



Ekonomik ve Sosyal Düşünce Araştırma Geliştirme Vakfı

**HOW TO STUDY TERRORISM: COMPARISON OF
CONSTRUCTIVISM WITH TRADITIONAL IR THEORIES¹**

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Abstract

This paper aims to assess how existing theories explain terrorism and its relations with traditional state system and how assumptions of constructivism fit in better compared to other IR theories. A constructivist approach thanks to its multidisciplinary understanding can give more plausible insights about the role of norms, ideas, time and context in shaping the relation between states and terrorism as non-state actor which is the core focus point of this paper. The marginal method of terrorism in order to interact and communicate with state and send policy messages makes it difficult to be explained and conceptualized by traditional IR theories. The word “terror” which means to fear and frighten gives an insight that terrorism does not include a peaceful and malleable human nature. a non-state actor which is able to access state instruments in power politics makes terrorism study more complex and problematic. While state-centric traditional IR Theories seem to have several weaknesses in explaining state and terrorism relations, constructivism, with its arguments on priority of persuasion, identity and social construction on material power and economic rationality, fits better in explaining many issues about terrorism study. Thinking about the changing nature of self-interest with its non-material determinants, the role of identity in defining actors and the problems in cooperation and coordination faced by traditional theories, constructivism seems a better-developed theoretical lens in terms of explaining global terrorism and its impact on changing state behavior.

1. INTRODUCTION

World history has witnessed too many issues since the beginning of 20th century and International Relations (IR) scholars spent great effort in explaining and understanding them by framing new theories with different ontological and epistemological perspectives. Terrorism, as one of the most challenging topics of today's world, is drawing great attention especially for the ones who study in IR field. "How should IR scholars generate a theoretical framework when studying terrorism as new world's problem?" is an ongoing debate. This paper aims to assess how existing theories explain terrorism and its relations with traditional state system and how assumptions of constructivism fit in better compared to other IR theories. Finding the most accurate theoretical lens for analyzing terrorist groups and state relations may seem ambitious but starting with evaluating the insufficiency of traditional IR theories when it comes to terrorism is seen as a good start in order to understand the relatively comprehensive consistency of constructivism compared to other IR theories. A constructivist approach thanks to its multidisciplinary understanding can give more plausible insights about the role of norms, ideas, time and context in shaping the relation between states and terrorism as non-state actor which is the core focus point of this paper.

Key assumptions of realism such as sovereign state centric understanding of interest maximization and maintaining the order with balance of power³, neo-realist assumptions on anarchy, or the assumptions of liberalism on democratic institutions with liberal values and neo-liberal understanding of peaceful change with the help of institutions does not completely explain whether terrorism, with its violence based non-state structure, fits in to these assumptions or not.

An undivided opinion on the identification of "state" on the one hand, fractured understanding on defining "terrorism" with state based concepts on the other hand makes it quite difficult to establish a stable ground with traditional theories. Here, the next part starts with etymologic investigation of the main definitions on "state" and "terrorism", and how their interaction is socially constructed. Rapoport⁴ defines four waves of terrorism based on their organizational culture which are anarchist wave starting in the 1880s, anti-colonial wave starting in the 1920s, new left wing wave after the 1960s till late 1990s and religious wave after the 1979

³ Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, Newyork, Alfred A. Knopf, 1948

⁴ David C. Rapoport, *The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism*, in *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy*, edited by Audrey Kurth Cronin and J. Ludes. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2004

until today. No matter the wave terrorism belongs to, it is always seen a notion of resistance against inequality and lack of social justice which has been boosted after globalization due to its improvements for non-state actors in reaching financial, economic and technological instruments as states do. Therefore, the point of interest in this paper on terrorism is globalization which shapes the current wave of both sub and transnational terrorism.

The third part tries to cover a comparative analysis of constructivist theory and its advantages in studying terrorism where traditional IR theories and their state based conventional approaches suffers from their limitations. The ontological subject matters they argue and theoretical assumptions they suggest is evaluated by considering the non-traditional dynamics of terrorism. How applicable constructivist approach on terrorism studies with its main assumptions is elaborated in detail. Finally, after considering the limitations this paper faces, it is concluded with further discussion on terrorism and state relations by examining some predicaments which most of the theories fall in to.

2. DEFINITIONS AND THEIR ETYMOLOGIC CONSTRUCTION

If we are asked to draw two pictures which represent the words “state” and “terrorism”, there might be an undivided pattern of drawing for “state” which contains circular or rectangular close line to show the territory, some buildings to show the institutional settlement, a flag to represent the identical uniqueness and some well-dressed soldiers to show the military power. On the other hand, a drawing that shows the terrorism might contain some tents, guns, bombs and cruel men holding guns with mask on their face. These definitions are constructed in our minds socially and traditional IR Theories evaluate and explain the interaction between two by their preconceived understanding.

When we look at the etymologic origins of the definitions, “State (English), der Staat (German), état (French)”⁵ means manner of standing, attitude, position that presents a solid and stable entity; “Al-Dawla (Arabic)”⁶ means circulation, cycle or time period that represents the territorial rule and “Gosudarstvo-государство (Russian)”⁷ means prince of a household which shows the static ruler of a territory. These definitions are all related with positive social construction of “state” in minds which define the basic characteristics of a state. On the other

⁵ Online Etymology Dictionary “<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=state>”, Last retrieved: 23/12/2015

⁶ Franz Rosenthal, Dawla, *The Encyclopedia of Islam, New Edition, Volume II: C–G*. Leiden and New York: BRILL, 1991, pp. 177–178

⁷ Oleg Kharkordin, What is the State? The Russian Concept of Gosudarstvo in the European Context, *Wesleyan University, History and Theory* 40, 2001, p 206-240

hand, the word “terrorism” is originated from the Latin word “terrere”⁸ which means to “frighten” and this creates an understanding of fear in minds because it is constructed by states to represent an enemy that scares its citizens by using violence. Although “state” is a unanimously accepted and agreed concept, “terrorism” is still a controversial concept for which academy could not agree on a single meaning. In this respect, these definitions give state an asymmetric privilege to decide who should be labelled as terrorist.

Alex Schmid⁹ compiles 260 different definitions for terrorism and clarifies the academically most agreed one as “*Terrorism refers to a doctrine about the presumed effectiveness of a special form or tactic of fear-generating, coercive political violence and, on the other hand, to a conspiratorial practice of calculated, demonstrative, direct violent action without legal or moral restraints, targeting mainly civilians and non-combatants, performed for its propagandistic and psychological effects on various audiences and conflict parties*”. While on the other hand, definition of state has still the same content of Max Weber’s¹⁰ which is summarized as the human community that has the right to claim monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory. That definition of terrorism gives a great intuition about how a scholar perceives this non-state actor when developing a theoretical framework on its interaction with state.

The systemic use of violence and aggression against civilians, government agencies and public service infrastructure in order to intimidate state citizens makes the terrorists different from ordinary criminals who use violence as an end, not mean.¹¹ This marginal method of terrorism in order to interact and communicate with state and send policy messages¹² makes it difficult to be explained and conceptualized by traditional IR theories. The social construction¹³ of a so called “noble” state declaring another non-state actor as a fear generator actor is shaped by states according to their own interest which changes in time and conditions for each of the separate actors. This brings a problem for realist assumption of sovereign states as main

⁸ Online Etymology Dictionary “http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=terror”, Last retrieved: 23/12/2015

⁹ For other definitions, please see Alex P. Schmid, *Handbook of Terrorism Research*, London, Routledge, 2011, pp.86-87.

¹⁰ Simeon Mitropolitski, Weber’s Definition of the State as an Ethnographic Tool for Understanding the Contemporary Political Science State of the Discipline, *Canadian Political Science Association, Presented in Wilfrid Laurier University*, 2011, p 1

¹¹ Martha Crenshaw, An Organizational Approach to The Analysis of Political Terrorism, *Orbis*, 29 (3), 1985, pp 465-489.

¹² Thomas P. Thornton, *Terror as a Weapon of Political Agitation. In Internal War: Problems and Approaches*, edited by Harry Eckstein. Princeton: Princeton University Press., 1964

¹³ For social construction of metaphors in terrorism, please see Alexander Spencer, The social construction of terrorism: media, metaphors and policy implications, *Journal of International Relations and Development Vol. 15, No. 3, 2012*, pp. 393-419

actors interacting each other in anarchy and this problem is comprehensively examined in next part.

It is important to note that social construction of the terrorism is so relative and changing upon the interest of a specific state that one's terrorist can easily be labelled as other's freedom fighter¹⁴. State, on the other hand, is recognized as state internationally no matter the size or population. Tuvalu, for instance, with its small size and 11.000 population is recognized as a state whereas Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) with its 20.000 to 200.000 members¹⁵ in Iraq and Syria, is not internationally recognized as a state no matter it has the word "state" in its name. It is obviously seen that when talking about a state, it is easy to tell the exact population and territory which are prerequisites to be called as a state in IR, whereas the latter can only be estimated in terms of population and unrecognized territory. This dichotomy of clarification gives more space to the role of constructed ideas and norms when studying terrorism because states choose to define terrorism in accordance to their constructed interest.

Finally, the different structural composition of terrorism reflects the behavioral difference of it when compared to traditional state understanding. Because terrorist groups don't share the same values and interest with states which they settled in or operate, acting as a transnational or sub-state actor without the boundaries of the state-centric limitations makes it easier for them to acquire political gain. The 3 main objectives of terrorism, which are systemic violent activities for achieving political goals, making alliances with different actors by operating in other crime areas and recruiting new members in order to survive, shows us how its main assumptions in international system should be generated. Galula¹⁶ argues that terrorists or insurgents don't need to act within the law of state and are free to lie, cheat and exaggerate without having an obligation to prove it. On the other hand, states have to act in accordance with domestic and international law where international institutions and global media observe their excess activities all the time. This asymmetry brings several questions on terrorism studies when tried to be explained with traditional IR theories. That is why it is

¹⁴ Alex P. Schmid, Frameworks for conceptualizing terrorism, *Terrorism and Political Violence*16(2),2004, p 205

¹⁵ CIA estimates and Kurdish Regional Authority claims differ for the number of the combatants of ISIL. CIA Estimates:<http://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/11/world/meast/isis-syria-iraq/> Last retrieved: 23/12/2015 Regional Authority Estimates:"<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/war-with-isis-islamic-militants-have-army-of-200000-claims-kurdish-leader-9863418.html>", Last retrieved: 24/12/2015

¹⁶ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare, Theory and Practice*, Published in the United States of America in 1964 by Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., Publisher,1964, p 11

necessary to understand the behavioral difference between states and terrorist groups in order to have a better understanding on their relation and to examine whether the key assumptions of different theories fill the gap in studying terrorism.

3. SCANTINESS OF TRADITIONAL THEORIES IN STUDYING TERRORISM

“Why do people decide to be terrorist?” or “Why are people labelled as terrorist?” questions bring more and more sociological questions in to minds. As Martin¹⁷ argues, it might be unequal distribution of goods, resources, power, health or social rights that create disorder and radicalize individuals. Due to these inequalities, terrorist groups do not share the same values and constructed ideas and norms of states they are born in. In the mindset of societies, terrorists are constructed as insane and irrational groups with criminal backgrounds, however terrorist groups generally follow rational strategies with specific methods of struggle based on cost and benefit analysis.¹⁸ These rational strategies, on the other hand, are much more different than the rationality of states in terms of decisions and actions which also create organizational cultures. In return, organizational culture of a terrorist group clarifies the way it interacts with other state and non-state actors, local communities and the victims.

In this part of the paper, it is evaluated how constructivism better explains terrorism and state relations compared to other traditional IR Theories when we compare the ontology and epistemology of the theories by analyzing their understanding on human nature, rationality, state, interest, security, cooperation, change and system.

3.1 Human Nature, Rationality and State

The characteristics of human being which identify and set the way we think, the way we feel and the way we act determine human nature. This nature is derived by philosophical and biological aspects of human ontology and traditional IR Theories such as realism and liberalism comes up with a domestic analogy between the human nature and state nature in order to explain state behavior. Constructivism, on the contrary, leaves this domestic analogy and claims that human nature is not a determinant of actors' behavior in IR. Instead of human nature, it focuses on human consciousness and believes that the social world is a world of human consciousness; of thoughts and beliefs, of ideas and concepts, of languages and discourses. The social world is an intersubjective domain: it is meaningful to people who

¹⁷ Gus Martin, *The New Era of Terrorism*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2004

¹⁸ Paul Wilkinson and Alasdair M. Stewart, *Contemporary Research on Terrorism*, Aberdeen, UK: University of Aberdeen Press, (eds.-1987)

made it and live in it, and who understand is precisely because they made it and they are at home in it¹⁹. Rather than being a “given” in the real world, terrorism is interpretation of events²⁰ and its meaning varies depending on the context and cultural resources.²¹ Therefore, neither terrorism nor state nature can be explained with human nature.

Realism makes judgements on how evil human nature explains actors’ behavior and liberalism falls into same trap by arguing that peaceful human nature explains actors’ behavior in IR. Because they consider the state as main and key actor to be analyzed, they do not offer sufficient explanations in terrorism which is a non-state actor. The violent attacks of terrorism and counter measures of states do not fit in peaceful human nature of liberalism and its reflections on actors’ behavior. Existing in a subjective understanding, terrorism necessitates human institutions, which is reminded by constructivism.²² The paradox of domestic analogy with human being and not considering an individual level analysis, the blind focus of realism’s state level analysis also brings questions when one needs to study sub-state terrorism.

It is important to note the dichotomy between terrorism and democracy where terrorism exploits democratic institutions and liberal values. The first image liberalism defends the idea that democracies give priority to individual freedom and liberal states are less prone to war. On the contrary, democracies which are supposed to affirm the liberal theory of IR in terms of peaceful nature have a strong tendency to war when it is fight against terrorism.²³ Even the democratic peace idea²⁴ of war causing waste of economic resources can easily be ignored when democratic states spend great amount of economic resources in order to fight against terrorism. Therefore, violence orientation of terrorism challenges the peaceful state assumption where this state centric understanding of liberalism fails to explain relations between terrorism and state actor. Rapoport’s fourth wave (2004) terrorism which is labelled as religious wave is also not happy with democracy itself because this wave sees democracy as a product of western capitalism which is a threat to religion.

¹⁹ Richard Jackson and Georg Sorensen, *Introduction to International Relations. Theories and Approaches*, 3rd ed. Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 68.

²⁰ Ben N. Yehuda, *Political Assassinations by Jews*, Albany: State Univ., New York Press, 1993

²¹ Jacob L. Stump, L, The Artful Side of the Terrorism Discourse: A Response to Hulsse & Spencer, *Security Dialogue*. 40, 2009, p661

²² John Searle, *The Social Construction of Reality*, New York: Free Press, 1995

²³ Tim Dunne, *Liberalism, International Terrorism, and Democratic Wars*, SAGE Publications Vol 23(1), Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore and Washington DC, 2009, p107

²⁴ For further discussion on Democratic Peace idea and War-likeness of democracies, please see Thomas Risse, Democratic Peace — Warlike Democracies?: A Social Constructivist Interpretation of the Liberal Argument, *European Journal of International Relations*, December 1, 1995, pp 491-517

Both sub-state terrorism and transnational terrorism challenges the sovereign state centric understanding which is defined by Weber²⁵ as “state has monopolistic legitimacy in using collective violence”. Lizardo²⁶ argues that state does not recognize terrorism as a legitimate partner in using violence however terrorism strongly challenges it by using mass global media sources and organizational tactics with violent attacks. Here, there is a need to make a clear distinction on rationality understanding and how constructivism becomes a better tool to explain the rationality of terrorism. Unlike realism and liberalism, constructivism takes rationality as constructed based on norms, values and identities of states which can also change in time and context. Likewise, transnational terrorism constructs its rationality both by considering its organizational culture created by its identity and norms and by responses of states in their interaction. A state centric understanding explains terrorism as a sophisticated and intolerable evil actor outside from the system²⁷ therefore this understanding approaches to the relations in only consistent counter terrorist measures for the survival of state. Realist theory, looking always from the perspective of state, is trapped in its state centric biased understanding²⁸ which in return makes realism to see terrorism as only counter terrorism. That is to say, realists understanding on terrorism study focus mainly on counter terrorism for the sake of state survival.²⁹ Even Mearsheimer³⁰ notes that realism has very little to say about terrorism due to its focus on relations among states.

The rationality of state centric assumptions fails to evaluate the different type of relations between different states and different transnational terrorist organizations. Realist rationality, for example, assumes that two actors (states) with same material capacity and material interest acts in the same way. This assumption contradicts with different responses of UK and Germany against terrorism³¹ which can only be explained by non-material rationality. Besides, states do not always act rationally due to their constructed cultures and norms. For instance, considering the conflicts between Turkey and Syria, it might be seen

²⁵ Mitropolitski, “Weber’s Definition of the State as an Ethnographic Tool for Understanding the Contemporary Political Science State of the Discipline”p1

²⁶ Omar Lizardo, Defining And Theorizing Terrorism: A Global Actor-Centered Approach, *Journal of World-Systems Research, Volume XIV, Number 2*, 2008, p4

²⁷ Randi L. Buros, Realism vs. Liberalism in the Development of Counterterrorism Strategy, *Small Wars Journals*, 2011

²⁸ Richard Jackson, The Study of Terrorism 10 Years After 9/11: Successes, Issues, Challenges, *Uluslararası İlişkiler, Volume 8, No 32*, 2012, p11

²⁹ Martha Crenshaw, Terrorism Research: The Record, *International Interactions, 40:4*, 2014, p562

³⁰ Herry Kreisler, The Problem of Terrorism: John Mearsheimer Interview, *Conversations with History; Institute of International Studies*, UC Berkeley, 2002

³¹ Peter. J. Katzenstein, Same War—Different Views: Germany, Japan, and Counterterrorism, *International Organization*.57, 2003

rational for a realist Turkey to cooperate with PYD in Syria however constructed values of Turkey do not let this rational decision.

It is noteworthy to argue that there is an obvious asymmetry between rationality of states and transnational terrorism in terms of their organizational culture which creates an ontology problem. The so called legitimate use of violence against sub-state terrorism no matter the individuals of terrorist organization are state's own citizens, is seen rational by state in order to sustain sovereignty where terrorism operates violent attacks in order to create fear and challenge this legitimacy. Moreover, state's use of violence is manipulated by terrorism as a propaganda method for strengthening the solidarity and recruit new members by showing the "unjust monopoly" of state's aggression³² which is a constructed rationality different than state rationality.

To conclude, the black-box state understanding of realism and peaceful democratic acquisition of liberalism are challenged by sub-national and transnational terrorism in the era of globalization. The word "terror" which means to fear and frighten gives an insight that terrorism does not include a peaceful and malleable human nature. Terrorism's use of violence against civilians for the sake of political goals cannot be explained by liberalism and its toleration and civility. An individual level of analysis without making domestic analogy between human nature and actors' rationality is a better way to conceptualize terrorism study which is to be studied from the perspectives of both actors rather than the sole perspective of state. Thus, more focus on the role of domestic politics, non-monolithic evaluation of state with its sub-actors and interpretation of values and norms can give IR scholars much clear vision in studying terrorism and its relations with states.

3.2. Power, Interest and Security

Who decides to be a terrorist? Why does terrorism continue to evolve and develop no matter the hardest measures are taken by states? Answers to these two fundamental questions explain the understanding of power, interest and security for transnational terrorism and state actors. In contrast to Morgenthau's (1948) argument that states try to maximize power for their self-interest and his assumption that maximizing power can be achieved by increasing military power with material capabilities, constructivist theory focuses on non-

³² Galula, "Counterinsurgency Warfare, Theory and Practice"

material interest.³³ When it is terrorism study, material interest is almost meaningless compared to identity, religion or ideology. Rapoport's (2004) four wave definition of terrorism classifies terrorism waves according to their unique characteristics however it is always unequal distribution of resources, lack of social justice and exclusion of people because of their identity as three main common points for all waves. Keeping in mind how these non-material values shapes identity and rationality, Realist School's "Raison d'État" does not explain the non-material constructed interest of transnational terrorism like religion, social rights and identity. Fallacy of realism for explaining all actions within the system by power capabilities ignores different organizational cultures of transnational terrorism which are shaped by their own interest and identity.

An unchanging self-interest of maximizing the power and protecting the territory may sometimes be a weakness of rationality understanding in realism. In contrast, constructivism claims that there is no given interest of the states such as ensuring security. Instead, they are shaped in time and context. It makes sense when we look at the relations between states and terrorism. Schmid³⁴ argues that a terrorist is not always a terrorist where the history has witnessed Yassir Arafat, Nelson Mandela, Sean McBride and Menachim Begin won Nobel Prizes and even became President as being former "terrorists".³⁵ As constructivism argues, interest of states and terrorism changes in time and context (*zeitgeist*), therefore an actor which is labelled as terrorist today according to today's interest of state can easily be promoted to another label in tomorrow's changing interest. That is to say, social construction of the terrorism is so relative and changing upon the interest of a specific state in time and circumstances. We have to admit that the realist understanding of self-interest seems plausible if this change in labelling happens due to self-interest of states, however it fails when it starts to explain this self-interest by only material power capabilities. Changing nature of interest is shaped by the changing perception on threat because as Wendt³⁶ argues they are not given but constructed.

It is important to mention the power capability understanding of transnational terrorism. The key assumption of realism that the power is measured by material capabilities especially with

³³ Marc Lynch, IR: Constructivism v. Rationalism, *Online. Weblog: Abu Aardvark*, 2005, URL: http://abuaardvark.typepad.com/abuaardvark/2005/07/ir_constructivi.html. Accessed 28/12/2015

³⁴ Schmid, "Frameworks for conceptualizing terrorism" p205

³⁵ Joseba Zulaika and William Douglass, *Terror and Taboo. The Follies, Fables and Faces of Terrorism*, New York, NY: Routledge, 1996

³⁶ Alexander Wendt, Anarchy is what States make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics, *International Organization*, 46(2), 1992, p391-425

military capacity seems insufficient in explaining the asymmetric power play between states and transnational terrorism. A home-made explosive, for instance, can easily bring a big power capacity to a transnational terrorist organization if it is exploded in the right place and right time with a right target. Hundreds of tanks, aircrafts and SAM's (Surface to Air Missile) of a state may not bring a gain in power play if it is used against transnational terrorism. Military response of a state in its relations with terrorism is seen like a sword with two sharp edges. Rübbelke³⁷ argues that individual support for terrorism diminishes if there is intense negative response to their activities with counter military measures of state authorities. However, considering Galula (1964) and his argument on how terrorism uses intense military responses of states as propaganda methods, transnational terrorism can convince more and more individuals to be suicide bombers which directly changes power balance. This also necessitates an individual level of analysis as constructivism favors in order to understand the concept of power in state and terrorism interaction.

A last but not least point about the concept of self-interest should be evaluated in terms of liberal understanding. Liberalism claims that the desire for prosperity and thanks to the liberal values and democracy, actors (states) also consider financial and economic gains in addition to political gains which maximizes self-interest. Here the interest of transnational and sub-national terrorism is attaining political goal which is acquired through rationally calculated violent attacks. The soft politics with economic and financial gains are not political goals of terrorism which also contradicts with liberal claim that economic and financial consideration brings the desire for prosperity. Besides, democracy itself is one of the main targets of transnational terrorism. The fourth wave of religion oriented transnational terrorism benefits from the institutions and liberal orientation of democracy in order to develop and exploit non-material sources (openness, free speech, demonstrations, etc.) on the one hand and targets the democratic institutions of Western Society by accusing them as being "Big Evil" to be attacked on the other hand. Al Qaida attacks on World Trade Center, for example, was justified by transnational terrorism as a target to be destroyed in order to represent the hatred against western institutions which are claimed to be the enemies of Muslim society. In addition, this violent attack also triggered military counter measures taken by USA focusing on hard power and USA also put the liberal values aside by also constraining

³⁷ Dirk T. G. Rübbelke, Differing Motivations for Terrorism, *Defense and Peace Economics*, 16:1,2005, p21

the democratic rights of its own citizens when it is about state security³⁸. This construction of self-interest and reshaping it according to new threats is consistent with constructivist approach in terms of its changing nature together with interaction of those state and non-state actors.³⁹

There is a need to also evaluate the liberal understanding that terrorists are mainly from those groups which are economically poor and less educated, therefore soft politics are better tools for curbing transnational terrorism. For example, according to liberal approach, Europe should play its main role on the civilian side of conflict resolution.⁴⁰ This argument might be true for sub-state terrorism such as PKK whose organizational culture is constructed with economic inequalities and identity.⁴¹ However, transnational terrorist organizations like Al-Qaeda may not follow the same pattern and majority of Al Qaeda members belong to middle or upper classes⁴² and more than 60 % of Palestinian suicide bombers have at least high school education.⁴³

Does more military capacity bring more security for states? Is it plausible to increase military capacity for the sake of protection of sovereign territory in the age of transnational terrorism? It is important to start with the argument that terrorism holds state and its security understanding responsible for creating the insecurity. Globalization process puts a big problem in front of states that they can no longer protect economically disadvantaged citizens because terrorist groups increase the awareness of poor people on economic and social inequality by using the global media sources.⁴⁴ This in return, makes the security measures and military capacity questionable in terms of the budgets spent on them rather than spending the same budget for economically disadvantaged groups. Being aware of Booth's⁴⁵ note that the number of citizens killed by their own state under the name of security is sometimes much more than the number killed by its rivals⁴⁶, transnational terrorism finds

³⁸ Considering September 11 attack of Al-Qaeda, it might be seen as an attack of revitalization of the members and marginalization of supporters by exploiting intense response of US government (Rinehart, 2007).

³⁹ Peter Katzenstein, *Coping with Terrorism: Norms and Internal Security in Germany and Japan*, in *Ideas and Foreign Policy Beliefs, Institutions and Political Change*, edited by Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Koehane. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993

⁴⁰ Richard Youngs, *The EU's Role in World Politics: A retreat from liberal internationalism*, Routledge: New York, 2010, p79

⁴¹ Nihat Ozcan and Erdem Gurkaynak, *Who are Those Armed People in Mountains*, *Turkish Economic and Political Research Foundation*, 2012

⁴² Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004

⁴³ Claude Berrebi, *Evidence about the Link Between Education, Poverty and Terrorism Among Palestinians*, *Peace, Economics, Peace Science and Public Policy*, Vol 13(1), 2007

⁴⁴ Ekkart Zimmermann, *Globalization and Terrorism*, *European Journal of Political Economy* 27 011, 2011 p158

⁴⁵ Ken Booth, *Security and Emancipation*, *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Oct, 1991), p 318

⁴⁶ Suter (2005) calls this as state terrorism. It is noteworthy to mention that the word "terror" is first used to mention state terrorism in French Revolution (Nunberg, 2001). Please see also Chomsky (2002) for further discussion on Ken Booth's note.

suitable ground for its own propaganda in order to legitimize its violent attacks against state authorities. Therefore, constructivist argument that security can not only achieved through military capacity and the need for more explanation on rationality constructed on non-material factors opens a much clear vision for IR scholars. Here, there is an unanswered question for realism and liberalism about why terrorist organizations do not equip SAMs, tanks or mass weapons for increasing power capacity although they have enough economic sources. Rationality of transnational terrorism is constructed by organizational culture with a consistent focus on deciding appropriate amount of violence and staying covert⁴⁷ and works different than the rationality of states mentioned in traditional IR Theories. Constructivism, in contrast, rejects static determinants of traditional theories and stresses volatile nature of global political reality⁴⁸. Looking from this perspective, changing global political reality gives one opportunity and creates one problem to transnational terrorism. The opportunity is, suicide bombing and some new trend violent attacks finds more space in global media and brings more political gain however using SAMs and tanks generates a resemblance between terrorism and state which terrorism fights against⁴⁹. On the other hand, problem with using SAMs and tanks arises from the fact that it is not easy for transnational terrorism to equip these kinds of arms due to ethical reasons for states. Origins of these kinds of arms can easily be detected and the universal morality for states not officially supporting terrorism prevents states to sell these arms, even though Morgenthau (1948) claims that there is no universal morality.

This dilemma between universal morality and self-interest brings another discussion which can be evaluated by analyzing the concepts of cooperation, change and system. The following part focuses on different explanations of IR Theories for these concepts and seeks for a better understanding.

3.3. Cooperation, Change and System

In Operation Desert Storm in 1991, a big coalition under USA leadership was formed to fight against Iraq. After this Gulf crisis, USA giving visa to Gerry Adams⁵⁰, European States not willing to support US sanctions against Qaddafi and many other policies of Desert Storm

⁴⁷ Jacob Shapiro, *The Terrorist's Dilemma: Managing Violent Covert Organizations*, Princeton University Press, 2013, p5

⁴⁸ Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It", p393

⁴⁹ Terrorism is fighting against state authorities and using the same military tools with state creates a problem of justification for motivation of terrorism.

⁵⁰ The head of IRA's political wing.

Coalition showed that level of cooperation against terrorism was declining sharply.⁵¹ After 9/11 attacks of Al Qaeda, a global war against terrorism is declared and pioneered by USA which wanted to re-establish the solid cooperation in Iraq Operation. These actions of state actors bring the question on whether a state cooperation against terrorism is possible or not. This question is tried to be answered with different IR Theories within their key assumptions.

Transnational terrorism is difficult to study without an assumption on possibility of cooperation. Not only do states cooperate against terrorism, but also different terrorist groups may also cooperate against state actors. Different terrorist groups declaring war against developed states under the name of fight against capitalism, or declaring war against USA under the name of fight for religion or identity seems difficult to be explained by realist theory of self-interest. For realism, states follow their self-interest and this does not allow cooperation with the help of international institutions where the system is anarchy.⁵² Neo-realism also supports this anarchic system understanding of nonexistence for a central authority to enforce rules, which finally brings the possibility of change only with war. Then, how and why states cooperate when it is war against terrorism? States are calling international organizations such as NATO and UN for an international war against terrorism. United States, instead of acting like a hegemon and waiting others bandwagoning, is asking for UN or NATO support for a coalition against terrorism and this brings a problem with realist school argument that nation states do not consider international regimes in following their self-interest. Here, states not only cooperate to protect their sovereign territories as realists argue, but also join international cooperation against non-state actors such as in the case that Japanese troops went to Iraq, in 2004, in order to support the US in its war against terrorism.

The possibility of cooperation among states when the rival is terrorism is a big challenge to realism however a bigger challenge lies behind the lack of cooperation between states and terrorist groups. A rational state with self-interest may easily find it rational to cooperate with a terrorist group which challenges a rival state. However, this cooperation does not happen, at least not officially⁵³ because of the immoral and unethical understanding of cooperating with terrorism. This problem of acting within the universal morality about terrorism forces states to refrain from official cooperation with terrorism.

⁵¹ Paul Wilkinson, *Terrorism versus Democracy: The Liberal State Response*, Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2006, p166

⁵² Christopher Layne, *The War on Terrorism and the Balance of Power: The Paradoxes of American Hegemony*, in Paul, Wirtz and Fortmann, eds. *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21st Century*, Stanford University Press, 2004, p104

⁵³ Although states do not officially cooperate with terrorist groups, Hoffman (2006) mentions the unofficial support of states for terrorism in order to gain relative power compared to rival states, which he calls as state sponsored terrorism.

The word terrorism is a political judgement of legitimacy of an actor and its actions.⁵⁴ By this, same group can easily be labeled as freedom fighter, guerilla, terrorist or insurgent by different states which in return justify the constructivist theory for terrorism study. Wilkinson (2006) calls US declaring 1990s' Iran and Syria as pro-terrorist states because of their support for groups which are labelled as "terrorist" by US. Cooperation against terrorism does not easily occur because the subjectivity in definitions of terrorism brings the dilemma of terrorist vs freedom fighter idea which is constructed in time. This, in return, weakens the possibility of international cooperation due to change of terrorist understanding in time and context. US declaration on fight against ISIL with the help of international institutions or US operations in Afghanistan for the sake of fight against Al-Qaida are two examples that international institutions are not enough to legitimize this political judgement. A constructivist scholar can easily explain these situations with two arguments. The first argument is because Iran, Syria and those groups labelled as "terrorist" by US share the same values, identities and religious understanding which in return shape their self-interest apart from material components, they do not choose to cooperate with US. The second argument is that also the material interests can change over time and context where US can easily have good relations and decide to remove "pro-terrorist state" label on Iran and Syria which also can be seen as a reason for the lack of cooperation between states against terrorism. Likewise, considering Osama Bin Laden and his relations with US in Afghanistan against Soviet invasion, yesterday's ally can easily be today's terrorist depending on the changing understanding of constructed self-interest.

What about the liberal assumptions on cooperation? Can we talk about official financial and economic cooperation between states and terrorism as non-state actor with the help of democratic institutions? Does liberal values and democracy help actors for cooperation? Because state-centric assumptions of liberalism focus on cooperation among states, transnational terrorism or sub-state terrorism is out of scope in terms of their possible cooperation with state actors. States as being main peaceful actors of liberalism sometimes covertly support transnational terrorism in another state's territory in order to gain relative power because waging a war is much more costly than supporting terrorism.⁵⁵ This covert

⁵⁴ Richard Jackson, The core commitments of critical terrorism studies, *European Consortium for Political Research*, 1680-4333/07, 2007, p247

⁵⁵ Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, Columbia University Press, 2006, p258

support on the one hand and attempts for international cooperation against terrorism on the other hand brings a question: Is there something wrong with the system?

Unitary understanding of state as being a main and major actor assumption of realism has been challenged several times since 1970s. Transnational terrorism as being the final challenger for today brings a big question on the table, which is about interaction change and systemic change. Counter terrorist measures of states change according to the organizational culture of transnational terrorism. It can be hard power politics with military measures or soft power politics with judiciary measures of exploiting the democratic values for the sake of state. UK, after fighting against IRA for more than 30 years for instance, started peaceful negotiations with IRA after 1997 due to the changing nature of time and interests. Realist theory has to carry a burden of its understanding for maintaining order with balance of power and neo-realist assumption of anarchic structure which is given when explaining terrorism and state relations. In the era of global terrorism with too many different motivations and organizational cultures, it is not easy to consider terrorist organizations to follow balance of power which is a form of state behavior.⁵⁶ Instead, the nature of terrorism continuously changes the interaction with states and system itself as constructivism argues. In fact, if the thoughts and ideas that enter into the existence of international relations change, then the system itself changes as well. As Wendt (1992) posits, "Anarchy is what states make of it".

It is important to mention the assumptions of neo-liberalism on change and whether these assumptions fill the gap in terrorism study or not. The most well-known writings of Robert Keohane explain his assumptions about the possibility of cooperation in the absence of a hegemon and a peaceful change in international system can occur thanks to the international institutions.⁵⁷ He argues that actions of separate individuals or organizations can be brought into conformity with the help of negotiation and this does not necessitate existence of a hegemon once international institutions are established. Considering the different counter terrorist measures of different states and the call of US to declare an international war on terrorism, this cooperation with or without a hegemon has failed where constructed ideas of states about terrorism varies. At the end of the day, using global media and informing

⁵⁶ Layne, "The War on Terrorism and the Balance of Power: The Paradoxes of American Hegemony " p107

⁵⁷ Robert Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*, Princeton University Press, 1984 and Robert Keohane, *Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond Neorealism and its Critics*, Columbia University Press, 1986

transnational networks help terrorism where coordination between states is not effective due to mismatches of relative rational interests of those states⁵⁸.

Lastly, neo-liberal understanding of the possibility for peaceful change with the help of international institutions is problematic when scholars need to study terrorism because the violent nature of terrorism does not give evidence on peaceful change even in the existence international institutions. International institutions, indeed, are seen as main targets for the fourth wave religious terrorism. Considering the Al-Qaida attack to World Trade Center in 9/11, terrorism claims that the main reason for poverty is a product of international institutions itself. Brasset⁵⁹ quotes the speech of Tony Blair after the bombing where Blair tells that he couldn't understand this violent attack happening at the time they met to find solutions for ending poverty in Africa. Even that speech of Blair alone shows how rationality of states and terrorism are different.

To sum up, different responses of different states to transnational terrorism are shaped by changing nature of interest and constructivism firmly believes that international cooperation on war against terrorism is deeply infused with cultural understandings of the social world which explains different actions of states for terrorism when it is inside the borders and abroad.

4. FURTHER DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS

Terrorism is a complex study with its many variables that define the nature of it. Different motivations, different organizational cultures and different rationalities make each terrorist group unique in terms of its behavior. A multidisciplinary approach with economic, sociological, psychological and political support is highly needed in order to understand the complex relations between states and terrorism as a challenging non-state actor. Unlike the monolithic understanding of traditional IR theories on state and their black box presumption, constructivism has an advantage with its multidisciplinary understanding. On the other hand, constructivism has also some predicaments in explaining terrorism, due to its complex nature. Unlike state with its official, legal and legitimate transparency, there are too many unknowns in terrorism because of its covert nature.

⁵⁸ According to Hoffman (2006:304), even terrorist organizations have not taken coordinated operations and coordination between terrorist organizations does not occur for unknown reasons.

⁵⁹ James Brasset, *Cosmopolitanism vs Terrorism? Discourses of Ethical Possibility Before and After 7/7*, University of Warwick, Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation (CSGR) Working Paper 252/08, 2008

Constructivism is good at explaining the past events rather than anticipating the future.⁶⁰ Buzan⁶¹ argues that constructivism does not offer a picture of today's world but it is good at enquiring into the process of human understanding in terms of social construction of ideas. A more focus on the role of ideas in behavioral patterns of terrorism should be given so that future anticipations can be done better. We have to admit that, a deep sociological look is needed to understand those behavioral patterns and psychological analysis at individual level to capture the motivations of people who are fighting against the black box of state. However, the focus of this paper is comparative analysis of IR Theories on terrorism and this deep evaluation of sociology and psychology makes it more behavioral analysis oriented. That is why sociological evaluation is benefitted only in understanding how terrorism shapes the behavior of states and gains a state-like power although it does not have the characteristics and physical or institutional assets of statehood.

Terrorist networks pass through the state control and share their identity transnationally thanks to the globalization. This shared identity creates a new relation type which is the interaction between terrorism and diaspora in national borders. Therefore, this study is expected to give more space to terrorist vs terrorist relations, terrorist vs yesterday's terrorist but today's state relations and diaspora vs terrorism relations. This, however, necessitates a broader understanding on non-state actors other than terrorism and in return it results in losing focus on realist and liberal criticism which is also a second key point of this paper.

Another point not studied here is the new wave terrorism's attempts to turn to being state. ISIL, for instance, is coining money on behalf of its leader which is a sign for being a state. Besides, its name also includes the word "state" and it has a territorial understanding. Realism is highly interested in why transnational terrorism is trying to be like nation states. Even terrorism sees rationality in being state with its territorial sovereignty. Although that brings an advantage to realism, the idea that the vision of terrorist groups is only limited to being like a state, not more than this.

⁶⁰ Stephen Walt, International Relations: One World, Many Theories, *Foreign Policy*, No. 110, Special Edition: *Frontiers of Knowledge*, 1998

⁶¹ Barry Buzan, The Implications of September 11 for the Study of International Relations, *Draft manuscript, conference on the 'Research Agenda in International Politics in the Aftermath of September 11th.'*, 2002

5. CONCLUSION

Terrorism is not a new concept to International Relations scholars in terms of its use of organized collective violence against state and ordinary citizens. What makes 21st century's terrorism new and unique is its access to global financial, economic and technological tools with globalization. Therefore, a non-state actor which is able to access state instruments in power politics makes terrorism study more complex and problematic. While state-centric traditional IR Theories seem to have several weaknesses in explaining state and terrorism relations, constructivism, with its arguments on priority of persuasion, identity and social construction on material power and economic rationality, fits better in explaining many issues about terrorism study. Thinking about the changing nature of self-interest with its non-material determinants, the role of identity in defining actors and the problems in cooperation and coordination faced by traditional theories, constructivism seems a better-developed theoretical lens in terms of explaining global terrorism and its impact on changing state behavior.

Thanks to its multidisciplinary approach with sociological⁶² and psychological support, constructivism helps scholars to understand how different state and non-state actors define themselves in constructed identities and how these constructed identities decides the actions and legitimizes them.

Because terrorism has too many different variables in different levels of analysis in terms of its organizational culture, individual motivations and international aspects, it would be too ambitious to see constructivism as a skeleton key which opens all locked doors in explaining terrorism. A historical and sociological approach can be well benefitted in explaining some aspects of terrorism, too. Nevertheless, it is still seen in this paper that constructivism fills many gaps compared to other traditional IR Theories when terrorism is studied.

⁶² Nicholas Onuf, Making Terror/ism, *International Relations* 23(1),2009, p54

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