terrorism is one the most controversial concepts in international affairs, and there is no comprehensive definition for this term. As a response to catastrophic attacks in 11th September 2001, UNSC issued resolution number 1373, which not only defines the term of terrorism but also requires states to undertake some actions against terrorists and terrorist organizations. UNSC Resolution 1373 defines terrorism as those actions, violent or criminal, which are designed to create state of fear and terror in general public. US Department of States defines Terrorism as : "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience( US Department of State 2002)."

Shmid & Jongman(2008), have reviewed at least 109 definitions of terrorism and have pointed out the variations that exist within these descriptions. Their work could help in understanding the main indicators of nature of terrorism. they explain that: in 83% of the cases, terrorism is a violent act; in 65% of cases, it is mentioned as political action; in 37% of the cases aim of terrorism is specifically mentioned as addressing a larger audience other than its the immediate target, nonetheless in 51% of those definitions the aim was tackled tacitly through mentioning the fear/terror in the definition.

Hayes, Kaminski and Beres (2003, 452) define terrorism as: "the use or threat of dramatic, public violence by non-state actors that is intended to influence the behaviour of people or institutions beyond those immediately targeted or harmed by violence."

Shmid & Jongman (2008, 28) define terrorism as:

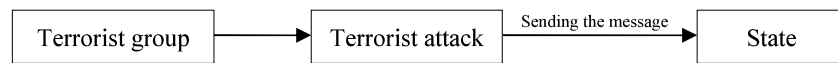
*"an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi-)clandestine individual, group, or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal, or political reasons, whereby--in contrast to assassination-- the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. The immediate human victims of violence are generally chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative or symbolic targets) from a target population, and serve as message generators. Threat- and violence-based communication processes between terrorist (organization), (imperilled) victims, and main targets are used to manipulate the main target (audience(s)), turning it into target of terror, a target of demands, or a target of attention, depending on whether intimidation, coercion, or propaganda is primarily sought ."*

Hoffman pointed to a change in terrorism trend and distinguished "new" terrorism from "old" terrorism, he characterized this change

through change in goals, organizational structure and ideology. According to his studies, new terrorist use technology and build global networks(Hoffman, 2001 citted in Hayes, Kaminski, & Beres, 2003, 457).

According to definitions of the term, terrorists are sending messages via their choice of the immediate target, and they address a larger audience which their most important addressees are states, so the act of terrorists is nothing but a try to make a conversation with states.In addition, this kind of violent actions are demonstrations of the basic definition of conflict, in which two groups are competing over incompatible goals(Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall 2011, 30). This one way communication between terrorist group and the state could not be considered as negotiation (Figure 1).

Figure 1: one way communication of terrorism



Resolving this conflict is the matter of choice for states whether they want to respond terrorists with negotiation or they prefer to send their answer via hard power instruments or they might select a mixture of negotiation and suppressing methods.

### **NEGOTIATING WITH TERRORISTS:**

States do not negotiate with terrorists, this is the mantra of states. Confirming this slogan, some scholars like Wilkinson (2001, 80 cited in Toros 2008, 408) believe that talking with assailants is not appropriate and should be rejected. But what is going on in real world? Should states negotiate with terrorists? There are many other scholars how recognize negotiation as a way to transform or resolve conflicts with terrorists, they provide some methods and

considerations about interacting with terrorists.

Thus next question regarding talking with terrorists is why states should negotiate with them? Hayes, Kaminski and Beres (2003), mention negotiation as way of intelligence gathering, beside transforming the conflict to non-violent one. Peter R. Neumann (2007, 129) describes the main objective of governments in negotiating with terrorists as ending violence in a way that minimize the risk of destabilizing of their own political system. Faure (2003) in his work on hostage taking situations pointed that saving human lives is the main objective of talking with terrorists. Eban (1994 cited in Spector 2003, 614) and Jimmy Carter (Rose 1995, cited in Spector 2003, 614) argue the ethical imperative of leaders to save lives and resolving conflict peacefully. Zartman (2008, 251-252) provides three answers for this question: first, they want to end violence; second, states and terrorists reach a 'mutually hurting' dead end; third, presence of mediators and their active roles.

These answers regarding whether governments should making dialogue with terrorists or not, are generally true and applicable to almost all situations. After 2001 and advent of al-Qaeda as network organization, these questions got narrower and more specified about the methods of negotiations with different types of terrorist organizations.

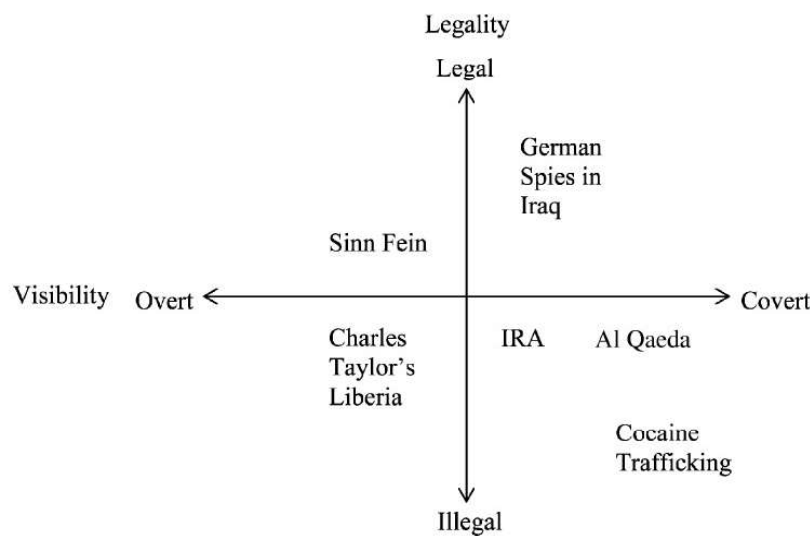
## **TYPOLGY OF TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS**

There are many methods to categorize different types of terrorism, some scholars like Shlutz (1978, 10-12) uses causes, environment, goals, strategy, means, organization and participation for classification of different types of terror, some other like Schimid and Jongman (cited in Gonar 2008, 270) point to the motivation of the perpetrators. Sageman (2004, 137 cited in Gonar 2008, 271) considering the impact

of al-Qaeda, uses structural changes in formulating their typology of terrorist organizations, he argues changing structure of terrorist organizations from traditional top-down hierarchical structure to network method of formulating an organization.

Milward and Raab(2006)used legal-illegal and visibility-covert axis to categorize various terrorist networks, in their work both IRA and Al-Qaeda are categorized as illegal covert networks while IRA's political wing, Sinn Fein is located in visible legal area (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Categorizing Terrorist Networks



Source:(Milward and Raab 2006)

Here in this paper, the organizational typology would be used to distinguish two main types of terrorist organizations. In the hierarchical organizations, role of every actor is defined and clear and a very centralized chain of command is controlling this vertical and flexible structure(Mishal and Rosenthal 2005) like IRA, PKK, Tamil Tigers(Gonar 2008, 276).

Network organization as Podolny and Page(1998, 59) defined, is a form of organization "as any collection of actors ( $N \geq 2$ ) that pursue repeated, enduring exchange relations with one another and at the same time, lack a legitimate organizational authority to arbitrate and resolve disputes that may arise during the exchange." Arquila and Rondfeldt(2001, 7) described this form of organization as "diverse, dispersed nodes that share a set of ideas and interests and arrayed to act in fully intermitted 'all channel' manner ", and there is no or at least a not clear chain of command in their structures, like al-Qaeda.

Term of network comes from economic and social systems analysis in which actors are related via formal and informal relations; from an economic perspective, comparing to traditional hierarchical systems , they are more flexible, more able to take on-demand production and they can keep the pace of fast changing trends in technology (Elistrup-Sangiovanni and Jones 2008, 9,10).

In networks, due to the nature of the system and enjoying vast range of communication, information can flows very more efficient and faster than traditional vertical systems. This type of organization can grow very easily by making new links with individuals and groups, structure of a network is not rigid and predetermined so it can grow or diminish or change their links based on changing environment, they also can change their location of operation based upon the accessibility of resources and feasibility of their operation in certain environment; this treat can enable a terrorist network to change its area of operation when security measures increases in a location and therefore they can escape from capture (Kenney 2007, 144 cited in Elistrup-Sangiovanni and Jones 2008, 15).

Relationships in networks are based on ties of kinship, loyalty and trust, the nature of relationship in these organizations reduces the risk of exit, in this kind of organizations there are many same level cells so eliminating these cells would not make any harm to an

organization(Elistrup-Sangiovanni and Jones 2008, 15).

States who has a terrorist organization as their counterpart in conflict, owing to aforementioned reasons would like to resolve the disputes by applying methods of conflict resolution. They would mostly engage to an interaction with other disputant(s) via back channels, mediation and negotiation, which are mainly mechanisms for sending and receiving message between two adversaries. Both types of organizations impose their challenges to conflict resolution methods.

### **CHALLENGES OF TERRORISM:**

The main concept of conflict resolution is to facilitate communication between disputants. Terrorist operations are of the most violent ways of sending message, demanding to making a dialogue with the authorities. Presence of a terrorist organization as one the disputants in a conflict imposes its challenges to the method of transforming a violent conflict to a non-violent one.

Some these challenges are related to the structure of the organization and some of them are common for both hierarchies and networks, while challenge of naming and challenge legitimacy are not related to the structure of terrorist group although solving the problem of legitimacy in dealing with networks is more difficult, challenge of finding an interlocutor for negotiation is dependent whether the states want to negotiate with a network or hierarchy.

### **CHALLENGE OF NAMING:**

From post-structuralist perspective, when a state makes her decision to call a group or organization as terrorist, to describe that group as

demon and everything related to that group as bad while she makes herself anything related to the state as good (Toros 2008, 409). In more broader term, Spector (2003) argues villainizing the adversary diminishes the options of resolving the conflict peacefully. By calling a group terrorist or villain, generally by demonizing a group, despite it seems that states recognizing the existence of a conflict, their actions would pointing to annihilation of the devil not responding to the conflict, one may argue that demonizing a disputant would be nothing but fanning the flame of conflict.

The Consequences of naming a group or organization as terrorist is not dependent to the organizational structure of the terrorist group. States would use naming technique to delegitimize the groups (Toros 2008, 411) and isolating them in both domestic and international level, when state assigns term of terrorism to a group, other states should treat that group or organization according to the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373, US Department of State (2011) use this method against foreign terrorist organization to "Stigmatize[s] and isolate[s] designated terrorist organizations internationally."

## CHALLENGE OF LEGITIMACY

Another challenge that terrorism imposed to application of conflict resolution methods is problem of legitimacy, those scholars who reject negotiation with terrorists are arguing that talking with terrorists would provide legitimacy for that organization and legitimizes their violent methods. Moreover, they claim that talks could play a destabilizing role in their political system and undermine the international attempts to outlaw terrorism (Neumann 2007, 128), Wilkinson argues that talks would mean accepting criminals as legitimate interlocutors (Wilkinson 2001, 80 cited in Toros 2008, 410). Spector (2003) argues that "terrorist groups are not legitimate

representatives of a physical territory or population", and since they are not officially responsible to any constituency they cannot be a reliable negotiation partner.

The answer to the question of representativeness is related to the structure of organization, in traditional vertical organizations like IRA, it is very easy to find and measure their constituency where unlike the other part of the conflict these organizations are legitimate, but when it comes to the horizontal organizations like al-Qaeda which are constituted of different cells spread around the world, finding and measuring their constituency is very hard, if not impossible.

As mentioned networks can grow easily by making new links to other groups, for these added groups, it might be very easy to find a constituency but since networks' structure is very flowed and flexible, their constituency could not be accounted the main core of the network.

### **CHALLENGE OF INTERLOCUTOR**

This challenge is related to structure of the organization that are prone to use violent method to send their demand or messages to states. Any dialogue needs at least two interlocutor, when states try to resolve violent conflicts with terrorists via negotiation, they have to talk to somebody, even when they want to use back channels, using members of foreign government, dependable members of community or intelligence officers (Byman 2009, 127)they should know with whom they are talking and his ability in effecting on the decision making of the organization.

To reach an agreement with IRA, UK and US governments accepted that the negotiation should be done with the Sinn Fein leaders and they conducted a series of clandestine talks with John Hume and Gerry Adams(Hancock 2008, 208). As

Neumann(2007,130) mentions governments should be assure about the power of the leadership to control the rank and file, which is possible just in vertical centralized command and leadership. To solve this challenge Some scholars like Toros(2008) suggest to use the advantage of scalability of networks and with recognizing the legitimacy of grievance and domestic agendas of attended organizations like MILF to simplify the complexity of negotiating with network.

In case of networks like al-Qaeda, answering the challenge of interlocutor is very complicated, due to the nature of the networks this is hard to find someone to negotiate, an interlocutor who has the ability to influence on decision-making process of the network. Since decisions in networks do not come from a centralized leadership and everyone has his voice it is hard to make any effect by negotiating with a group or an individual(Elistrup-Sangiovanni and Jones 2008, 21). There is a counterargument to Toros's rational of isolating and separating each cell could be provided by referring to the nature of networks, their nimbleness and adaptability to the environment enable networks like al-Qaeda to relocate themselves and manage their operations remotely.

To defeat al-Qaeda, some scholars like Hoffman(2008, 138)believe in necessity of taking a dual strategy of destroying and weakening enemy capabilities which is eliminating the senior members (by killing or capturing) and preventing new recruitments thus there is no chance for negotiation.

From Hierarchy to Network Organization: Old to New Terrorism

In this part, two terrorist organizations would be studied, IRA with its classic hierarchic structure and then Al-Qaeda with its complex network.

## **IRISH REPUBLICAN ARMY:**

IRA and its political wing Sinn Fein, are representing a nationalist movement as the constitution of the organization define its aims:

"1. To Guard and honour and uphold the sovereignty and unity of the Republic of Ireland.

2. To support the establishment of an Irish Socialist Republic based on the 1916 Proclamation.

3. To support the establishment of, and uphold, a lawful government in sole and absolute control of Republic."(Horogan and Taylor 1997, 1)

In real world, achieving these objectives requires a British free Northern Ireland.

While IRA was seeking to reach its aims, it targeted UK's interests globally to send its message and force the UK government to cease her military presence in Northern Ireland. So they attacked members of the British Army and security forces. They used indiscriminate campaigns in which their targets include civilians as well. Rise of Sinn Fein as an accepted political player who represent IRA's objectives caused an evolution in IRA's terrorist campaigns and made them more discriminate.

## **STRUCTURE OF IRA**

IRA as an old terrorist organization, with a hierarchic structure. According to Horogan and Taylor (1997), the constitution of the organization, the chain of command starts from General Army Convention (GAC) on top. GAC as the highest authority of the Army, is an organized meeting of delegates composed of representatives of currently active Volunteers, prisoners, Brigade staffs, General headquarters members and all members of the Army Council. Next in

the line is Army executives, which is composed of a dozen senior veterans. This body has the responsibility of electing 7 members of Provisional Council and overlooking Army Council's activities. These two, are the policy making body . Thus they are on the top of the power pyramid of IRA (Figure 3). Responsibility of executive leadership of the organization lays upon Army Council. This body oversees General Head Quarters and Northern and Southern Commands. From these two commands which cover different counties of Ireland, chain of command continues to Brigades and then to the Active Service Units(ASU).

Figure 3: IRA Power Pyramid

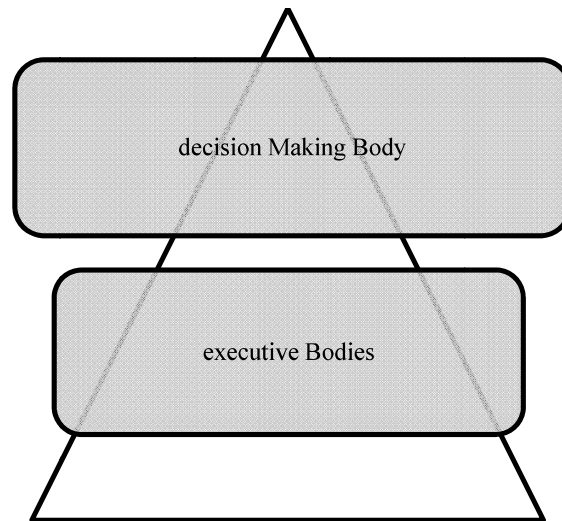
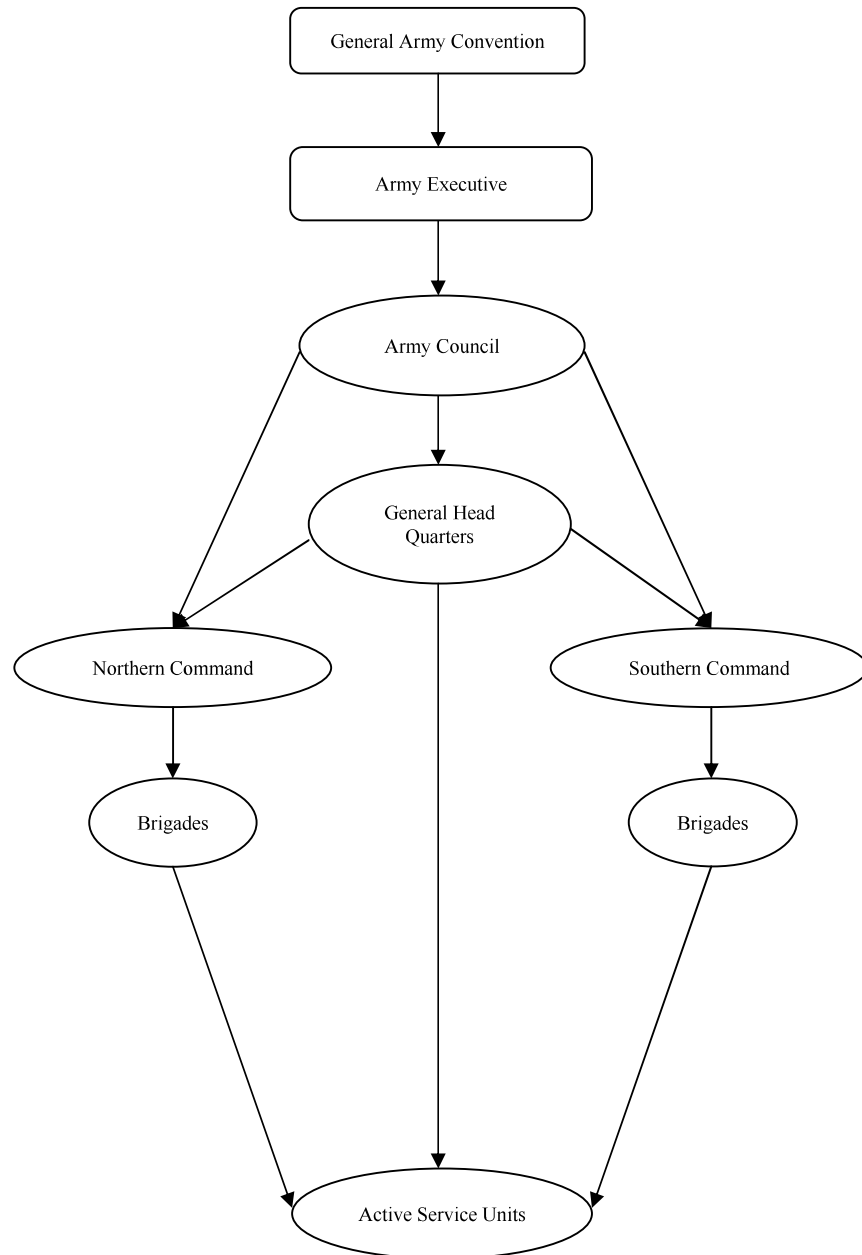


Figure 4 shows the structure of IRA:

Figure 4 : IRA Chain of Command



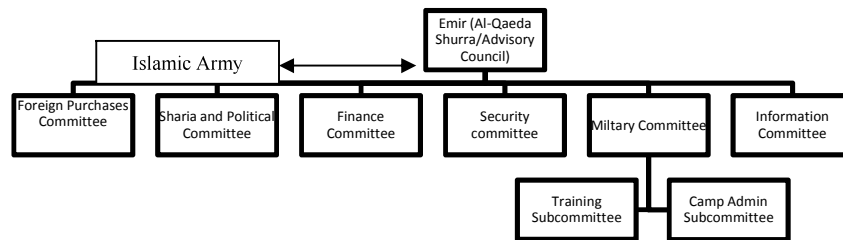
As mentioned before, rise of Sinn Fein as political representative of IRA is important. When Sinn Fein leader got elected as a Westminster M.P., it gave the organization an opportunity to solve the problem of having an influential representative. In Crenshaw's words (1995, 3 quoted in Horgan and Taylor 1997, 2) he "effectively consolidated his authority" over both aspects of Republican movement in Ireland.

### AL-QAEDA: A NEW FACE FOR TERRORISM

The National Commission on Terrorist Attack Upon the United States (2004, 87,399) in its final report on 9/11 attacks al-Qaeda has been described as the best known example of this kind of organizations- as agile, fast moving and difficult for states to fight with. Hoffman(2003, 12) in his assessment of the trends in terrorism portray al-Qaeda as "nimble, flexible, and adaptive entity". Gunaratana (2002, 79) depicts this organization as "liable to change...structure according to circumstances."

These descriptions of Al-Qaeda are post 9/11 when it changed its structure. When Bin Laden established his terrorist organization in Sudan, it was a classic top-down organization (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Al-Qaeda early structure



Source: (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks n.d.)

In that structure, Advisory Council was the Bin Laden's close associates, Sharia and Political Committee was responsible for providing juridical ground for operations by issuing Fatwas. Military Committee was in charge of suggesting targets and training, Finance Committee was in charge of providing budgetary support for various activities of the organization. Foreign Purchases Committee's responsibility was to provide weapons and equipment. Security Committee was in charge of physical protection and intelligence gathering and counterintelligence activities(National Commission on Terrorist Attacks n.d., 3).

Through the time, various terrorist groups from different countries joined the organization and gradually changed its structure from the centralized hierarchy to a decentralized network. This new network is a composition of at least 4 networks(Milward and Raab 2006, 338):

1. a pre9/11 network with Bin Laden as its hub<sup>(1)</sup>.
2. an Arab network with Khalid Sheikh Mohammad as its hub, which is now a scale free network<sup>(2)</sup>.
3. another scale free network in North Africa
4. Southeast Asia group<sup>(3)</sup>.

Using new technologies, as Wallace-Wells(2006, 1) said: "nearly everything about Al Qaeda that matters is happening online right now..." these networks use internet as means of training new members and supporters and promoting their aims and strategies and controlling

In case of Al-Qaeda, we are facing a network that covers the globe, no one can claim he or she is talking on behalf of the organization, it is hard to define a leadership in this networks. This form of organization would rise the aforementioned challenges.

## CONCLUSION

Terrorist organizations mostly communicate one-sided and they use threat to demonstrate their demands (Spector 2003, 616). Advent of global terrorist networks, made communication with these type of disputants more difficult, it could be said that terrorist conflicts are of the most difficult ones to solve by applying traditional peaceful methods of conflict resolution.

Terrorist organizations imposed two main challenges of naming and finding the proper interlocutor to conflict resolution methods which are based on communication between counterparts of a conflict.

When states designate name of terrorist to a group they try to delegitimize and stigmatize that group both domestically and internationally, and when they try to make an interaction with a terrorist group they have to recognize that there is demand by some parts of their societies, then states are facing with problem of legitimacy. This problem is easy solve when a hierarchical organization is named as terrorist comparing with transnational networks.

Dealing with transnational networks and defining their constituency is more complicated. The other challenge that states are dealing with transnational terrorist organizations like al-Qaeda, is to find a reliable back channel and interlocutor to communicate with. As shown in case of IRA, when Gerry Adams got elected as Westminster M.P., he could manage to be the voice of both faces of republican movement in Ireland. But in case of Al-Qaeda, no one can be held as representative of those networks.

Responding to reality of terrorist organization and these challenges, states should find indirect ways of communication with these organization. Media can help states to send their message, "by officials grating interviews or by encouraging reports on state's negotiation conditions" (Byman 2009, 126) or reports that convoy the

message of state's recognition of the terrorist grievances and the conflict.

Since the most infamous transnational terrorist network has(or claims to have) religious theme and justifications for its violent action, states in association with media and religious figures can try to reduce the number of recruitment of al-Qaeda, by reporting and interviewing with religious figures and broadcasting programs that promote alternative peaceful interpretations of religion. Media affects on the constituency of terrorist organizations and can make a bottom-up momentum to encourage the hierarchical groups' leaders and weakening the networks. ❖

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1. Now Ayman al-Zawahiri is the hub of this network
2. In scale free networks, some nodes can change their position and become a hub and they can easily move from one part of the network to another part.
3. Unlike other elements of Al-Qaeda network, it seems this element has more hierarchic nature.