

MANIPULATION OF THE TERM «TERRORISM» *

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The purpose of this article is to analyze how world leaders manipulate the concept of terrorism to justify their actions in the context of politics and diplomacy. Through the strategic use of language, politicians and diplomats shape public perceptions and gain support for their military operations. By using language associated with fighting terrorism and protecting civilians, leaders position themselves within a moral framework that does not allow the international community to question or condemn their actions.

The article also addresses the problem of evolving vocabulary of terrorism, including new forms such as "energy terrorism", "environmental terrorism", etc., that enable countries to organize actions under the guise of terrorism. To conduct the analysis, we applied qualitative research, case study and textual analysis of empirical research methodology. After the study of the article, it was concluded that the term "terrorism" serves as a powerful tool to shape public opinion and justify state actions by hindering the effective fight against terrorism. It is a means to legitimize politically motivated violent activities and to escape responsibilities in the diplomatic-political arena.

Key words: manipulation, diplomacy, language, terrorism, political, goals, justify, legitimize.

Introduction

Since the events of September 11, 2001, the term "terrorism" has been widely used in discussions of global security and politics. However, the term itself is often manipulated and used to serve agendas. The choice of language and rhetoric employed by both terrorists and politicians is crucial in shaping public opinion and obtaining support for their objectives. The purpose of this article is to investigate how nations employ the label "terrorism" as a means of evading responsibility, displacing it onto their adversaries, and creating narratives that favor them. From several case studies on political happenings in recent years, we examine the strategic use of terrorism as a framing device for politically motivated violent actions, to attract international sympathy as a base of justification for invasions. The interplay between terrorism and the language of power in this globalized world can be studied by investigating the dynamics of the evolving

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terrorism lexicon and linguistic strategies deployed to dominate. After all, the use of the words "terrorist" and "terrorism" as a weapon shapes political reality and is a powerful tool in justifying acts that might otherwise be questioned or condemned. It highlights the power of language.

Manipulating the Term of Terrorism

Being in the center of politics and diplomacy, world leaders frequently manipulate the concept of terrorism which is becoming more and more actual in modern politics. This means that the language and event-oriented texts of both terrorists and political and diplomatic figures are aimed at justifying and legitimizing their actions or vice versa. Wardlaw G. mentions that more powerful groups encourage perceptions by manipulation the information (Wardlaw 5).

As Hewer and Taylor mention in their article 'terrorism' becomes an indicator that is used to distinguish legitimate and non-legitimate politically motivated violence'.

It is mentioned that *'it is a linguistic tool that serves the interests of the state and those who wish to maintain the status quo and obscure the political import of the act' and it is a fight to legitimize or deny any kind of politically motivated violence, which is waged in front of media by specialists in political rhetoric* (Taylor 199-212).

States mainly manipulate the term to escape being labeled as a terrorist or to create preconditions to put responsibility on their adversaries and act based on their interests. Sometimes it is not necessary for a country to use the word 'terrorism' directly since there are other words that are associated with the phenomenon.

In 2013 after the suspected chemical weapon attack in Ghouta and other cities in Syria, the main message of Syria's acting president was that they were fighting against **terrorism** to defend **civilians**, in this way legitimizing the bombings of Syrian cities (Al-Assad 2016).

This example shows that political leaders through diplomatically and logically built speech show the innocence, reasonability, and inevitability of their steps.

In the diplomatic world words like the *fight against terrorism, protection of civilians, or their rights* hold great reputations and spread shadows on other concepts and give legit rights to the countries in their intentions. This means that actions carried out under the name of counterterrorism are justified and hold strong moral values.

In the case of the example given above, it can be said that the Syrian leader used it under the guise of protection to justify the events. However, the use of the term is not limited to that. It can be used for other motives as well. For example, when the Crimean Bridge was blown up during the Ukraine-Russia war (2022) Russia accused Ukraine of terrorism, partially Putin said *'There is no doubt, this is an act of **terrorism** aimed at destroying Russia's critical civilian infrastructure'* (Putin 2022).

The use of the word 'terrorism' by Putin was to complicate the ongoing events and give a more serious tone to the military-political events and create basis to accuse Ukraine in the latter.

Another example of this was the illegal trial and detention of Armenian servicemen in Azerbaijan after the 2021 May clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan when Armenian soldiers were fortifying an Armenian army post on the border with Azerbaijan. Having no legal bases to keep them in Azerbaijan, the Armenian-origin prisoners of war were labeled as terrorists to be sentenced. In this way, they legitimize illegal actions taken by the Azerbaijani government (Khachatryan 2022).

Linguistic exploitation of the terrorism concept leads to the realization of political decisions and the latter is a good base to launch politically motivated violent operations. It is best to use this tactic when a country is not being attacked by terrorists, but instead is

organizing something against their adversaries. In these cases, manipulating the term can help legitimize their actions and start the process.

A vivid example of the manipulation of the concept can be seen in Azerbaijan's military operation in the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh). Starting on September 19, 2023, Azerbaijan launched attacks on peaceful civilians in Nagorno-Karabakh, labeling these actions as 'anti-terror operations' (Kirby, 2023) after the nine months of blockade (UN, 2023). It is important to note that for over 25 years, Azerbaijan has been engaged in negotiations with Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh, and no international organization or country has ever reported the presence of terrorists, terror organizations, or terrorism in the disputed zone. These so-called 'anti-terror operations' resulted in forced displacement of the local population with clear signs of ethnic cleansing from the disputed zone to the Republic of Armenia (Wright, 2023).

No country recognized those actions as 'anti-terror operations', moreover The European Parliament adopted a resolution on this question strongly condemning Azerbaijani actions. (EP, 2023).

These examples demonstrate how political leaders strategically employ language to shape public perception, justify their actions, and legitimize their intentions. By utilizing terms associated with counterterrorism or protecting civilians, they can cloak their actions in a moral framework, making it more challenging for the international community to question or condemn their behavior.

Azerbaijan's use of the term '*anti-terror operation*' in the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, despite the absence of terrorism in the region, can be seen as a strategic choice aimed at shaping the narrative and garnering international support. By framing their military actions as counterterrorism operations, Azerbaijan sought to portray themselves as fighting against a common global threat and justify their aggression. Using the language of counterterrorism carries significant weight in the international community, as it invokes notions of security, self-defense, and the protection of civilians.

By labeling their actions as anti-terror operations, Azerbaijan aimed to gain sympathy and legitimacy for their military campaign, both domestically and internationally.

Another example is Israeli attack on refugee camps in southern Beirut. In 1982, Israeli officials said that there were approximately 2,000 terrorists in the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila in southern Beirut. Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Defense Minister Ariel Sharon ordered the invasion of Lebanon with the help of Phalange and massacred people under the name of counterterrorism actions (Jazeera, 2022).

Later, the Israeli side attacked Jenin Refugee Camp (2002) again claiming that they were fighting against terrorism, however during both attacks, Israel was unable to find all those terrorists which confirms the fact that political leaders via manipulating the term terrorism try reach their political goals. From this point of view, the concept of terrorism is very flexible and dangerous since the concept includes different types of crimes that can be used for different reasons and are easy to exploit linguistically.

On the other hand, the definition of terrorism is becoming increasingly complex as we encounter various forms of violent and aggressive actions that are labeled as terrorism leaving a door for the manipulation of the latter. The lack of the common definition of terrorism makes it even easier to manipulate it and the new emerging forms or names of terrorism give new possibilities to exploit the term.

Before the classical vocabulary of terrorism included words like *hijackings, hostage takings, kidnapping, mass shootings, car bombings, and suicide bombings*, however nowadays the common understanding and concept of terrorism have been given new names in recent decades, making it significantly more difficult to combat terrorism.

If before suicide bombing, hijacking of planes, or bombing of an embassy, metro, train, etc. were classical forms of terrorism, now we see that the concept of terrorism has

broadened having new types. The vocabulary of terrorism is not limited only to words such as terrorism, **suicide bombing**, or **hijacking**, etc. If before concepts like '**energy terrorism**' '**environmental terrorism**' '**hydro terrorism**' (Al-Marashi, 2005)', '**nuclear terrorism**' '**bioterrorism**'⁸, '**cyberterrorism**' '**chemical terrorism**' and other such kinds of denominations had no place in the terrorism vocabulary, nowadays we see them being used by diplomats and politicians as new forms of terrorism and this created additional possibilities for some countries to organize actions under the name of terrorism or to show deterioration of the events. When in October 2022 Russia attacked Ukraine's energy network, Ukraine's president Zelensky called it '**energy terrorism**' which was meant to say that Russia tried to terrorize the people of Ukraine leaving them without electricity in the winter season.

Zelensky in his speech addressed to the people said, '*The very fact that Russia is restoring to **energy terrorism** shows the weakness of the enemy*'. (Zelenski, 2022)

Qualifying such a phenomenon as terrorism shows that countries are very comfortable using the term against other countries. We should also try to understand the reason why countries use the word 'terrorism' so much and why they blame each other for terror actions, namely what makes them frightened so much. The reason is that in a world of international law and territorial integrity, for a country it is an extremely big issue to be accused of terrorism since it can have negative consequences in shaping their external policy and can have a huge impact on their international image and prosperity.

The linguistic manipulation in this context has 2 aspects:

1. To legitimize the actions
2. To justify the actions carried out by states.

The latter indicates that the concept of terrorism is used for political motives which is not a new fact. Many countries come across declaring they are fighting against terrorism, however, sometimes reality proves the opposite. The very fact that the concept of terrorism is manifold and complicated to define gives chances to other actors to use the term taking advantage of a linguistic and semantic gap between the latter. What we see and what we can say on this is that linguistic manipulation is not only aimed at the above-mentioned two goals but pursues many other goals among them to confuse the audience, distract them put forward their ideas, etc.

This is when we understand how powerful weaponizing the word '**terrorist**' or '**terrorism**' can be. The reason for that is when a person or group or state is labeled as terrorist and the fact that terrorism is intolerable, legitimates the other sides to respond to terrorist attacks or actions without being labeled terrorist.

Conclusion

The research suggests that:

- Political actors and diplomatic figures use terrorism as a tool to manipulate public opinion, provide reasons for actions, and legitimize decisions.
- Expanding the definition of terrorism allows states to justify their actions in fighting terrorists, portraying any conflict they involve themselves in as an act of heroism, which is not always the case.
- The term "terrorism" can be used by states against adversaries to engage in aggressive measures while pursuing political objectives, leading to accusations and

⁸ According to Cambridge Dictionary, Bioterrorism is a violent action using living matter, such as bacteria, to harm or kill people for political reasons.

counteraccusations. This suggests that labeling anything as terrorism can lead to countries attacking people based on mere suspicions, creating a cycle of endless war.

It is also concluded that governments use moralistic language and rhetoric to mask their actions, making it hard for the global community to question or denounce them causing the main problem unsolved which is to hold governments accountable for their violent actions.

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«ԱՅԱՔԵԿՉՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ» ԵԶՐՈՒՅԹԻ ՄԱՆԻՊՈՒԼՅԱՑԻԱՆ

ԱՆՈՒՇ ՄԱՐՏԻՐՈՍՅԱՆ

*Եվրասիա միջազգային համալսարանի օտար լեզուների և գրականության ամբիոնի ասպիրանտ և դասախոս,
ք. Երևան, Հայաստանի Հանրապետություն
Սանտյագո դե Կոմպոստելայի համալսարանի ասպիրանտ,
ք. Լոգո, Իսպանիա*

Սույն հոդվածի նպատակն է վերլուծել, թե ինչպես են համաշխարհային առաջնորդները շահարկում «ահաբեկչություն» հասկացությունը՝ արդարացնելու իրենց գործողությունները քաղաքական և դիվանագիտական համատեքստերում: Լեզվի ռազմավարական գործածության միջոցով քաղաքական գործիչներն ու դիվանագետները ձևավորում են հանրային ընկալումները և աջակցություն ստանում իրականացնելու իրենց ռազմական գործողությունները: Օգտագործելով ահաբեկչության դեմ պայքարի և խաղաղ բնակիչների պաշտպանությանն առնչվող լեզու՝ առաջնորդները դիրքավորվում են բարոյական շրջանակում, որը թույլ չի տալիս միջազգային հանրությանը կասկածի տակ դնելու կամ դատապարտելու նրանց գործողությունները:

Հոդվածը անդրադառնում է նաև ահաբեկչությանն առնչվող բառապաշարի զարգացման հիմնասխեմին՝ ներառյալ նորակազմությունները, ինչպիսիք են՝ «Էներգետիկ ահաբեկչություն», «բնապահպանական ահաբեկչություն» և այլն, որոնք հնարավորություն են տալիս երկրներին կազմակերպելու գործողություններ ահաբեկչության շղարշի ներքո: Վերլուծությունն իրականացնելու համար մենք կիրառել ենք որակական հետազոտություն, դեպքի ուսումնասիրություն և տեքստային վերլուծություն՝ Էմպիրիկ հետազոտության մեթոդաբանության հիման վրա: Կատարված ուսումնասիրությունից եզրակացվեց, որ «ահաբեկչություն» եզրույթը ծառայում է որպես հզոր գործիք հասարակական կարծիք ձևավորելու և ահաբեկչության դեմ արդյունավետ պայքարին խոչընդոտող պետական գործողություններն արդարացնելու համար:

Այն քաղաքական դրդապատճառներով բռնի գործունեությունը օրինականացնելու և դիվանագիտական-քաղաքական ասպարեզում պատասխանատվությունից խուսափելու միջոց է:

Հիմնաբառեր՝ մանիպուլյացիա, դիվանագիտություն, լեզու, ահաբեկչություն, քաղաքական, նպատակներ, արդարացնել, օրինականացնել:

МАНИПУЛЯЦИЯ ТЕРМИНОМ «ТЕРРОРИЗМ»

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Целью данной статьи является анализ того, как мировые лидеры манипулируют концепцией терроризма для оправдания своих действий в контексте политики и дипломатии. Посредством стратегического использования языка политики и дипломаты формируют общественное мнение и получают поддержку для проводимых ими военных операций. Используя язык (дискурс), связанный с борьбой с терроризмом и защитой гражданского населения, лидеры позиционируют себя в таких моральных рамках, которые не позволяют международному сообществу оспаривать или осуждать их действия.

Данная статья обращается также к проблеме меняющегося словаря терроризма, который включает в себя новые словоформы, такие, как «энергетический терроризм», «экологический терроризм» и т. д., которые позволяют странам организовывать военные операции под прикрытием борьбы с терроризмом. Для проведения анализа было использовано качественное исследование, кейс-стади и текстовый анализ на основе методологии эмпирического исследования. В результате исследования был сделан вывод о том, что термин «терроризм» служит мощным инструментом формирования общественного мнения и оправдания государственных действий, которые мешают эффективной борьбе с терроризмом.

Это – способ легитимизировать политически мотивированные насильственные действия и избежать ответственности на дипломатическо-политической арене.

Ключевые слова: *манипуляция, дипломатия, язык, терроризм, политические, цели, оправдание, легитимизация референдум.*