

Framing the Dynamics and Functioning of Different Variants of Terrorist Organizations: A Business Model Perspective

Authors : Eisa Younes Alblooshi

Abstract : Counterterrorism strategies, to be effective and efficient, require a sound understanding of the dynamics, the interlinked organizational elements of the terrorist outfits being combated, with a view to having cognizance of their strong points to be guarded against, as well as the vulnerable zones that can be targeted for optimal results in a timely fashion by counterterrorism agencies. A unique model regarding the organizational imperatives was evolved in this research through likening the terrorist organizations with the traditional commercial ones, with a view to understanding in detail the dynamics of interconnectivity and dependencies, and the related compulsions facing the leaderships of such outfits that provide counterterrorism agencies with opportunities for forging better strategies. It involved assessing the evolving organizational dynamics and imperatives of different types of terrorist organizations, to enable the researcher to construct a prototype model that defines the progression and linkages of the related organizational elements of such organizations. It required detailed analysis of how the various elements are connected, with sequencing identified, as any outfit positions itself with respect to its external environment and internal dynamics. A case study focusing on a transnational radical religious state-sponsored terrorist organization was conducted to validate the research findings and to further strengthen the specific counterterrorism strategies. Six different variants of the business model of terrorist organizations were identified, categorized based on their outreach, mission, and status of any state sponsorship. The variants represent vast majority of the range of terrorist organizations acting locally or globally. The model shows the progression and dynamics of these organizations through various dimensions including mission, leadership, outreach, state sponsorship status, resulting in the organizational structure, state of autonomy, preference divergence in its fold, recruitment core, propagation avenues, down to their capacity to adapt, resulting critically in their own life cycles. A major advantage of the model is the utility of mapping terrorist organizations according to their fits to the sundry identified variants, allowing for flexibility and differences within, enabling the researchers and counterterrorism agencies to observe a neat blueprint of the organization's footprint, along with highlighting the areas to be evaluated for focused target zone selection and timing of counterterrorism interventions. Special consideration is given to the dimension of financing, keeping in context the latest developments regarding cryptocurrencies, hawala, and global anti-money laundering initiatives. Specific counterterrorism strategies and intervention points have been identified for each of the respective model variants, with a view to efficient and effective deployment of resources.

Keywords : terrorism, counterterrorism, model, strategy

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