

EXPLAINING STATE DECISIONS TO LABEL VIOLENT GROUPS AS  
“TERRORISTS”

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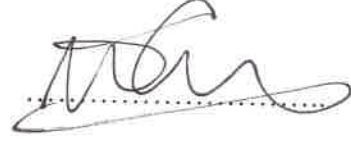
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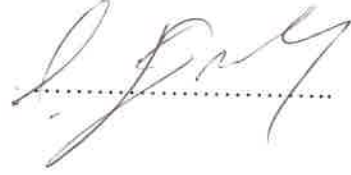
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## ABSTRACT

### EXPLAINING STATE DECISIONS TO LABEL VIOLENT GROUPS AS “TERRORISTS”

BUSE DİNGİLTEPE

M.A. Thesis, July 2018

Thesis Supervisor: Asst. Prof. Oya Yeğen

**Keywords:** Terrorism, Counter-Terrorism, Designated Terrorist Organizations, State Decisions

In this thesis, I argue that states and international organizations’ designations of violent groups as terrorist organizations vary depending on the characteristics of terrorist organizations themselves and the countries they target. I predict that the following group characteristics increase the chances of being labeled as a terrorist: inflicting a higher number of attacks, killing civilians, having a religious identity and beginning to operate after 1997, the year that the United States for the first time published a terrorist organizations list. I also hypothesize that the following target country characteristics influence a group’s label: regime type of the target state, geographical region of the target state, designator’s trade and alliance ties to the target state. To test these predictions, I compile a new dataset and conduct linear regression analysis on 528 terrorist groups from 1909 to 2017. I analyze the official “terrorist organization” lists of Australia, Canada, India, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States, Turkey, European Union and United Nations. My main finding is that a group’s religious identity, number of attacks and victims’ profile influence the decisions of all designator states. I also report a number of differences among different designator states and international organizations.

## ÖZET

### DEVLETLERİN ŞİDDET YANLISI GRUPLARI TERÖRİST OLARAK ADLETME KARARLARININ AÇIKLANMASI

BUSE DİNGİLTEPE

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Tez Danışmanı: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Oya Yeğen

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Terörizm, Terörle Mücadele, Belirlenmiş Terör Örgütleri, Devlet Kararları

Bu tezde devletlerin ve uluslararası organizasyonların şiddet yanlısı grupları terörist olarak adletmelerinin terör gruplarının ve hedef aldıkları ülkelerin karakteristiklerine bağlı olarak değiştiğini tartışmaktayım. Öngördüğüm kadarıyla, bir grubun terörist olarak adledilme ihtimalini yükselten karakteristikler şunlardır: yüksek saldırı sayısı, sivilleri öldürülmek, dini bir kimliğe sahip olmak ve faaliyet göstermeye Amerika Birleşik Devletlerinin ilk terör listeni yayınladığı 1997'den sonra başlamış olmak. Grubun ismini etkileyen hedef ülke karakteristiklerinin şunlar olduğunu varsaydım: hedef ülkenin yönetim şekli, hedef ülkenin coğrafik konumu, belirleyici devletin hedef ülke ile olan ittifak ve ticaret bağları. Bu öngörülerini ölçmek için yeni bir veri seti oluşturdum ve 1909 ve 2017 yılları arasındaki 528 terörist grup üzerine bir doğrusal regresyon analizi yürüttüm. Avusturalya, Kanada, Hindistan, Rusya, Birleşik Krallık, Birleşik Devletler, Türkiye, Avrupa Birliği ve Birleşmiş Milletler'in resmi terörist grup listesini inceledim. Ulaştığım esas sonuç; grubun dini kimliğinin, saldırı sayısının ve kurbanların profillerinin bütün belirleyici devletlerin kararlarını etkiliyor olduğudur. Ayrıca farklı belirleyici devletler ve uluslararası organizasyonlar arasındaki bir takım farklılıkları da raporladım.

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## INTRODUCTION

Terrorism is one of the most discussed global phenomena of our world today (Hiro, 2014). It is a problem that influences our lives and affects government's foreign policy choices. It also induces regulations of security forces and compels us to spend huge amount of time and money to protect ourselves from terrorists (Combs, 2012). The first modern terrorist activities which were recognized internationally, broke out with the Palestine Liberation Organization's attacks in 1969. Since the 1960s, the acts of terrorism have increased rapidly, and growing attention has been paid to terrorism (Hoffman, 1998; Kegley, 1990). After the Al-Qaida's attacks on September 11, 2001, attention and precaution against terrorism has been much more significant. In this time, international action was taken to deal with the problem of terrorism under the United Nations resolution of war on terror. In accordance with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373, all the member states were called to cooperate internationally and take counter-terrorism measurements (Combs, 2012).

Despite the growing interest, terrorism as a global term has not been clearly understood or defined (Kegley, 1990). What composes a terrorist action? Who is a terrorist? These are some of the most complex questions facing states nowadays (Holms & Burke, 1994). Laquer (1980) argues that no definition of terrorism can cover all varieties of terrorist actions that have occurred throughout history. Although there are varieties of possible definitions of terrorism that are being used, the most accepted usage of terrorism is significantly political and legal as well as security-oriented. It is also about the power; the pursuit of power, the acquisition of power and use of power (Combs, 2012; Hoffman, 1998). Among different definitions of terrorism there are some commonalities such as the killing of the innocent and giving material harm to reach certain aims such as freedom, human rights and democracy. However, because terrorism does not have an

agreed explanation, such prerequisites are also subject to debate (Sözübir, 2005). Therefore, providing an adequate and acceptable definition of terrorism be difficult but the nuance in the definition of terrorism are fundamental to fight against it. Because when terror is described clearly, states will be able to know their enemies and find solution to their problems.

As it is the case with providing a definition, designation of terrorism is also problematic. Designating a violent group formally as a “terrorist organization” requires more than a definition because in practice, it is a policy decision. Generally, states and international organizations play a major role in determining which groups are labeled as terrorist organization (World 101 from the Council on Foreign Relations, 2018). However, there is no general designation procedure accepted among the world community. The U.S. Department of State, for instance, declares its list of foreign terrorist organizations based on three criteria; the group must be foreign, it must engage in terrorism and it must threaten either the United States security or citizens (U.S Department of State, 2018). However, other states and international organizations differ in their designation process of terrorist organizations. According to European Union, the designation process for certain action or group includes initiation of investigation or prosecution for a terrorist act or an attempt to carry out or facilitate such an act and condemnation for any of those actions (Council of the European Union, 2017). When there are different types of designation process, each state identifies different groups as terrorist organizations.

In this thesis, I argue that group characteristics are an important factor in how states and international organizations label violent groups. More specifically, I propose that group characteristics such as the number of attacks that the group carried, its ideology, the first year of its attacks, the last year of its attacks, target country and target profiles matter. I also investigate if the level of democracy in target countries and whether alliance and trade relations between designator countries and target countries affect the designation process or not.

Previous studies on states’ and international organizations’ designation of terrorism are too narrow and compare only states and organizations such as the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union. An important contribution of my thesis is to explore this topic for a much broader set of designator states and international organizations. In this thesis, a series of analyses have been conducted to examine what are the factors that influence a state’s decision to designate a violent group as terrorist by analyzing the different characteristics of 528 groups and target

countries and international organizations namely Australia, Canada, India, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States, Turkey, European Union and United Nations.

The main findings confirm and extend previous research. Violent groups with a religious ideology and a higher number of attacks are more likely to be designated as a terrorist group. In terms of target countries, if violent groups attack the target countries located in the Middle East, the probability of their being labelled as terrorist is higher. However, the victim profiles of violent groups are not an important element as much as ideology. Besides, I present some preliminary evidence which shows that the first year a violent group operates as well as the regime of the target country are not significant for the classification of terrorism. Furthermore, I find that in contrast of the arguments of previous scholarly work, trade and alliance relations between the designator states and target countries do not produce a substantially important effect for the declaration of terrorist organizations lists.

The remainder of this thesis is organized as follows. The next section gives a brief review of the relevant literature. Thereafter, I present the theoretical argumentations and key hypotheses. The subsequent chapter describes the data sources, measurements and statistical models. The fifth chapter explains the main results of the analysis. The final chapter discusses some implications for further studies and concludes. The appendix shows the robustness checks.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **PREVIOUS LITERATURE ON TERRORISM**

This thesis contributes to the literature on counter-terrorism and specifically the issue of how states decide to label certain groups as “terrorist”.

#### **1.1 Terrorism as a Global Threat**

Terrorism is an inevitable global problem (Wilcox, 1997). The fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War did not yield the “End of History” as Francis Fukuyama had claimed or new prospects for peace and security as others did (Foreign Policy White Paper, 2017; Fukuyama, 1989; Wilcox, 1997). However, this shift created sharper focus for crucial threats such as terrorism for international community. Since after the Cold War, violent threats from terrorism have remained high and became more complex and far-reaching (Wilcox, 1997).

In the security literature, scholars have underlined that terrorism is the main security problem and a top inquiry to be addressed and eradicated by the states (Jackson & Gunning & Smyth, 2007). Wilcox (1997) and Wolfendale (2007) argue that terrorism threatens states in numerous ways and poses a greater threat than other forms of violence such as wars, massacres, invasions or criminal activities. Although terrorism kills relatively fewer people when compared to other security problems and the statistical probability of someone getting killed by a terrorist group is extremely low, states take prioritize combatting terrorism because terrorism provokes deeper fear and insecurity- more than other types of violence. Terrorist groups weaken a state’s security by creating panic and fear to demonstrate its incapability to protect its citizens. While majority of citizens claim that they can protect themselves against various form of violence, they feel defenseless against terrorist attacks (Wilcox, 1997). When the Pew Research Center (2007) asked in forty-

seven states how fundamental the problem of terrorism is, sixteen states responded that it was a big problem, fifteen states said it was a moderately big problem and only thirteen states said it was a minor problem or not a problem at all. In total, 41% of all respondents said that terrorism was a crucial problem in their states while 23% said that it was at least a moderately big problem and only 14% percent said it was not a problem at all. Therefore, these results display that there is a high-level of concern about terrorism among different states (Council on Foreign Relations, 2009).

## **1.2 Counter-terrorism and State's Perceptions about Terrorism**

Literature on the counter-terrorism has been expanding because within a decade, the number of states that started to take counter-terrorism measures increased. Counter-terrorism includes the practice, military tactics, several techniques and strategies that governments use to combat or prevent terrorism (Masferrer & Walker, 2013). Especially, after the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States in 2001, concerns about the counter-terrorism raise in global scale and a new approach coined as War on Terror, also known as the Global War on Terrorism, which mainly refers to the military campaign launched by the Bush Administration is followed by various states and international organizations (Ambinder, 2010; Schmitt & Shanker, 2005). Likewise, the United Nations counter-terrorism official said that:

*“There is no doubt that the threat from terrorism remains persistent and, unfortunately, credible, as demonstrated in many places... A country cannot, and is not in the position, to fight this phenomenon alone.”* Jean-Paul Laborde, Executive Director of the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive (UN News, 2016)

Counter-terrorism is important both in the academic literature and among policymakers because the concept of terrorism includes the main element of violence which is a certain threat for the states' national interest (Honderich 2006; Sözübir 2005). Although the elements of terrorism such as used tactics, threat level and victim and target differentiaon, are evoked in order to explain the concept, the violence component is the most fundamental element that is employed by states to classify terrorism (Schmid, 1988). According to Hoffman (1998) and Honderich (2006), terrorism is a type of violence or a threat which targets people. However, the term of terrorism does not include the lawful violence of police and soldiers and does not include national

acts. Therefore, terrorism is accepted as a violence by the national or international law and these make terrorism illegal by the definition and action which threaten national security (Hoffman 1998; Honderich 2006; Miller, 2009). According to Prabhakaran (2008) and Room (1993), having a strong national security means being independent from foreign dictations and ability to use state capacity to overcome security threats to maintain the well-being of its citizens. Therefore, it is essential to use state capacity when a state encounters a terrorism threat. Likewise, the realist literature asserts that states use its hard power to serve their national interest (Viotti & Kauppi, 1987). Joint cooperation against terrorism is not novel for states since the threat affects not only citizens of targeted countries but also humanity and international peace.

Since the counter-terrorism actions have been launched, many states such as Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom and Germany have introduced radical legislations and responses to terrorism (Schrijver, 2015; Wolfendale, 2007). Specifically, states have promulgated new legislations to define terrorism and provided their respective reasoning in legislations for why they it is imperative to respond to terrorist actions. For instance, according to German Federal Republic: *“Terrorism is the enduringly conducted struggle for political goals which are intended to be achieved by means of assaults on the life and property of other persons, especially by means of severe crimes as detailed in art. 129a of the penal code.”*. The United Kingdom declares that *“For purpose of the legislation, terrorism is the use of violence for political ends and includes any use of violence for the purpose of putting the public or any section of the public in fear.”*. In addition, as the United States claims terrorism is *“Premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience.”* (Gordon, 2004). Moreover, according to Turkey’s Law on Fight Against Terrorism of Turkey Act Nr. 3713 (2010) *“Any criminal action conducted by one or more persons belonging to an organization with the aim of changing the attributes of the Republic as specified in the Constitution, the political, legal, social, secular or economic system, damaging the indivisible unity of the State with its territory and nation, jeopardizing the existence of the Turkish State and the Republic, enfeebling, destroying or seizing the State authority, eliminating basic rights and freedoms, damaging the internal and external security of the State, the public order or general health, is defined as terrorism.”*. In the light of these legislations, it can be claimed that, different states’ legislations include similar elements to define terrorism such as

having a political purpose and use of violence against freedom, democracy and several states structures.

### **1. 3 Consequences of the “Terrorist” Label**

When states have promulgated laws to define terrorism and designate certain violent groups as terrorist organizations to fight against terrorism, they also assert the legal consequences of terrorist actions. For instance, the U.S. Foreign Terrorist Organizations list provides three crucial legal consequences for terrorism. Firstly, financial institutions in the United States must retain control over their funds in their possession in which terrorist organizations list has an interest. Secondly, individuals or groups who are the representatives or members of a designated terrorist organizations are banned from entering the state. Lastly, any individual in the jurisdiction of the U.S. who supports or provides materials to a designated terrorist organization is subject to the criminal penalties (Shapiro, 2015). Moreover, according to sanctions of the European Union, when individuals, groups and entities make any support of terrorist actions or engaged in any terrorist actions, they are subject to both the freezing of funds and other financial asserts and as well as enhanced measures related to police and judicial cooperation in criminal penalties (The Common Foreign and Security Policy, 2001). In the same way, Turkey’s Act on the Fight Against Terrorism Act No. 6526 (2014) declares that people who propagates against the Republic of Turkey and its citizens and institutions that support terrorist organizations are subject to aggravate the terms of imprisonment and punishments.

Although since 2001, we have witnessed a surge in counter-terrorism relate, significant attention is placed on the difficulty of fighting against terrorism, which is hardly a value- natural term. No matter how detached the state or scholars are, it is hard to ignore the fact that naming it is not an objective effort, but it is a moral judgement, as well. Currently, only few groups are willing to accept being labelled as terrorist. For instance, although a terrorist organization in Israel engaged in various attacks in Jerusalem and killed more than sixty people, the organization’s assumed name is “Freedom Fighters for Israel”, not “Terrorist Fighters for Israel” (Weinberg, 2005). Therefore, the problem is that citizens may have sympathy with a certain group and as a result they are rather seen as freedom fighters in the eyes of the public. Although various states have put clear definitions of terrorism and published terrorist organizations list, ultimately the



choice between the term of terrorist or freedom fighter depends on the point of view rooted in the political sympathies of the observer (Honderich, 2006; Weinberh, 2006).

#### **1.4 Designation Process of Violent Groups as “Terrorists”**

Besides the concept of terrorism, the other significant issue that the literature focuses on is the designation process of terrorist organizations. The designation process is problematic because when major violent acts take place in a certain state, the debate erupts as to whether it should be considered as terrorism or not. International terrorism has been a consistent feature of the post-Cold War era. However, legal designation of a foreign terrorist organization through a formalized list is a relatively recent phenomenon which began in 1997 and had spread from the United States to the world (Beck & Miner, 2013).

The designation of terrorist organizations contains various markers to spot states intentions and policy tools. For instance, the United States’ Foreign Terrorist Organizations provide a list of designated terrorist organizations and signals to other states and international organizations that the government of United States accepts these groups as dangerous. Also, by creating public awareness about the labelled violent groups, the government aims to deter citizens from supporting these groups financially or otherwise (Shapiro, 2015). However, designation process not only has a political but also an academic purpose which provides clarity to the meaning of terrorism. For instance, the American legal institutions alone employ at least twenty-two different definitions of terrorism (Perry, 2004). This potential ambiguity is eliminated with designation of terrorism because designation process enables to classify violent groups and it is considered as the most important counter-terrorism insight achieved by labelling terrorism (Cronin, 2003).

Many scholars examine the formal designation process by understanding states’ terrorist organizations lists through the lens of organizations’ characteristics and theoretical frameworks on designation process (Beck & Miner, 2013). For instance, the government of the United States designates violent groups as foreign terrorist organizations under the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 upon making three major findings; the organization is foreign, the organization engages in terrorist activities and these activities threaten the national security of the United States (Shapiro, 2008). The terrorist list under the act of 1996 displays similarity in the

definitions and practices of State's Foreign Terrorist Organization List of 1997. Since then, the United States' designation process has expanded its practice and the list is updated every two years (Beck & Miner, 2013). Although the United States define terrorist groups characteristic likely to fight with them, the United Nations has been unable to move forward for a comprehensive understanding against terrorism because of the inability of its member states to come a mutually accepted definition and designation of terrorism (Huff & Kertzer, 2018). Despite the United Nations' incapability, the United Kingdom and the European Union structure the terror designation in a similar fashion to the United States. The UK's primary act, called the Terrorism Act 2000 defines terrorist organizations as any association or combination of people who commit or participate in terrorist actions, prepare for or encourage to terrorism and are involved in any kind of terrorist actions. Moreover, the listing and delisting processes occur every six months in the United Kingdom. Similarly, the EU reviews the designation every six months, but the organization does not allow appeals. In EU, designation of violent groups is differentiated under two lists; the first list designates people and organizations specifically the ones that are involved with Al-Qaeda or the Taliban and the second list designates organizations involved in any kind of international terrorist actions that threaten citizens and destabilize those states' fundamental structures (Beck & Miner, 2013).

Overall, these classifications allow agreement on standardization of designation and sanctions that emanate from it (Shapiro, 2008). However, Beck and Miner (2013) explore that the United States, the United Kingdom and the European Union designate notably different terrorist organizations lists. While the United States has designated 91 foreign terrorist organizations, the EU has designated 62 and the United Kingdom has designated only 60 organizations. Moreover, among the listed 126 groups, only 24% are designated by all three judgement, 22% are designated by only two judgements and 51% are designated by only one judgement (Beck & Miner, 2013).

However, Huff and Kertzer (2018) claim that although political scientists have offered various conceptual frameworks, they have neglected to examine how frameworks depending on which state is responsible for constructing the frameworks responded to terrorism. There are various qualitative works, which examine how states designate terrorist organization by finding commonalities in different states' designation process. According to Miller (2009), first of all, it is important to distinguish the violent actions performed by combatants in the context of a war

because it is confined within a state jurisdiction and hence not seen as an act of terrorism. Also, terrorism is a type of violence that is smaller in scale than a war (Honderich, 2006). Moreover, designated terrorist organization has political aims and motives that are described under social agendas. (Hoffman, 1998.) After that, designated violent threats caused by terrorism is perpetrated by a subnational group or non-state entities because there is a tendency to think of terrorism as a collective activity (Hoffman, 1998; Huff & Kertzer, 2018 Spaaij, 2010).

In the literature, some quantitative works also examine important characteristics of terrorist groups which have an impact on states' designation process. First of all, Bloom (2005) and Huff and Kertzer (2018) argue that violent tactics should be exceptionally classified as terrorist actions and specifically sees bombings as a unique form of violence that is associated with terrorism. However, according to Beck and Miner (2013), violent groups that have used aviation tactics are 3.5 times much more listed in the lists of the United States, the United Kingdom and the European Union. Moreover, the groups' history of attacks and victims' profile are important factors that influence the decision to designate a group as terrorist. When there is a higher number of casualties produced by the group's action, it is more likely that the attack will be classified a terrorist action (Huff & Kertzer, 2018). Despite this assertion, Chou (2015) shows that in the United States there is a positive but small effect of the number of attacks on the probability of being designated. In the same line with Chou, Albayrak (2015) and Beck and Miner (2013) illustrate that the cumulative number of attacks and victims do not have a significant impact on the designation process of the United States. However, victims' profiles are more important for American government. If a violent group targets American citizen, it is highly possible for the United States to designate it as a terrorist organization (Albayrak, 2015; Beck & Miner, 2013). In contrast to the American example, the higher number of attacks and victims are more likely to lead UK and EU to designate groups as terrorists (Beck & Miner, 2013). Moreover, attacks on targets associated with formal state institutions are more likely to be considered as terrorist actions (Huff & Kertzer, 2018).

Nevertheless, not only the locations of target countries are crucial to take into consideration but their relations and bonds with designator countries is important as well. For instance, if violent groups have attacked the American government's allied states, they are more likely to be designated in the Foreign Terrorist Organizations list (Beck & Miner, 2013). In contrast, if the target state has a trade relation with the United States, it is less likely to be designate the group as

a terrorist, which is partly counterintuitive. It could be read as support for the hegemonic influence interpretation of terror designation; the American government is more likely to give the benefit of the doubt to organizations based in countries where there is substantial American economic interest. Or conversely, it could undermine support for this view as it suggests that the American government is less concerned about political violence and stability in countries in which it has a financial stake (Chou, 2015). Groups that are based in countries that receive more US military aid and are located in the Middle East and North Africa, are more likely to be designated as the foreign terrorist organizations. (Albayrak, 2015; Chou, 2015). Groups that attack the alliances of the designator states are at a higher ratio to be labelled as terrorist group. In the case of UK, the country is more likely to designate an action as terrorism when allied countries are attacked. This may be a result of the UK's numerous Commonwealth relationships and historical alliances. The European Union is more likely to list a terrorist group when it is based in an allied country but not when allied countries are attacked (Beck & Miner, 2013).

Moreover, different identity categories are used by states to describe the type of violent actor. Because of the pervasiveness of social categorization process, the descriptions both provide information about the violent groups and enable scholars to draw inferences about the broader counter-terrorism actions (Brewer, 1999; Huff & Kertzer, 2018). Hoffman (1998) asserts that what matters is not only that violent groups are fighting as much as their political purpose, mobilization and the way they impose their identity. For example, it matters if the violent group describes themselves as Muslim rather than Christian or left-wing or right-wing because, generally, threats perpetrated by a group which describes itself as Islamist is more likely to be classified as terrorist (Albayrak, 2015; Beck & Miner, 2013; Chou, 2015; Huff & Kertzer 2018; Liberman & Trope & Stephan, 2007). Moreover, the level of groups' state power is another identification factor that is correlated with the probability of being designated (Albayrak, 2015; Chou, 2015). Lastly, relatively weak groups are more likely to be designated as terrorist organizations especially by the American government. If the violent groups' both military and political strength is much weaker when it is compared to the target state, it is more likely to be seen as illegitimate group and more likely to be designated in terrorist lists (Albayrak, 2015; Chou, 2015).

In the literature, there are various qualitative and quantitative works related to counter-terrorism and designation of terrorist organizations. According to Jackson (2005), scholars started

to pay attention to this field following the attacks in the United States. Terrorism and counter-terrorism related studies rapidly expanded from a minor sub-field of security studies to a large stand-alone field with various dedicated works. In addition, Silke (2004) argues that if current trends in terrorism studies continue more than 90% of all published literature on is produced since 2001. Impressively, new books and articles about terrorism and counter-terrorism are published every six hours in the English language. Despite the expansion of the area related to security studies, there are some limitations in the literature. Although there are various works which approach the study of terrorism from a qualitative perspective, only a few scholars and researchers such as Winston Chou, Çağıl Albayrak, Colin Beck and Emily Miller examine the concept of terrorism from a quantitative perspective (Albayrak, 2015; Beck & Miner, 2013; Chou, 2015). However, these researchers only explore the decisions of the United States, the United Kingdom and the European Union about the designation process of terrorism.

The main goal of this thesis is to provide a more comprehensive and systematic analysis for the security studies through the examination of the factors that influence states' decision to designate a violent group as terrorist. Different than the previous scholars and researchers, I compiled a new and broader dataset that includes the official terrorist list of Australia, Canada, India, Russia, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States, United Nations and European Union. I used these states' terrorist organizations lists because each state located in different region than other. This is important because also each designated terrorist groups operate their action in different region and hence provides a more comprehensive data. Moreover, I found only these states published terrorist organizations lists in their official documents. The thesis includes also 528 violent organizations and their characteristics related to my hypotheses. Ultimately, this thesis aims to explore the interplay between politics and terrorist violence beyond anecdotal evidence and fill the gap in the security literature.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THEORETICAL APPROACHES ABOUT THE DESIGNATION OF VIOLENCE GROUPS AS TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS**

The ambiguous and politicized nature of the terrorism creates a fluid space that allows the social construction of terrorism and designation of violent groups as terrorists. Furthermore, the potential obscurity is astonishing considering the legal and political consequences of the formal designation of terrorism (Albayrak, 2015). On the other hand, Cronin (2003) argues that the main advantages of using the foreign terrorist organizations lists is that the classification provides legal clarity for law enforcement and designation promotes decision makers with a focal point for counter-terrorism actions. If certain violent group is designated as a terrorist group, the group becomes the subject of further scrutiny. In this thesis, the goal is to uncover if there is any guideline for states to designate a violent group as a terrorist organization rather than to study the consequences of the designation process. To analyze such factors, certain features of violent groups and target countries and relations between the target countries and designator states have been examined.

Ideology plays a crucial role in terrorist motivations (Drake, 2007). According to Hoffman (1982), throughout the 1970s, terrorist actions in Europe was mostly a left-wing phenomenon. There are fundamental components in revolutionary ideology such as classical anarchism, third world revolutionarism and new left ideologies of violence. All of these components are combined and fused with Marxist and nationalist doctrines (Kegley, 1990). However, the left-wing ideology has diminished since after the end of the Cold War. According to Crenshaw (2000) left-wing terrorism requires the perception of an unjust harsh government, profound disillusionment with the existing order and the availability of appropriate external roles. When these requirements were not met after the Cold War, the radicals have not become terrorists (Crenshaw, 2000; Sprinzak,

1990). The disappearance of the left-wing revolutionaries, the ideological terrorist actions of early 1980s and 1990s shifted into right-wing ones (Crenshaw, 2000). For instance, in 1980, terrorist attacks at the Bologna train station, the Munich Oktoberfest and a synagogue in Paris signaled a revival of right-wing terrorism. In addition, various events in other parts of the world between right and left in Turkey and the conflict between reformist and reactionaries points to resurgence of right-wing violence (Hoffman, 1982).

Ethnic terrorism differs from other types of ideological violence. Like other ideological terrorist actions, ethnic terrorism attempts to influence rival groups and governments, but unlike others, ethnic terrorists mostly focus on forging a distinct ethnic identity and fostering ethnic mobilizations. Although the identity is exacted by the state, ethnic terrorism fights for the communal identity that is rooted in communal bonds that come from a shared retaliation of government and persecution, through violent activities in order to draw attention. Currently, ethnic terrorist groups still engaged in violent actions such as Kurds in Turkey, Jewish settlers in Palestine and Tamils in Sri Lanka (Byman, 1998). Nevertheless, recent counter-terrorism efforts focus on the threat of religious terrorism particularly on radical Islamism with continuing military interventions in the Middle East and Asia. For instance, although the United States named the Islamist group Rajah Sulaiman Movement in the Philippines as a terrorist group, larger and more active left-wing Baluchistan Liberation Army in Pakistan which has a geo-strategic significance as much as the one in Philippines, it is not designated as such (Beck & Miner, 2013). According to Albayrak (2015), Chou (2015) and Beck and Miner (2013), Islamic violent groups are 2.5 times more likely to be designated than other violent groups by the United States. Moreover, when the Foreign Terrorist Organizations list was first published in 1997, only a quarter of the list designated groups with Islamic ideology. Currently, the designated Islamist violent groups are greater than half (Chou, 2015). Although the Islamist groups are much more likely to be designated as terrorist by the United Kingdom like the United States, more interestingly, being a Islamist group has no impact on the lists of the European Union (Beck & Miner, 2013). In order to test given arguments, I expect to find support from the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 1:* Religious violent groups are more likely to be designated as terrorist organizations than left-wing, right-wing or ethnic violent groups.

To examine why certain violent groups are designated as terrorist organizations, history of attacks and victim profiles become significant indicators. According to scholars, the cumulative number of attacks, severity of attacks and the number of attacks on victims do not appear to have a significant impact on the likelihood of being designated for the United States (Chou, 2015; Albayrak, 2015; Beck & Miner, 2013). However, whether the violent group has had American victims is significant as the United States is much more likely to list a violent group that threatens its citizens. In contrast to the United States' designation, overall both the United Kingdom and the European Union is likely to designate such groups when there are high number of attacks and its citizens are the ones attacked. However, in 2012, the number of recent attacks and the number of victims had a significantly negative impact on both the United Kingdom and the European Union designation process (Beck & Miner, 2013). Although higher number of casualties are more likely to be classified as terrorism, distinction between target profiles is also important. Especially, the distinction between civilian and military targets plays a central role in definition and designation of terrorism. According to Huff and Kertzer (2018), violent attacks on target associated with formal state institutions like security forces are more likely to be considered as terrorism. Therefore, I form these two hypothesizes:

*Hypothesis 2:* A state is more likely to designate violent groups as terrorist organizations in terms of their number of attacks.

*Hypothesis 3:* A state is more likely to designate violent groups as terrorist organizations when those groups target the security forces more than the civilians.

The violent groups' interval between its activities is another significant guideline to understand designation process. Changes in terrorism and security studies based on the year of 1997 has become a milestone for further researches. For instance, the Global Terrorism Database (2017) includes several violent threats of terrorism from 1970 to 2015 but with the number of new variables such as victim profiles, target location profiles and differences in the level of attacks, the database has started to include post-1997 data collection effort. According to terrorism studies' scholars, before the Global Terrorism Database started to specifically differentiate its data collection as before and after 1997, the observations of the database did not satisfy the three major standards; the presence of some political, socio-economic or ideological motivations, the intention to send a message to audience beyond the victim and outside of the precepts of international



humanitarian law. Specifically, when the database includes the criteria that there are differences in the level attacks after the 1997, changepoints in terrorism studies occur and most of the studies started to focus on post-1997 (Santiford & Sandler & Brand, 2012). Furthermore, the year of 1997 is also important as a start date of the designation of terrorism which is another crucial changepoint for the terrorism studies as it is the year that the U.S. declared the Foreign Terrorist Organization list for the first time. After the United States' designation, various states started to declare designated terrorist organizations lists. Although the United States' list continued to be published after the year 1997, there are few designated violent groups which made their first attack before the 1997. According to Albayrak (2015) if violent groups begin their activities after the 1997, the United States is 22 times more likely to designate these groups in its terrorists list. . Therefore, I reach my second hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 4: Violent groups who operate their first activity after 1997 are more likely to be designated as terrorist organizations.*

In some cases, terrorist violence is directly related to the end of democracy. In 1970, democratically elected governments in both Argentina and Uruguay were victims of military coups for their inability to defeat challenges posed by the terrorist guerrilla groups. Although the new and long-lasting democracies can experience the terrorist actions, overall, longevity by no means insulated democracies from outbreak of terrorism (Lutz, 2010). In terms of designation process, Albayrak (2015) argues that the United States is more likely to designate violent groups that target democracies. However, Chou (2015) and Beck and Miner (2013) display that there is a complex relationship between the democracy level in target countries and the likelihood for a violent group to be classified as terrorist. Particularly, democracies can be at great risk of experiencing violent attacks targeting civilians because of their open political structure. But, there is no significant impact on the United States designation process. Similarly, level of democracies in target countries has no significant impact on the United Kingdom and the European Union designations (Beck & Miner, 2013). To test these arguments, I come up with a hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 5: Violent groups that oppose to democratic regimes are more likely to be designated as terrorist organizations.*

The regions where target states are located have an impact on the states' designation process of terrorist organizations. According to Beck and Miner (2013), the violent groups

designated by the United States, the United Kingdom and the European Union include most well-known violent groups such as Al-Qaeda and the Basque Fatherland and Liberty which operate from different regions such as the Middle East and the Europe. Nevertheless, individual government and organization designations display more diverse concerns. For instance, while the United Kingdom classifies groups in the Northern Ireland at higher rates as well as Asian groups, the United States classifies more global groups including Latin American and African violent groups such as Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movements and the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda. In addition, the European Union designates more domestic groups. However, in 2015, more than 72% of terrorist actions occurred in just five states and these states were all in the Middle East, Asia and Africa. However, although there are 227 known violent groups active in these regions, major terrorist attacks carried out by just four of them namely Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, Boko Haram, Taliban and Al-Qaeda (Dudley, 2016). The following year, the result did not change. In 2016, 75% of terrorist actions listed in the Global Terrorism Database took place in just ten states and these were Afghanistan, India, Iraq, Pakistan, Nigeria, Philippines, Somalia, Syria, Turkey and Yemen. Moreover, all of these target states are in the Middle East, Asia and Africa (Chou, 2017). At the same direction, Albayrak (2015) shows by studying the United States' the Foreign Terrorist Organizations list, that violent groups that operate from the Middle East and Africa are more likely to be designated as terrorist organization by the United States. In the lights of these arguments, I reached to following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 6: Violent groups who operate their actions in the Middle East and Africa are more likely to be designated as terrorist organizations.*

Terrorist actions also have an effect on trade levels and trade relations among the international community. There are few major channels through which terrorism may affect the trade. For instance, terrorism increases uncertainty which raises the cost of traded goods and the cost of doing business by raising both insurance premiums and security costs. Also, terrorism decreases the flow of good and resources through ports due to the greater inspections and safeguard. As a result, terrorism can divert governments expenditure from more productive public investment to less productive security activities (Bandyopadhyay, 2016). In addition to terrorism's important impact on trade, direction of terrorism has also an impact on the designation process depending on the trade relations of the state that the violent actions are operated in. For instance,

the United States is more likely to give the benefit of the doubt to organizations based in states which has the potential of substantial American economic interest. Particularly, the United States is less concerned about the political violence and stability in states which have a problematic financial shape. The most reasonable interpretation is that this represents failed or failing states that are more likely to harbor terrorists and less likely to engage in substantial international trade (Beck & Miner, 2013; Meyer, 2010). However, trade relations do not have a significant impact on designations of the United Kingdom and the European Union (Beck & Miner, 2013). Therefore, I reach my last hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 7:* A state is more likely to designate violent groups if they attack a state which has a trade relation with it.

According to *the balance of threat theory*, making alliances is crucial for the interests of the state and to create a balance of power in the world. State alliance behavior is mainly determined by the threat they receive from other states. Although threat is an important determinant to make alliances, balance of power and geographical proximity are also other elements to rely on when making alliances (Waltz, 1985). In terms of designation process, relations with alliances are also important. Beck and Miner (2013) argue that the United Kingdom is more likely to designate terrorist groups when allied states are attacked. The European Union is more likely to designate it as a terrorist group when a group is based in an allied state but not when allied states are attacked. However, across both the United Kingdom and the European Union, memberships of non-governmental organizations have no significant impact on designation process. Therefore, following hypothesis is:

*Hypothesis 8:* A state is more likely to designate violent groups that attack its allies as terrorist organizations.

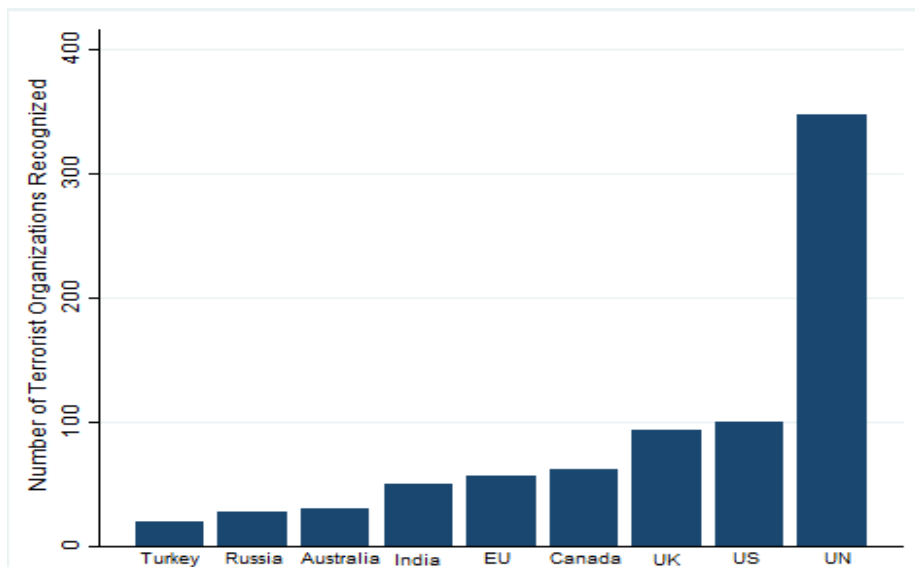
## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

In this chapter, the operationalization and the sources of the variables are described. In order to examine which factors, influence the decisions to label violent groups as terrorist organizations, I collected data on violent groups, target countries and designator actors. My unit of analysis is a designator-violent group pair. In addition, the dataset also includes major components of target countries such as its region, democracy level and interactions of designator states and international organizations.

My dependent variable is whether a designator state and international organizations classify a certain violent group as a terrorist group or not. Data on the designation of terrorist organizations comes from the most current and official declared terrorist organizations lists of Australia, Canada, India, Russia, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States, the United Nations and the European Union. The lists of the United Nations and the European Union have intentionally been included because these are international organizations with the highest number of member states. When the lists of those states and international organizations are combined, there are 528 terrorist organizations compiled in the dataset.

**Figure 1:** The number of organization that states, and international organizations recognize



Among the 528 violent groups which have operated from 1909 to 2017, Turkey designates only 20 violent groups as terrorist organizations (General Directorate of Security, 2017), the government of Russia designates 21 violent groups which is approximate to the number that Turkey lists (The Russian Federation National Anti-Terrorism Committee, 2017). Moreover, Australia labels 31 violent groups as terrorist organizations (Australian National Security, 2017) and India labels 51 groups (Government of India & Ministry of Home Affairs, 2015). According to the list of terrorist organizations banned by the European Union, the organization classifies 57 groups (The Council of the European Union, 2017) and Canada designates 62 groups as terrorists (Public Safety Canada, 2018). Additionally, while the United Kingdom designates 94 violent groups as terrorist organizations (The United Kingdom Home Office, 2017), the United States follows it with 101 designated terrorist organizations (U.S Department of State, 2017). Lastly, the United Nations classifies the highest number of labelled terrorists with 348 groups (The United Nations Security Council, 2018). Using these lists, I create a combined list of all violent groups that were designated as a “terrorist organization” by at least one state or international organization. The dependent variable is binary: it is coded 1 if a state or international organization classifies a group as terrorist and 0 otherwise.

The characteristics of terrorist organizations create main independent variables of this analysis. In the dataset, ideologies are divided into four categories: religious ideology, ethnic

ideology, left-wing ideology and right-wing ideology. These four categories are chosen because of the fact that they are the most common ideological elements of violent groups. In addition, to form ideology as an independent variable, various datasets such as Non-State Actor Data (2013), Big, Allied and Dangerous Dataset (2017), Counter-Extremism Project (2017), Terrorist Groups Dataset by Inside Government (2017) and Mapping Militant Organizations (2016) have been used. However, there is a limitation that some terrorist groups have more than one ideology. Therefore, to overcome given drawback, each ideological characteristics of violent groups are coded as dummy variable in the dataset. If an organization's ideology falls into more than one category, it is coded 1 for each of these indicators of ideology.

I collected information on the number of attacks conducted by violent groups from Global Terrorism Database (2017), Non-State Actor Data (2013), Winston Chou's Dataset (2015) and Counter Extremism Project (2017). The number of attacks variable is logged. In terms of victim profiles, victims of violent groups are divided into civilians and security forces. Data about victims is obtained from Non-State Actor Data (2013), Mapping Militant Organizations (2016) and Counter Extremism Project (2017).

The 1997 is a milestone as the beginning date of the classification of violent groups as terrorists. The United States designated terrorism under the Foreign Terrorist Organizations list for the first time that year and various states and international organizations have followed its lead. I acquired data on violent groups' first activity year from the TORG Crosswalk Dataset (2014) and Non-State Actor Data (2013). To create this variable, a dummy is used in which "0" denotes if the first activity of the terrorist organization has taken place before 1997 and otherwise "1" has been utilized.

In addition to the characteristics of the terrorist groups and their actions, the features of target countries are also included. The region and level of democracy in target countries are two of the independent variables. In terms of region, classification on target countries region of the Global Terrorism Database (2017), Non-State Actor Data (2013) and the TORG Crosswalk Dataset (2014) have been utilized to classify in which regions target countries are located. The level of democracy in target countries has been also examined as a factor in order to assess if it has an effect on the designation process. To examine democracy level, Polity IV Project (2016) which measures level of democracy in states between the years 1800 and 2016 has been utilized. However, instead of

using level of democracy in target countries in every year, I analyzed average democracy level of each target country.

Features and interactions of designators have also been included as factors which may impact on the designation process. First of all, alliance factor has been utilized as an independent variable to examine if the designator states and international organizations have any alliances with target countries. The data about the alliance relations come from The Correlates of War Project Formal Alliances (2012). Furthermore, to analyze whether designators have alliances with target countries or not, dummy variables are created. If certain designator has any alliances with target countries, it is coded “1” If otherwise; it is coded “0”. Using the data obtained from The Correlates of War Project Trade (2014), the impact of the trade relations of designators on the designation process has also been examined. The total number of trade that has been created from total number of import and export flows between the designator and target countries has been examined instead of analyzing only import and export relations.

To examine the hypotheses, the linear regression model has been utilized to analyze the combined impacts of features of violent groups, target countries and designator states and international organizations. While most quantitative studies on terrorism and designation process ignore characteristics of violent groups, target countries and designators, the joint impact of these features are analyzed.

As robustness checks I explored the impact of alternative variables such as number of wounded and killed people by violent groups, democracy level of target countries at 2015, export/import levels between designators and target countries and whether the designator state is also target of the group or not. These results are explained in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

Table 1 demonstrates the regression results, which were conducted to analyze the relationship between the characteristics of terrorist organizations, target countries and designator states and IOs that may impact on which groups are labeled as terrorists.

According to my analysis, the impact of ideology varies across designator states and IOs. According to Table 1, ethnic, left-wing and right-wing ideologies are less likely to be classified as terrorists. However, groups that have a religious identity are more likely to be classified as terrorist organizations. If a certain violent group has a religious identity, this is significant for the designation process of the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, the United Nations and Russia. This factor also has a positive effect for other designators such as India, Turkey, the United States and the European Union, but not consistently significant.

In terms of ethnic ideologies, if an extremist group has ethnic identity, the United States is less likely to label that group as terrorist. For other designator states and international organizations, the effect of ethnic identity is insignificant.

Regarding left-wing ideology, only Australia is affected by whether the violent group is a supporter of left-wing ideology. Accordingly, Australia is less likely to designate left-wing violent groups as terrorist organizations. For other designator states and international organizations, the effect of left-wing ideology is insignificant. Table 1 also shows the effect of the right-wing ideology on the creation of terrorist organizations lists. If a violent organization is motivated by right-wing thoughts, this has a negative but significant impact on only Australia's designation process and Australia is less likely to designate right-wing violent groups as terrorists. For other designator states and international organizations, the effect of right-wing ideology is insignificant.



Overall, when the ideologies of groups are considered, unsurprisingly, religious ideology is more important for classification process of terrorist organizations than ethnic, left-wing and right-wing ideologies., If a certain violent group is a supporter of ethnic, left-wing or right-wing ideologies, designators are approximately between 15% and 29% less likely to label this group as terrorists. Therefore, in the light of these arguments, Hypothesis 1 is supported for designation processes of Australia, Canada, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United Nations. Nevertheless; although Beck and Miner (2013) claims that the United States was crucially affected by the 11 September jihadist attacks, according to the analysis, the religious identity of violent groups does not have a significant effect on the US.

Table 1 demonstrates that if violent groups' number of attacks increase, this creates a positive and significant effect on Canada, Australia and the United States. All three states are more likely to designate groups that commit a greater number of attacks. However, for other designators and international organizations the effect of number of attacks is insignificant.

Table 1 also shows victim profiles as independent variables which is divided into security forces or civilians. According to my analysis, security force casualties have a negative and statistically significant effect on the classification of terrorism by the United Kingdom. Killing security forces has a positive and considerably important impact on the designations of India and Russia. If violent organizations kill security forces, India is 27% and Russia is 19% more likely designate those organizations as terrorists. This variable has a positive but statistically insignificant impact on Australia, Canada, Turkey, the United States, the United Nations and the European Union.

According to Table 1, civilian casualties has a positive and substantially significant impact on the terrorist list of the European Union. If a certain violent group attacks civilian, the European Union is 47% more likely to designate that group as terrorist. For other designator states and IO's this variable does not have a statistically significant effect.

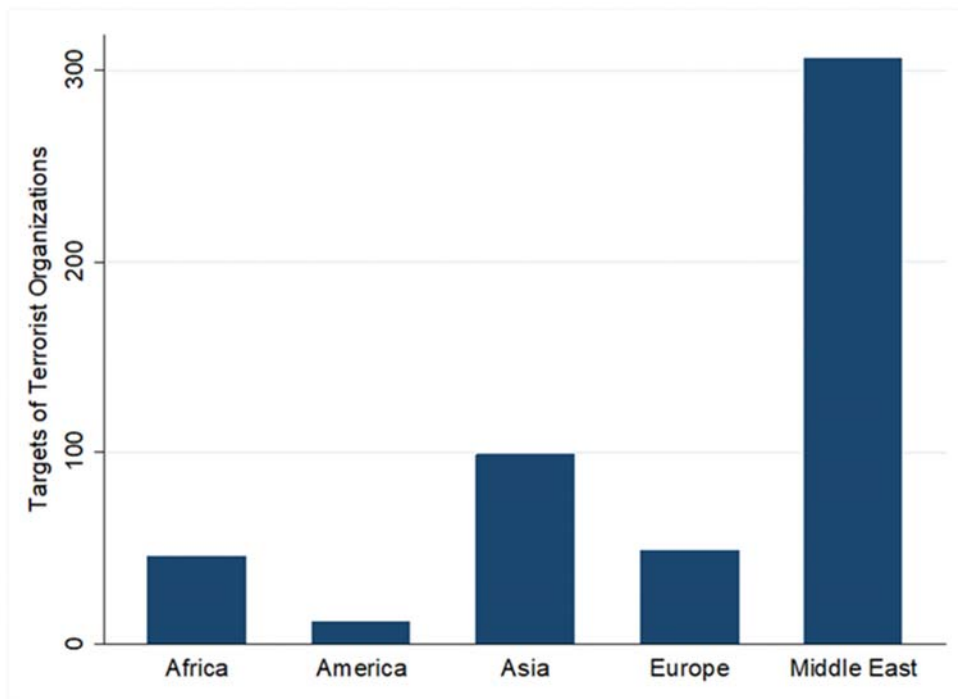
I examined whether the extremist groups begin to operate before 1997 or after 1997 by creating dummy variable. According to Table 1, violent groups that began before 1997 are less likely to be designated as terrorists by the European Union. This is an unexpected result because the European Union started to publish terrorist organizations after the 11 September attacks in 2001 for the first time (Council of European Union, 2017). This variable seems to matter only for

the EU. For other designator states and IO's this variable does not have a statistically significant effect.

According to Table 1, characteristics of target countries are also important to understand the decisions of designator states and international organizations. First of all average level of democracy in target countries has been analyzed. According to the analysis, for designator states and international organizations, the average level of democracy in target countries is statistically insignificant.

The other possible explanation is maybe related to target countries' location. According to the graph, designator states and international organizations label violent groups as terrorists mostly in the Middle East. However, extremist groups which are based and operating action from America are less likely to be labelled as terrorists. Generally, the groups that are located in the Middle East are classified as terrorist organizations with higher number. Therefore, Hypothesis 6 is also supported.

**Figure 2:** Target Countries' Location



The relation between the designator countries and target countries also make up one of the important parts of this analysis. First of all, Table 1 demonstrates the volume of total trade relations between the designator and target countries. For each unit of increase in the volume of total trade between the certain country and designator, the possibility of designation by Canada and the United States decreases, but not in a significant scale. Trade relations have insignificant impact on creating terrorist organizations lists by other states.

Table 1 also displays the effect of alliance between the designator states and target countries. alliance relations between designator countries and target countries have positive and statistically significant impact for India. In short, if certain extremist groups attack the allies of India, India is more likely to classify those groups as terrorist.

**Table 1: Impact of features of violent groups and target countries on designation preferences**

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables								
	Designation Preferences of States and International Organizations								
	Australia	Canada	India	Russia	Turkey	The United Kingdom	The United States	The United Nations	The European Union
Ethnic Ideology	0.0150 (0.0553)	-0.0180 (0.0927)	-0.0562 (0.0972)	-0.0518 (0.0350)	0.00952 (0.0225)	0.184 (0.100)	-0.297** (0.105)	0.0269 (0.0714)	-0.107 (0.0954)
Religious Ideology	0.253*** (0.0744)	0.267* (0.103)	0.00142 (0.0779)	0.107* (0.0504)	0.0288 (0.0226)	0.273* (0.118)	0.127 (0.120)	0.212* (0.0995)	0.0453 (0.115)
Left-Wing Ideology	-0.157* (0.0645)	-0.0746 (0.105)	0.0608 (0.107)	-0.0392 (0.0401)	0.0116 (0.0246)	-0.130 (0.108)	0.0642 (0.110)	-0.122 (0.0824)	0.183 (0.0957)
Right-Wing Ideology	-0.160* (0.0753)	0.0282 (0.324)	-0.0142 (0.143)	0.0196 (0.0670)	0.0243 (0.0337)	0.257 (0.239)	0.305 (0.230)	-0.117 (0.0982)	0.354 (0.304)
Number of Attacks	0.0788*** (0.0218)	0.101*** (0.0239)	0.00450 (0.0224)	-0.00348 (0.0210)	0.0272 (1.74)	0.0445 (0.0273)	0.0698** (0.0263)	0.0323 (0.0220)	0.0430 (0.0240)
Killed Security Forces	0.155 (0.133)	0.231 (0.200)	0.271* (0.123)	0.198* (0.0778)	0.0274 (0.0206)	-0.438* (0.188)	0.296 (0.229)	0.239 (0.125)	0.0700 (0.197)
Killed Civilians	-0.0407 (0.114)	0.00674 (0.168)	-0.474 (0.340)	0.0680 (0.0577)	0.0127 (0.0206)	0.0970 (0.215)	0.320 (0.203)	-0.0510 (0.145)	0.479*** (0.129)
First Attack After 1997	0.00856 (0.0818)	-0.0247 (0.0896)	-0.135 (0.0826)	-0.129 (0.0764)	0.00701 (0.0501)	-0.0190 (0.0971)	0.171 (0.0954)	0.102 (0.0928)	-0.205* (0.0899)
Av. Democracy Lev. (Tar. Cont.)	0.00112 (0.00541)	-0.00691 (0.00748)	-0.000173 (0.00502)	-0.00957 (0.00601)	-0.00362 (0.00283)	-0.0151 (0.00776)	0.00418 (0.00770)	-0.0140 (0.00724)	0.00592 (0.00745)

Total Trade of Designator States (W/ Tar. Cont.)	0.0164 (0.0163)	-0.00320 (0.0243)	0.00549 (0.0139)	0.00700 (0.00827)	0.000297 (0.00986)	0.0149 (0.0253)	-0.000000180 (0.000000710)		
Alliances of Designator States (W/ Tar. Cont.)	0 (.)	-0.0172 (0.113)	0.409** (0.127)	-0.0434 (0.0307)	-0.00871 (0.0252)	0.147 (0.180)	-0.0229 (0.142)		
N	130	130	104	125	191	125	131	133	133
r2	0.283	0.278	0.254	0.182	0.0437	0.204	0.242	0.273	0.175

Standard errors in parentheses \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

According to regression results, although independent variables of religious identity, number of attacks and security force casualties are statistically significant for the designation process, other independent variables such as civilian casualties, year of first attack, target's average democracy level, total trade and alliances with designator states do not have such an important impact. When we consider the regression results, Australia and Canada generally follow same patterns. For instance, ideological preference and number of attacks are two crucial independent variable which affect Australia and Canada in the same way. Especially, the European Union and India's designation preferences are very different than others. For example, civilian casualties and first attack year are only substantially important for the designation of the EU. Also, alliance relations are only statistically significant for India. According to regression results, although independent variables of religious identity, number of attacks and security force casualties are statistically significant for the designation process, other independent variables such as civilian casualties, year of first attack, target's average democracy level, total trade and alliances with designator states do not have such an important impact. When we consider the regression results, Australia and Canada generally follow the same patterns. For instance, ideological preference and number of attacks are two crucial independent variables, which affect Australia and Canada in the same way. Especially, the EU and India's designation preferences are very different than others. For example, civilian casualties and first attack year are only substantially important for the designation of the European Union. Also, alliance relations are only statistically significant for India.

#### **4.1 Robustness Checks**

In this part, I demonstrate how my results change when the following independent variables are added: number of wounded and killed people, democracy level of targeted countries in 2015, export flows and import flows and whether designator countries have become target country or not. Basically, by introducing these variables, I intended to see whether previous result would change or not.

In Table 2, I add new measures of the number of people killed and wounded by the violent organization. This measure is obtained from Polity IV Project (2016), Mapping Militant Organizations (2016), Non-State Actor Data (2013) and Counter Extremism Project (2017). I

dismissed the independent variable of number of attacks because that variable is highly correlated with the number of wounded and killed. First of all, I find that the number of people wounded by an organization has an insignificant effect on terrorist designation. When the impact of independent variable of number of killed people is analyzed, it can be seen that if violent groups kill a high number of people this has a significant effect on whether they appear on the terrorist lists of the United States, Canada and Australia. If violent group killed high number of people, the United States is 71%, Canada is 67% and Australia is %58 more likely to label this group as terrorists.

In my original analysis, I looked at the level of democracy in target countries at 2015 and level of total trade between target and designator states. According to Table 2, level of democracy in target countries at 2015 has not any significant impact on the designation process. In the robustness check analysis, I separately utilized export flows and import flows between the target countries and designator states. Table 2 displays that if violent organizations attack the target countries which have export relation with designator states, this has insignificant impact on the Australia, Canada, Russia, Turkey and the United States and United Kingdom. Table 2 shows that if violent organizations attack the target countries which have engaged in import with designator states, this has insignificant impact on Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, India, Russia, Turkey and the United States. In addition, it can be understood from Table 2 new independent variable does not change the importance of alliance relations between designators and target countries. Generally, it can be claimed that as in total trade, when we use export and import relations as independent variables, they have an insignificant impact on the designation of violent groups as terrorists.

In Table 3, I analyzed whether there is an impact or not if the designator countries have also been targeted countries – i.e. whether the country that is designating has previously been attacked by the violent group. When I utilized this alternative independent variable named “Designator-Target Countries”, I did not use variables related to trade relations and average democracy level of target countries because of prevalent missing data problem. According to Table 3, if the United Kingdom, India and Turkey are the target of certain terrorist organizations, the United Kingdom is 73%, India is 78% and Turkey is 79% more likely to label those organizations as terrorists. Although designator states usually label violent groups that operate their actions in

the Middle East and Asia. The United Kingdom, India and Turkey are more likely to designate violent groups if those groups operate their actions inside the borders of these designators. This result may indicate that the United Kingdom, India and Turkey are more sensitive about the terrorist attacks within their borders than other designator states.



## CONCLUSION

This thesis investigates which factor affect the designation process that lead to terrorist organizations lists. To uncover this process, in this thesis, characteristics of terrorist organizations and target countries and several interactions of designator state and international relations are analyzed. I give empirical evidence that religious identity of violent groups and number of attacks are more statistically important than other groups' characteristic. I show that features of violent groups such as victim profiles and first activity year are not equally significant for the designators. For this reason, the impacts of those features cannot be generalized. In terms of factors related to target countries, I find that although target countries location is an important indicator to label violent groups as terrorists, the average level of democracy in target countries is not as important as much as geographic factor. According to my findings, contrary to previous literature, trade and alliance relations between the designator states and target countries do not have a statistically significant impact on the designation process of terrorism.

I conducted robustness tests to check if the results change as a result of using other independent variables. Also, some additional independent variables are added in the analysis. However, there are two important limitations that weaken the explanatory power of my analysis and this could not be eliminated. One limitation of this study is that there are some missing data for the independent variables related to characteristics of violent groups. Also, although there is various information about the characteristics of violent groups in the literature, for some terrorist organizations, it is not possible to find information about their certain features because the nature of the violent groups makes it hard to detect.

In sum, the patterns through which states and international organizations designated terrorist organization reveal their policies and preferences. This thesis follows a different approach from the previous scholarly works in terms of scope and analysis method. In this thesis, I will examine

the lists of Australia, Canada, India, Russia, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States, the European Union and the United Nations. The terrorists list of those designators countries is the most reliable, recently published and easy to find than other countries. In addition, it can be realized that each designator state located in different region. This characteristic of designators become important because each terrorist groups are exposed to different sanctions in different locations. Moreover, as I mentioned that before, I used the lists of those IOs because these are the IOs that have highest number of member states.

Throughout the analysis, I found that religious identity of violent groups and inflicting high number of attacks are two important factors for designators to label violent organizations as terrorists. In addition, results show that if violent groups operate their actions in Middle East, these groups are more likely to be designated as terrorists. However, victim profiles, group's first attack year and regime type of target countries are not important for the labelling extremist groups. In contrast to previous works, I found that trade and alliance relations between the designator countries and target countries do not have any significant impact for creating terrorist organizations lists. Also, there is no evidence that each different state and organization follow the same guideline and understanding. Although Australia and Canada approximately apply the same guideline for their terrorist organizations lists, India and the European Union follow very different pattern than other seven designators. Therefore, the designation of terrorism is a symbolic instrument that keeps counter-terrorism silent in terms of both domestic and international settings.

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## APPENDIX

**Table 2:** Impact of features of terrorist organizations and target countries with robustness check

		Dependent Variables							
		Designation Preferences of States and International Organizations							
Independent Variables	Australia	Canada	India	Russia	Turkey	The United Kingdom	The United States	The United Nations	The European Union
Ethnic Ideology	-0.0404 (0.0577)	-0.0531 (0.0920)	-0.0422 (0.0926)	-0.0725* (0.0361)	0.0130 (0.0214)	0.160 (0.103)	-0.285** (0.104)	-0.0431 (0.0694)	-0.0667 (0.0939)
Religious Ideology	0.214** (0.0770)	0.231* (0.109)	-0.00616 (0.0906)	0.131* (0.0591)	0.0346 (0.0419)	0.371** (0.123)	0.100 (0.120)	0.215* (0.0922)	-0.0134 (0.112)
Left-Wing Ideology	-0.127 (0.0659)	-0.0535 (0.103)	0.0842 (0.103)	-0.0462 (0.0423)	0.0199 (0.0341)	-0.125 (0.112)	0.0865 (0.107)	-0.158 (0.0875)	0.210* (0.0928)
Right-Wing Ideology	-0.164 (0.106)	0.0115 (0.287)	0.0633 (0.183)	-0.0504 (0.0899)	0.0153 (0.0301)	0.235 (0.260)	0.291 (0.253)	-0.179 (0.144)	0.548 (0.296)
Wounded People	0.00339 (0.0299)	0.0218 (0.0381)	0.0351 (0.0217)	-0.00231 (0.0229)	0.0108 (0.0127)	0.0175 (0.0436)	0.00312 (0.0388)	0.0122 (0.0347)	0.0633 (0.0374)
Killed People	0.0582* (0.0258)	0.0670* (0.0324)	-0.0240 (0.0278)	0.000808 (0.0221)	0.0124 (0.00954)	0.0328 (0.0413)	0.0715* (0.0347)	0.0246 (0.0306)	-0.0282 (0.0374)
Killed Security Forces	0.153 (0.152)	0.183 (0.206)	0.264* (0.124)	0.224* (0.0887)	-0.0119 (0.0415)	-0.393 (0.219)	0.228 (0.239)	0.285* (0.141)	0.0242 (0.199)

Killed Civilians	0.0327 (0.112)	0.0280 (0.154)	-0.517 (0.349)	0.0888 (0.0677)	-0.0530 (0.0345)	0.136 (0.204)	0.274 (0.203)	0.0102 (0.140)	0.432** (0.151)
First Attack After 1997	-0.0156 (0.0858)	0.00473 (0.0918)	-0.147 (0.0869)	-0.183* (0.0790)	0.0210 (0.0704)	-0.00986 (0.102)	0.194 (0.0986)	0.118 (0.0931)	-0.238** (0.0886)
Democ. Lev. at 2015 (Tar. Cont.)	0.0123 (0.00734)	0.00744 (0.00906)	-0.00638 (0.00646)	-0.00556 (0.00919)	-0.00629 (0.00788)	0.0118 (0.0102)	0.00513 (0.0102)	0.0109 (0.00942)	-0.00648 (0.00907)
Export Flows (W/ Tar. Cont.)	-0.0168 (0.0288)	-0.00690 (0.0321)	-0.0190 (0.0253)	-0.0237 (0.0231)	-0.0118 (0.0251)	0.0586 (0.0411)	-0.0315 (0.0348)		
Import Flows (W/ Tar. Cont.)	0.0400 (0.0318)	-0.0120 (0.0423)	0.0212 (0.0352)	0.0273 (0.0248)	0.0148 (0.0309)	-0.0782 (0.0542)	0.0586 (0.0448)		
Alliances of Designator States	0 (.)	0.0861 (0.118)	0.437*** (0.128)	-0.0621 (0.0342)	0.0144 (0.0349)	0.266 (0.189)	0.0591 (0.139)		
N	130	130	104	126	125	125	131	135	135
r <sup>2</sup>	0.292	0.290	0.280	0.187	0.118	0.218	0.275	0.250	0.180

Standard errors in parentheses \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

**Table 3:** Impact of whether the designator countries have previously been attacked by the violent group with robustness check

		Dependent Variables					
		Designation Preferences of States and International Organizations					
Independent Variables	Australia	Canada	India	Russia	Turkey	The United Kingdom	The United States
Ethnic Ideology	0.0132 (0.0575)	-0.0144 (0.0873)	-0.00977 (0.0730)	-0.0684 (0.0369)	0.00952 (0.0263)	0.166 (0.0980)	-0.287** (0.101)
Religious Ideology	0.288*** (0.0731)	0.310* (0.105)	-0.0723 (0.0748)	0.175** (0.0599)	0.0914 (0.0464)	0.362** (0.119)	0.131 (0.117)
Left-Wing Ideology	-0.140* (0.0604)	-0.0814 (0.0989)	0.0519 (0.0717)	-0.0473 (0.0409)	0.0133 (0.0377)	-0.143 (0.112)	0.110 (0.105)
Right-Wing Ideology	-0.173* (0.0756)	0.0152 (0.324)	-0.0723 (0.0922)	-0.00385 (0.0702)	0.00130 (0.0355)	0.209 (0.229)	0.344 (0.228)
Number of Attacks	0.0683** (0.140)	0.103*** (0.200)	0.0102 (0.110)	-0.00336 (0.0859)	0.0285 (0.0389)	0.0430 (0.197)	0.0667** (0.224)
Killed Security Forces	0.211 (0.140)	0.261 (0.200)	0.0722 (0.110)	0.263** (0.0859)	0.0174 (0.0389)	-0.334 (0.197)	0.304 (0.224)
Killed Civilians	0.00254 (0.116)	0.0103 (0.164)	-0.325 (0.177)	0.0839 (0.0680)	-0.0623 (0.0376)	0.184 (0.212)	0.336 (0.203)
First Attack After 1997	0.0108 (0.0757)	-0.0461 (0.0863)	-0.0756 (0.0662)	-0.151* (0.0737)	-0.0129 (0.0589)	-0.0147 (0.0985)	0.187* (0.0938)

Democ. Lev. at 2015 (Tar. Cont.)	0.0108 (0.00690)	0.00157 (0.00868)	-0.00728 (0.00549)	-0.00338 (0.00809)	-0.00573 (0.00684)	0.0121 (0.00956)	0.00356 (0.00957)
Alliances of Designator States (W/ Tar. Cont.)	0 (.)	-0.0144 (0.109)	0.458*** (0.132)	-0.0322 (0.0324)	-0.00658 (0.0242)	0.158 (0.180)	-0.0455 (0.135)
Designator- Target Countries	0 (.)	0 (.)	0.782*** (0.0873)	0.447 (0.376)	0.799*** (0.152)	0.733*** (0.0969)	0 (.)
N	137	137	137	137	137	137	137
r2	0.266	0.249	0.559	0.193	0.457	0.226	0.233

Standard errors in parentheses \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$