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I. Articles

Terrorist Decision-Making: Insights from Economics and Political Science

by Jacob N. Shapiro

Abstract

Terrorist groups repeatedly take actions that are ultimately politically counter-productive. Sometimes these are the result of deliberate calculations that happen to be mistaken - Al-Qaeda's decision to conduct the 9/11 attacks is the most obvious example of an ultimately self-defeating operation. Sometimes they reflect the challenges groups face in controlling their operatives: Al-Qaeda in Iraq's excessive public violence against other Sunni organisations stand out. At other times they appear to steer difficult political waters quite effectively despite of deep internal divisions— Hamas is the exemplar here. This article reviews recent developments in the literature on terrorist decision-making in economics and political science. Overall, tremendous advances have been made in the last 10 years, but much work remains to be done. In particular, it is argued that the literature needs to do better at testing its theories in inferentially credible ways and at considering terrorism as one tactical option among many for opposition political groups.

Introduction

Over the last 10 years research on terrorism in the academic literature has grown massively (Young and Findley, 2011). Early on in this process McCormick (2003) laid out what the existing literature said about terrorist decision-making in terms of strategic, organisational, and psychological approaches. In his typology, strategic approaches are those that assume terrorists adapted rationally to the opportunities and constraints they face for advancing political goals, while organisational approaches begin from the premise that much terrorist decision-making is driven by internal group dynamics; psychological approaches focus mainly on the decision to become a terrorist. As the literature has developed in economics and political science, the focus has increasingly been on integrating insights from all these fields and identifying interdependencies.[1]

This piece lays out what we have learned since 2003 about terrorist decision-making. Overall, the key takeaway from this review is that terrorism is a contextual phenomenon and it thus makes sense that successful analysis of terrorist group decision-making needs to take into account a variety of contextual factors. This, in turn, means that successful research requires detailed knowledge of the group(s) in question, the persons involved in decision-making (or influencing) roles within the group, and the operating environment in which that group is situated. In cross-group quantitative work, these requirements translate into sensitivity for the statistical biases inherent in how data on terrorist groups is developed.

The remainder of this article proceeds as follows. The first section discusses the general importance of considering terrorism as one point in a spectrum of possible tactics for anti-government groups, an issue with particular bite when it comes to thinking about how groups decide to engage in terrorism in the first place, and why they stop. The second section focuses on strategic considerations by terrorist groups, the dominant strand in the literature. Given the rich evidence that terrorist groups behave strategically, this section reviews arguments about their strategic choices, and concludes by a discussion how those choices are influenced by organisational and resource constraints. The third section addresses non-strategic considerations, which enter into terrorist decision-making, including technological constraints and internal dynamics. The fourth section discusses approaches to studying terrorist decision-making, suggesting a way they can complement one another to help develop more reliable knowledge in the next decade. It concludes with some challenges to researchers.

Legal Action vs. Terrorism vs. Rebellion

A general principal that should guide future work is that terrorism is not an attribute of a group whose members have a specific psychological profile or who share a particular ideology (Laitin and Shapiro, 2007). Rather terrorism is one point on the spectrum of tactics adopted by groups seeking to change the political status quo, one chosen given a set of internal and external constraints and one whose further use is sensitive to changes in those constraints (Bueno de Mesquita, 2011). Left-wing political movements in the United States in the 1960s, for example, generated mostly peaceful political organisations (e.g. Students for a Democratic Society), relatively extreme but mostly non-violent groups (e.g. the Black Panther Party), and at least one outright terrorist group (i.e. the Weather Underground).

If this perspective is correct, it has two implications. First, counting incidents as separate observations may be the wrong way to measure the degree of terrorism in the world. Such data do not allow us to distinguish between factors leading to increases in terrorism due to substitution from traditional political activities into terrorism (or from insurgency into terrorism) from factors that predict an increase in the overall level of opposition political activity.[2] To solve that indeterminacy, data needs to be collected on terrorism as part of a family of related rebellious activities, and acknowledge that groups under changing circumstances will switch strategically among these activities.[3]

Second, more attention needs to be paid to the political opportunity structures facing rebels. Fortunately, an emerging literature is exploring such issues. Key findings so far are that dictatorships with fewer mechanisms for citizens to influence politics see more terrorism (Aksoy et al., 2012), that groups seeking change within the existing political status quo are less likely to emerge in democracies which offer more opportunities to small parties (i.e. proportional-representation systems with small districts) than in other democracies (Aksoy and Carter, 2012), and that democracies with more veto players see higher incidence of terror (Young and Dugan, 2011) which the authors attribute to blocked opportunities for change through normal means. Overall, this literature suggests that the lack of opportunities to effect change through normal politics increase the chances that opposition groups will turn to terrorism, a finding matched by earlier qualitative work.[4]

More broadly, new empirical and theoretical work emphasizes the importance of considering various forms of political activism in a unified framework. On the empirical side, two findings stand out. First, it turns out that most terrorism occurs in the context of civil war or shortly before or after one (Findley and Young, 2012). Second, comparing violent and non-violent activists operating in the same struggle leads to important inferential gains by revealing relationships masked when considering them in isolation. In the standout paper of this type, Lee (2011) compares the backgrounds of Bengali independence activists involved in violence with those who were not. He finds that while terrorists were better educated and had higher status jobs than the population average, they were less educated and less wealthy than the nonviolent activists.

On the theoretical side, Bueno de Mesquita (2011) nicely illustrates that if rebels can endogenously choose between symmetric (insurgency and civil war) and asymmetric (terrorism) tactics, then any analysis of tactics in isolation risks making incorrect inferences about the causes of conflict and potential policies to mitigate it. The core intuition of the model is that rebels have a choice first whether to fight, and then how to fight. Different modes of contestation have different returns and those returns depend on how much of the population mobilizes to support the rebels' struggle. When only a small group will mobilize in response to rebel's political appeals, then asymmetric tactics (i.e. terrorism) yield greater benefits, but when a sufficient proportion of the population is willing to mobilize, then symmetric conflict is better for the rebels. This argument fits well with the discussions of rebel strategists themselves going back at least to the early Russian Marxist group Narodnya Volya and yields a rich set of results which can account for a range of observations about the relationship between rebellion and terrorism. In particular, the results highlight why successful counterinsurgency sometimes leads to increased terrorism [5] and why so many rebel groups in reasonably developed places begin with a terrorist vanguard, or at least try to, before shifting to more conventional insurgent tactics.[6]

Strategic Theories

The dominant strand in the literature on terrorist decision-making in economics and political science starts from the premise that terrorist groups strive to match means to ends given limited and imperfect information about the world. This assumption appears to be correct. There is now a rich body of evidence that terrorist organisations behave rationally across a range of domains. Evidence from Israel, for example, shows that they match more skilled operatives to harder targets (Benmelech and Berrebi, 2007) and that the availability of such operatives varies with economic conditions in exactly the ways one would expect if individuals became less likely to participate as their other opportunities improve (Benmelech et al., 2012). This section therefore reviews what we know about the different constraints that influence strategic decision-making by terrorist groups.

Tactical Choices and the Strategic Environment

The cleanest delineation of the relationship between terrorists' strategic environment and their choices of tactics comes from Kydd and Walter (2006) who approach the question from a bargaining theory framework. Since conflict in such a framework is *ex ante* inefficient— with

perfect information there always exists some bargain that is preferable to fighting since fighting is destructive—terrorist campaigns only make sense when there is some uncertainty, either over the other side’s power, resolve, or trustworthiness. Kydd and Walter argue that how terrorists approach the struggle depends on the interaction between where the uncertainty lies and whether they are trying to persuade the enemy or their own population. They identify five strategic reasons to engage in terrorism:

1. *Attrition*. When terrorists are trying to gain favorable political changes by convincing an enemy of their power or resolve, they engage in a struggle of attrition, conducting as many attacks as possible to demonstrate their capacity and resilience.
2. *Spoiling*. When terrorists are trying to scuttle a peace process that embodies a settlement they do not like, they may use attacks to convince the enemy that the moderates on their side cannot be trusted.
3. *Intimidation*. When terrorists seek to keep their own population in line—perhaps because too many people are sharing information with government forces—they may engage in attacks against that population to reaffirm their power.
4. *Outbidding*. When a terrorist group is competing for prominence with other groups, and there is uncertainty among these groups’ potential supporters about which of the several groups is a better representative of the cause, then they may engage in attacks to convince potential supporters of their resolve.
5. *Provocation*. When terrorist groups wish to convince their own population that a government cannot be trusted, they may engage in attacks designed to prompt that government to excessive action, what has long been known by terrorist strategists as the ‘action-reaction cycle.’

In this typology tactical choices arise as the result of groups trying to resolve different kinds of uncertainty. These comprise a distinct set of tradeoffs involved in each strategy. Those inherent in strategies of provocation and outbidding have so far received the most attention.

On the provocation side, Bueno de Mesquita and Dickson (2007), examines the interaction between terrorists trying to provoke a government into action which reveals its perfidy to their supporting population, a government trying to minimize support for terrorists, and civilians unsure about how much the government cares about their welfare. They show that terrorists face very different strategic incentives depending on how costly it is for the government to respond in a discriminate way and on what the population at large believes about the government. Building on this insight, Carter (2012a) analyzes terrorist attacks and counter-terrorist actions in Europe from 1950-2004, offering evidence that groups with anti- system focus seek to provoke excess reaction while groups seeking to change policies within the existing political system do not. Carter’s work is novel in its introduction of structural modeling into the terrorism literature, an approach that allows one to build beliefs about the strategic environment into the statistical estimators used to analyze the data.

On the outbidding side, Bloom (2004) and Jaeger et al. (2011) both provide valuable evidence. Using interviews and qualitative analysis, Bloom demonstrates how dynamics of outbidding shaped the growth of suicide bombing in Palestine and the early years of the second intifada. Jaeger et. al. combine attack data with public opinion data to study how popular opinion reacts to

militant violence. Importantly, they show that while militants do see political gains from successful attacks, those gains do not cross over tacit boundaries. When secular groups (e.g. Fatah) conduct an attack, they gain support at the expense of other secular groups, but do not garner additional adherents who formerly supported an Islamist group, and vice versa. The gains from outbidding, in other words, are constrained by pre-existing political categories.

One area of decision-making that the strategic literature has not yet studied effectively is individual and group decisions to leave terrorism. There have been excellent case studies on why individuals leave or on why specific groups stop using terrorism (Bjørge and Horgan, 2009; Horgan, 2009), but these do not examine a systematic sample that makes identifying broad trends possible. In the most prominent recent quantitative studies on the subject, Cronin (2006) identifies nine distinct ways in which groups can end, half of which imply a coherent decision and not simply the slow attrition of the group. Cronin (2009) extends the analysis of each way groups can end but does not delve deeply into the strategic logic of those ways which are intentional. For prominent groups which made a conscious decision to end terrorism, the decision-making process is well understood because key leaders have shared their thinking with journalists and scholars (e.g. the African National Congress, Fatah, M-19, and the Provisional Irish Republican Army), but much less is known about decision making in less prominent groups. More historical research is needed here before scholars can develop broad testable theories. A good place to start would be with the histories of groups that successfully employed terrorism as part of an anti-colonial struggle, since those participants who are still alive will likely be willing to share their experiences and face no legal jeopardy for doing so.

Resource Constraints

A substantial literature in the study of rebel groups and terrorist organisations focuses on how groups' resources impact on their behavior.

Focusing on the nature of the fighters groups can attract, Weinstein (2007) argues that groups which attract opportunistic joiners will have a harder time maintaining discipline and so be more likely to abuse civilians. They will, in other words, be more likely to engage in activity that would be coded as terrorism in any of the canonical datasets. Weinstein argues that groups will tend to attract opportunistic joiners when they have access to substantial readily distributed resources, while those without such resources must rely on ideological appeals to find recruits and so get a more easily controlled set of operatives.

While his argument focuses on natural resources (e.g. conflict diamonds), an obvious analogy is that groups with access to substantial external sources of funding will attract more opportunistic individuals and so engage in more violence. Accepting foreign resources also creates additional incentives to engage in highly visible violence. As Hovil and Werker (2005) show in the context of African rebel groups, external sponsors are often ill-informed about how hard their proxies are fighting and so look for dramatic public signals of effort. This, in turn, creates incentives for groups receiving external support to engage in spectacular attacks that generate high levels of media coverage and international attention.

Turning to more obvious impacts of groups' finances, recent work has pointed out that the nature of attacks groups conduct, and thus the patterns of terrorist campaigns, must depend on the relationships between their financial capital, ongoing income, and the costs of organising different kinds of attacks (Feinstein and Kaplan, 2010). When terrorist groups have low levels of capital, there are strong reasons for them to start small, conducting attacks that can be financed with ongoing income. However, as groups develop greater resources, the risks inherent in investing in large-scale attacks become more tolerable. The key implication is that groups' finances may impact the types of attacks they conduct in subtle ways.[7]

Terrorist groups may also be constrained by their access to security resources. In particular, access to foreign sanctuary may be critical (Salehyan, 2007). As Bapat (2007) shows, terrorist groups face a tough decision in seeking foreign sanctuary because doing so enhances their chances of survival but also places them under the influence of a foreign power that may require them to alter their demands or turn on them in the future. Bapat models the strategic decisions of terrorists who take into account that tradeoff as well as the strategic incentives of the prospective host and provides initial evidence that terrorists are more likely to move to host states that have low capacity to influence their activities. More recent work, though, calls into question the basic premise that access to foreign sanctuary is an unalloyed good. Carter (2012b) shows that groups with foreign sponsors actually become more vulnerable if that sponsor provides a safe haven. He posits this is because those sponsors face strong incentives to sell out their terrorist allies when they stop being useful proxies.

Of course, a key determinant of how much security groups have is the baseline levels of support they enjoy from a population. Drawing on this insight, Berman et al. (2011) model the three-way interaction between insurgent organisations seeking to do violence, government forces seeking to suppress them with a mix of public goods provision and military action, and the population stuck in the middle which must decide whether to share information with counterinsurgents. They show that norms of non-cooperation with the government can critically impact the equilibrium of that interaction and use data from Iraq to test the model.

In an empirically-focused piece, S´anchez-Cuenca and de la Calle (2009) review evidence on the social constraints domestic terrorist groups face. They also argue that groups' cannot survive without some degree of state support and that their uses of violence in domestic terrorist campaigns are thus strongly constrained by social norms. Groups operating in societies where extreme violence is simply beyond the pale will have to be much more careful than groups with identical political goals operating in places more tolerant of violence. These arguments are surely correct and are mirrored in the internal discussions of groups, including Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) whose members debated the proper ways killing their Iraqi enemies without causing the population to turn against them (Shapiro, in press).[8]

Overall, future advances in understanding the social constraints to terrorist decision-making will require far more research on the correlates of support for terrorist groups. This can be done well with surveys, at least in some contexts such as Pakistan (Bullock et al., 2011; Blair et al., 2012) and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Jaeger et al., 2011).

A promising early effort to ties insights about terrorists reliance on popular support and their decision-making together is Wood (2010) who uses data on one-sided violence in civil wars to

show that terrorists are most likely to attack civilians when they face strong government, and so need to compel compliance from their supporters, but have few financial resources with which they can buy off the population. This pattern suggests that terrorist groups make strategically rational choices about how to allocate their efforts between attacking security forces and attacking civilian targets.

Organisational Constraints

A distinct strand in the rationalist literature posits that groups face a set of constraints stemming from their organisational structure. Many of the findings in this literature come from cross-national regressions on new datasets that record organisational traits over time. Asal and Rethemeyer (2008), for example, show that organisations that are large, control territory, and have a religious ideology are more lethal. The authors, do not, however, establish how traits like whether a group controls territory or its estimated size are calculated independent of references to the group's activities. It seems likely that estimates of group size in the secondary literature are strongly influenced by assessments of what a group is doing, with analysts assuming that groups conducting more attacks must have more people.

The most subtle set of arguments in this strand stems from efforts to explain why some religiously-motivated terrorist groups are so deadly (Berman and Laitin, 2008; Berman, 2009). The basic insight is the familiar one that terrorist groups are inherently vulnerable to leaking information to government forces. Given this, if government forces will pay more for information that lets them stop attacks against more valuable targets or that do more damage (i.e. suicide attacks), then only organisations which are unusually effective at preventing people within the movement from cooperating with the government will be able to conduct such attacks. Just as religious organisations which run mutual aid networks and require sacrifices from their members turn out to be unusually good at stopping such defections in less violent settings, Berman and Laitin (2008) show that religiously motivated terrorist groups which provide services to their members are more deadly and more likely to successfully attack high value targets. Importantly, the role of religion here is not in generating greater commitment to the cause; rather, religion serves as a method of embedding potential agents in a dense network of reciprocal relationships which make it relatively more costly for them to defect by sharing information with government operatives.

A second set of arguments about organisational constraints comes from arguments about what we can think of as the organisational ecology in which groups operate. As Bloom (2004) noted, groups who must compete with one another for prominence have incentives to conduct more attacks than simply pressuring the opposing government might imply. Chenoweth (2010) tests this logic in a cross-country setting, finding that where there is more competition between terrorist groups (which tends to happen in democracies) there is more violence. However, these findings are based on regressions which do not account effectively for the possibility that certain arrangements of political preferences in the population may make it more likely that terrorist groups break into multiple factions.[9]

One might think that an implication of arguments about how the struggle for prominence motivates violence is that when key leaders are killed there should be a spike in violence as

people vie to make a name for themselves and take over top slots. The evidence, however, does not support this view. In the only cross-national study which effectively tests the causal impact of leadership decapitation, Johnston (2012) shows that successful assassinations of insurgent leaders (many of whom are from groups many data sources classify as terrorist) lead to reduced violence. If competition within a movement were an important motivation for excess violence, we would expect the opposite to be the case. Because Johnston (2012) is one of the few authors in this literature to identify a causal relationship, it is worth mentioning how he does so. Basically, Johnston compare successful leadership decapitation efforts with failed ones, relying on the randomness inherent in the success or failure of any given attempt to identify the causal effect of success, an approach previously used by Jones and Olken (2009) to study the impact of leadership changes on economic growth.[10]

Non-Strategic Considerations

While the rationalist literature does an excellent job when outlining how groups respond to constraints that impact their strategic opportunities, groups face a broad set of non- strategic considerations that limit their options. In particular, technological constraints loom large for terrorist groups. These are typically small groups that rarely have substantial research and development capacity, meaning the diffusion of organisational technologies across groups is a critical source of tactical options. This fact has been observed broadly in the policy-oriented literature interested in the spread of tactics from insurgent in Iraq to Afghanistan, but has also attracted scholarly attention. Horowitz (2010), for example, examines the diffusion and adoption of suicide bombing across groups, finding that groups with organisational traits that make them more capable of adopting suicide tactics do so sooner and that key results in earlier studies of suicide bombing fail when the diffusion process is accounted for.

Internal agency problems also loom large in constraining terrorist decisions. The key insight in this literature is that terrorist groups face substantial internal managerial challenges, including: controlling operatives who wish to do more violence than is politically optimal from their leader's perspective; making sure funds are spent properly and not raised in ways which alienate the community; coordinating actions between covert operatives across long distances; and resolving intense political disagreements.[11] Tools to deal with these challenges - expense reports, frequent communications, screening operatives by requiring them to engage in violent acts, and the like - all entail security costs for groups, which means that groups facing strong pressure may simply not be able to carry out leaders' decisions.

One enduring puzzle which suggests non-strategic considerations play a key role in motivating terrorist decision-making is that terrorist organisations almost always fail to achieve their strategic demands (Abrahms, 2006). Indeed their attacks on civilians often make it harder for governments to compromise (Abrahms, 2011). There are several possible explanations for this phenomenon. The simplest is that achieving strategic demands is too high a bar for measuring 'success'; perhaps terrorists should be considered as succeeding when they shift the terms of debate around an issue. By that metric, Gould and Klor (2010) show that terrorism by Palestinian groups has been a success in that it has shifted the entire electoral map in Israel. Their study is

particularly credible as it effectively uses sub-national variation in exposure to terrorism to identify the causal effects of terrorist violence.

A slightly more nuanced possibility is that terrorism is simply the best of a poor set of options available to would-be political entrepreneurs. That terrorist groups fail quite often is a fact; yet crucial is the question is whether they fail more often than those seeking similar political changes through other means. If they do, then the puzzle has real bite, but identifying a valid set of counterfactual cases to test this question is inherently challenging. Abrahms (2012) takes a step in the right direction by comparing violent sub-state campaigns that target civilians against those that do not in a regression setting. While he finds groups that target civilians are less likely to succeed, his research design does not exploit an exogenous source of variation in civilian targeting, and so leave us unsure if violent opposition groups lose at higher rates when they target civilians, or if they target civilians when they see no other options for success.

Still, suppose that Abrahms is correct, and that among similarly capable organisations seeking similar changes, those which employ terrorism have less chance of success. Several explanations would be possible. One is that the agency problems identified above simply make it very hard for any covert organisation to use violence effectively and that they are more debilitating for managing terrorist violence than for managing other kinds of opposition activity. A second explanation is some that terrorist groups are not, in fact, motivated by achieving political goals. There is good evidence that individual terrorists are motivated largely by the desire to form affective ties with their compatriots (see e.g. Abrahms (2008)), but whether those individual motivations add up to group-level decision-making is an open question.

How Should Terrorist Decision-making be Studied?

In the last 10 years analysts have brought a broad range of tools to bear on the study of terrorist decision-making. I conclude this review by summarizing them and then suggest how these tools can be profitably combined to yield more accurate knowledge.

Game theory has proven extremely useful for laying out the strategic dynamics terrorist decision makers face. While its descriptive accuracy and the reality of its assumptions regarding subjective expected utility (SEU) maximization have been questioned, there is a growing body of literature in experimental economics which suggests that people operating in settings in which they have experience do in fact maximize SEU in decision-theoretic settings and play equilibrium strategies in interactions with others.[12] The question for terrorism analysts considering whether rationalist models are useful should shift from the overly simplistic question of whether such models assumptions' are always correct - of course they are not - to the more subtle question of whether the domain of terrorist decision-making in question is one in which we should expect individuals or groups to follow equilibrium strategies.

Interviews and archival work have been extremely valuable in illuminating specific cases of terrorist decision-making. Interviews have been used to greatest effect to study organisational processes in groups where a successful peace process has made it possible for former participants to talk about their actions. The work if English (2003) and Moloney (2002) on the Provisional Irish Republican Army are two of the best examples.[13] Archival work has proven extremely

useful for studying jihadist movements. Thanks to the U.S. government's Harmony database, thousands of internal documents from Al-Qaeda Core, Al-Qaeda in Iraq, and related groups are now archived. More of these documents are becoming available over time and they have been used in a range of reports which highlight the managerial failings of these groups, as well as the extent of disagreement within them (Brachman and McCants, 2006; Felter and et. al., 2006; Shapiro and Watts, 2007; Fishman et al., 2008; Bahney et. al, 2010). Work with captured documents has also provided great insight into the FARC (Smith, 2011).

In a slightly different version of archival work, a number of scholars have used trial transcripts to provide a broad range of detailed information on individuals and organisations (Sageman, 2004, 2008; Magouirk et al., 2008). Helfstein and Wright (2011) use such data to show that six prominent attack networks do not appear to have been organised to maximize secrecy; rather they were organised to maximize productivity and cohesion in the run up to their attacks. This important finding emphasizes the importance of considering how hierarchy and structure contribute to terrorist organisations' abilities to make decisions in the first place.

So how should these tools be combined? I argue that detailed knowledge of groups' political and organisational histories is critical for using quantitative tools effectively. Most quantitative results cited above are associational, they show correlations which could be a result of the impact of key variables on terrorist behavior, but could also be due to the fact that both independent and dependent variables are influenced by the same factors (or at least our measurement of them is). While there are some important exceptions to this observation, Johnston (2012) writing on the impact of leadership decapitation, Benmelech et al. (2011) on the impact of home demolitions, and Gould and Klor (2010) on the impact of terrorism on Israeli politics - most of the empirical literature remains quite unreliable by current standards for quantitative work in economics (and increasingly in the literatures on civil war and insurgency). This is not simply a problem in quantitative work, few qualitative studies properly identify plausible counterfactuals or identify cases that were similar but for some key independent variable.

More detailed knowledge can help here. In the first place, it can identify plausibly exogenous variation in key variables which enable one to estimate causal effects.[14] In the second place, it can draw our attention to key points in time around which we should see changes in terrorist activity. LaFree et al. (2012), for example, examine whether patterns of ETA attacks shifted after their 1978 announcement that they would begin conducting attacks across Spain in an effort to wear out the government and compel concessions to the Basque movement. They find that the pattern of ETA violence did indeed become more dispersed following this announcement, suggesting the announced strategic shift was, in fact, carried out. This kind of analysis, in which one looks for breaks in the patterns of terrorist activity, could surely be applied across a range of groups to gain greater insights as to whether and how decisions translate into action.

Even when clever identification strategies are not available, quantitative research in this field needs to be much more careful about interpreting correlations found in cross-country or time-series data. Four tools in particular can help quantitative researchers establish greater confidence in their findings. First, cross-country regressions should always report a model employing country fixed-effects to make sure that unit-specific factors are not driving the results. If adding fixed-effects substantially changes the results. That does not mean the study is useless, it simply

is another piece of information about the underlying social process. Second, researchers should make greater use of placebo tests in which one tests the impact of the treatment in question (say a change in government counter-terror policy) on a variable known to be unaffected by the cause of interest. In a study of the impact of mobile communications on violence in the Iraqi insurgency, for example, Shapiro and Weidmann (2012) show that turning on new towers in areas that have pre-existing coverage has no impact on violence, while introducing coverage in previously-uncovered areas leads to substantial reductions in violence. Third, researchers should explicitly test various implications of the most likely sources of bias. Finally, researchers can consider concordance tests with the factual record in key places, basically making sure their model predicts correctly what happened in a few specific instances, ideally those that are a key source of intuition for their underlying theoretical concepts.

So, where should the literature on terrorist decision-making go next? First, we need more theoretical work on terrorism as one tactical choice among many for those who would change the political status quo. Second, quantitative empirical work needs to move beyond finding endogenous correlations into reliable causal inference - the same move the civil war literature has made in last few years. Third, there needs to be much more dialogue between researchers from the qualitative side of the field who have rich knowledge of the specifics needed to reliably test theories and quantitative researchers who have the data and tools to find average tendencies across a range of comparable groups.

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Notes

[1] Jackson (2009) reviews many of these developments, laying out the rich set of influences in the literature, ultimately identifying some 47 factors that have been posited to impact terrorist decision-making.

[2] Blomberg et al. (2011), for example, study the impact of terrorism on growth in Africa, finding a negative effect of rates of terrorism on economic growth. The authors do not account for the possibility that terrorism may simply be parodying for other kinds of opposition activity.

[3] Groups as diverse as the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party from 1905 - 1910, the FARC over the last twenty years, and Hamas from 1993 - 2006, have constantly adapted their activities to changing circumstances, varying both levels of violence and specific tactical choices.

[4] For a brief summary, see Laitin and Shapiro (2007).

[5] The author highlights Chechnya but other relevant examples include the MILF in the Philippines, IRA over the long run, AQI in Iraq, and now possibly the Taliban in Afghanistan.

[6] See for example M-19 in Colombia, AQI in Iraq in 2003 -04, the Party of the Socialists Revolutionary in Russia in 1904 - 1905, and now perhaps the resistance in Syria.

[7] Relatedly, groups that fund themselves through illicit business may attract opportunistic joiners—a repeated problem for Loyalist terrorist groups in Northern Ireland—but also face incentives to keep a low profile to minimize disruption to those businesses. Peters (2012) provides a useful discussion of the interplay between violence and both licit and illicit businesses for the Haqqani network.

[8] As Fishman (2009) shows, AQI as a whole failed in making these calculations.

[9] See e.g. Bueno de Mesquita (2008) ; this is discussed more below.

[10] Price (2012) finds a correlation between leadership decapitation and reduced organisational durability that is consistent with Johnston's result. He does not, however, exploit a source of exogenous variation in leader death, and so his estimates, while probative, should be accorded less weight.

[11] Key citations in this literature include Cu'ellar (2007); Shapiro (2007); Shapiro and Siegel (2007); Eilstrup-Sangiovanni and Jones (2008); Helfstein (2009); Shapiro and Siegel (2012).

[12] List's body of work on the subject is too rich to cite in full, but for exemplary pieces, see List (2003) and Levitt et al. (2010).

[13] See Berko (2007) for a creative use of prison interviews to provide evidence on the motivations of Palestinian suicide bombers.

[14] See for example Condra and Shapiro (2012) who use the randomness inherent in weapons effects to identify the impact of civilian casualties on insurgent violence in Iraq, or Lyall (2009) who uses the particulars of how Russian soldiers conducted artillery missions to identify how insurgents responded to the abuse of civilians in Chechnya.

Turning to and from Terror: Deciphering the Conditions under which Political Groups Choose Violent and Nonviolent Tactics

by Susanne Martin and Arie Perliger

Abstract

Political parties and terrorist groups are seldom viewed as comparable organizations. While both have political ambitions and an interest in mobilizing popular support, the former are associated with the use of legitimate formal-legal tactics to obtain political goals and the latter, in contrast, are typically associated with the use of violence. However, these characteristics are not always compatible with the empirical evidence. In fact, some political parties have employed violence in order to promote their goals, while many terrorist groups have adopted nonviolent tactics in order to achieve theirs. In order to account for similarities and differences between these organizations, we conceptualize political parties and terrorist organizations as political groups that use different tactics under different conditions. We examine the relative attractiveness of choices between violent and nonviolent tactics in an effort to uncover the factors shaping the strategic decisions of diverse political groups. Subsequently, we present and test a theoretical framework, which serves as a foundation for the analysis of the shifts in tactics undertaken by different political groups.

Introduction

It has been more than twenty years since Leonard Weinberg and Bill Eubank published their highly insightful typology of party-terror linkages.[1] This typology summarizes the variety of forms that linkages between political parties and terrorist groups have taken, along with examples of these types. A year later, Weinberg extended the discussion to include the conditions under which political parties are more likely to engage in terrorism, noting differences between political parties and terrorist groups while simultaneously highlighting the ways in which these political groups are similar.[2] The view of participating in party politics and engaging in terrorism as tactics, which may be used by different types of political groups under varying conditions, follows easily from this description. Despite the initial impact of this work, there has been relatively little development in the literature on linkages between political parties and terrorist groups. A resurgence of interest and new research, however, suggests that this is changing.[3]

This renewed interest in the topic of party-terror linkages has inspired us to revisit and further develop the research questions raised by Weinberg and Eubank some twenty years ago. We begin by elaborating on the work that has been done to date on the relationships between political parties and terrorist groups. We build on this work by empirically testing current understandings of the conditions under which political parties and terrorist groups alternate between engaging in party politics and terrorist tactics and the types of political parties and terrorist groups that are most likely to change their tactics. In this analysis, we focus on cases in which terrorist groups

form ties with political parties and cases in which political parties form ties with terrorist groups. We refer to these as party-terror linkages and we view the formation of these linkages as a shift in tactics. We present three explanations for the formation of party-terror linkages, drawing support for each explanation from the literatures on three widely-corroborated categories of explanatory variables.[4] We then discuss the ways in which related factors influence the attractiveness of shifting between party politics and terrorism. In this way, we advance the literature on party-terror linkages, offering a point of departure for the growing collection of new scholarship in the field. We conclude with an evaluation of the implications of our findings for discussions and debates among students and scholars of party-terror linkages.

Explaining Shifts in Political Tactics

In this analysis, we address some of the questions most central to understanding the cases in which political groups shift to or from terrorism: Why do political parties and terrorist groups sometimes change their tactics? What leads these groups to experiment with terrorism or party politics, or some combination of these tactics? Under what conditions are groups more likely to change their tactics and which types of political groups are most likely to do so? Despite increased interest in political groups with ties to party politics and terrorist activities, very few answers have been offered to these questions.

In this article, we move from an elaboration of a static typology, as presented in the 1991 article, to an analysis of a dynamic event, as is evidenced by the large number of instances in which groups have shifted between terrorism and party politics. We show that shifts in tactics offer strong support for the contention that the strategic behavior of political groups changes over time as a function of changes in the attractiveness of different tactics. Changes in the attractiveness of different tactics are themselves a function of changes in the environment within which these groups operate, although the attractiveness of tactics, we argue, differs for different types of political groups. By empirically testing existing understandings of party-terror linkages, we provide further evidence in support of the argument that variations in the attractiveness of political tactics are mediated by political conditions and group characteristics.

The Development of the Literature

This effort represents an extension of the research on linkages between political parties and terrorist groups. When it comes to explaining the reasons that political groups alternate between terrorism and party politics, scholarship over the last twenty years has left a noticeable void in the literature. This void is particularly evident with regard to concepts, theory, methodology, and case selection.

Conceptual Limitations

The literature on party-terror linkages is limited by the distinctive designation and separate treatment of political parties and terrorist groups within the political science literature. In fact, different types of political groups are frequently distinguished by the tactics they employ. In

terms of tactics, political parties and terrorist groups are seldom viewed as comparable organizations. Political parties are typically recognized as groups working in accordance with established institutions to aggregate diverse interests, compete for popular support, obtain political office, and influence domestic politics.[5] With the exception of many communist parties, political parties are relatively transparent in their organization and operations; they are recognized as legitimate actors and key components of democratic systems.[6] Above all, political parties are widely assumed to use formal-legal tactics, not violence, to achieve political ends. It should be noted, however, that most definitions of political parties do not require that the party be committed to nonviolent tactics.

By contrast, definitions of terrorist groups most often refer to groups operating at the fringes of society, outside of the political system. Terrorist groups are commonly viewed as illegitimate actors, illegal, unrepresentative, and disruptive to the political systems within which they operate. They engage in terrorist violence, itself a contested term generally referring to the threat or use of violence, oftentimes perpetrated against noncombatants in order to incite fear, for the purpose of influencing political outcomes.[7] Terrorist groups are often secretive with regard to their operations and organization. Above all, terrorist groups are presumed to be illegal organizations utilizing illegal tactics, most notably tactics of a violent nature, in order to obtain political ends.

While these descriptions are generally accepted, they demonstrate a Western democratic bias, and a contemporary one at that.[8] In other parts of the world—for instance in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia—some organizations calling themselves political parties are anything but peaceful. If we follow Ware's definition of a political party as "...an institution that 1) seeks to influence a state, often by attempting to occupy political offices by putting forth candidates in electoral competitions, and 2) usually consists of more than a single interest in the society and so, to some degree, attempts to 'aggregate interests'," [9] then it is not obvious that these groups must be simultaneously committed to nonviolent political activities in order to be labeled as political parties. In principle then, there is no reason why political parties, institutions thus defined, cannot engage in terrorism or other types of political violence.[10] Similarly, when labeling organizations as terrorist groups, it is necessary to bear in mind that terrorism is a type of activity rather than a type of organization, and an organization that uses terrorism may also use other types of tactics.[11]

In fact, shifts between tactics adopted by a specific political group are observable. Evidence of shifts between party politics and terrorism comes from the numerous examples of political parties turning to terrorism and from the many examples of terrorist groups supporting, forming, or becoming political parties.[12] Two additional observations are notable. First, evidence of political groups engaging in party politics and terrorism supports the view of political strategies as flexible, rather than fixed. Second, these observations raise questions about popular designations of political parties and terrorist groups as distinct types of groups. If political parties sometimes engage in terrorist tactics and terrorist groups occasionally engage in party politics, then the assumption of a dichotomous distinction between these two groups on the basis of the tactics they use can be called into question.

We bridge these largely separate literatures through our conceptualization of political groups and political tactics. We draw insights for these concepts from Weinberg and his colleagues. In this analysis, we focus on shifts in political tactics and, in particular, on shifts between participating in party politics and engaging in terrorism. We view participating in party politics, including organizing as a political party, contesting elections, or supporting candidates in electoral competitions, as one type of tactic used by some political groups. We view terrorism as another type of tactic, and as a type of political violence, which is used by some political groups some of the time. Our understanding of participating in party politics and terrorism as tactics leads us to a designation of political groups that is broader than either political parties or terrorist groups. Political groups, including political parties and terrorist groups, have political objectives.

We apply the typology presented by Weinberg and Eubank and use this typology to explore two categories of shifts in tactics.[13] One category includes cases in which political parties turn to terrorism. The other category includes cases in which terrorist groups turn to party politics. Consistent with this typology, we do not assume that turning to party politics or terrorism requires abandoning other tactics. Political parties engaging in terrorism may continue to compete in elections. Likewise, terrorist groups turning to party politics may continue to engage in terrorism. Political groups choose from among a variety of tactics in order to achieve their objectives and selecting among available tactics is an important part of a political strategy.[14]

Theoretical Limitations

The scholarship on party-terror linkages is perhaps most limited when it comes to offering explanations for why political groups shift between terrorism and party politics. Orlandrew Danzell offers a significant critique of theoretical progress in the study of political parties turning to terrorism, calling this work the product of “anecdotal and historical assumptions.”[15] Despite these limitations, many of which are admitted by their authors, significant contributions have been made to the collective understanding of shifts in tactics and the formation of party-terror linkages.

Investigating the origins of terrorist groups, Weinberg and Eubank observe that most modern terrorist groups originate as political parties, turning to terrorism in reaction to changes in domestic political conditions. They note the coincidence of regime changes and transitions from party politics to terrorism. They also discuss the features of parties that cause them to be more susceptible to these types of transformation, namely parties suffering from state oppression, promoting a particular extreme ideology and being unable to garner significant electoral support. [16] In his subsequent contribution, Weinberg highlights two group-level characteristics of political parties that turn to terrorism: “grandiose goals” and the perceived “illegitimacy of the prevailing political order.”[17] After 1991, the main theoretical contributions directed toward understanding the reasons political groups shift between party politics and terrorism come from the work of Weinberg and his colleagues, who have collectively contributed to three books on the topic of political parties and terrorist groups.[18] Whereas the first book is an edited volume with contributions from experts on political groups engaged in both terrorism and party politics, the subsequent books go a long way toward providing theoretical explanations for why groups alternate between these tactics. These contributions remain the most thorough and theoretical

works on the topic. In particular, the 2008 book addresses the conditions under which political groups “enter” and “exit” terrorism. Weinberg, Pedahzur, and Perliger associate the “entry into terrorism” with the polarization of party systems and domestic crises, such as crises of national integration and disintegration, as well as crises of legitimacy regarding the rules of the political game. They also list changes in the political order and repression by the state as conditions under which terrorist groups may abandon armed conflict. Other explanations for these types of transitions include the difficulties associated with operating clandestinely, such as maintaining popular support and acquiring resources, as well as offers of amnesty from the government.[19]

Danzell addresses one part of this question, focusing on the subset of political parties that turn to terrorism. Importantly, Danzell adds to the discussion through his attention to regime ideology, structural relationships, and strategic calculations:[20] “Opposition political parties can consequently be expected to turn to terrorism more frequently when right-wing governments are in power than when center or leftist parties control the government.”[21] Other contributions address factors that may be related to the eventual transition to party politics without necessarily making the connection. With a focus on Hamas, Gunning observes that the group’s penchant for organizational survival provides incentives for moderation over time in terms of group objectives.[22] Importantly, Gunning writes prior to Hamas’ participation in municipal and parliamentary elections. Taken together, these works mentioned above provide a useful starting point for enhancing our understanding of the shifts in tactics undertaken by political groups. At the same time, much of the remaining literature does not address the questions of why groups undertake shifts to or from terrorism that are central to this analysis. For instance, many contributions to the literature address outcomes associated with shifts in tactics and the formation of party-terror linkages, while giving considerably less attention to the causes of these shifts. Rather than explaining why groups turn to party politics, these transitions are taken as given and used as a starting point for analyses. Much of this work focuses on outcomes associated with these shifts. For Hovdenak, Hamas’ transition into a political party should be viewed as “an opportunity rather than an obstacle for Palestinian democratization.”[23] Wiegand attributes Hezbollah’s successes as a political party in Lebanon to its “political leverage” and gradual moderation.[24] Largely absent are explanations for why Hezbollah formed a political party in the first place. Neumann argues that participating in party politics has had an effect on the strategies preferred by elements within the Irish Republican movement. While admitting to the relevance of other “enabling factors” present within a political environment (for instance, repression and outside intervention) and within the political groups (such as leaders’ views and actions), Neumann credits public aspects of participating in party politics, including publically engaging in political dialogue and being held responsible to public opinion through voting, with the movement’s decreased resort to armed violence.[25] An understanding such as this provides important insights into how participating in party politics may lead to a reduction in terrorism without explaining what leads to participating in party politics.

Furthermore, with notable exceptions such as the contributions by Weinberg and Danzell,[26] most of the literature focuses on the subset of terrorist groups that turn to party politics rather than the political parties that turn to terrorism. This is true even among political groups undertaking “life-cycle” transformations, for which the focus seems to lie with the transition to party politics. This can be explained in large part by the coincidence in the timing of the

development of this literature and the transitions of many well-known violent groups and formerly-violent groups to party politics. The recent focus on the Muslim Brotherhood's electoral victories in Egypt provides just one example.

Attention to the transition to party politics is no less apparent when attention is turned to the developing literature on the end of terrorism. The transition to party politics is one way by which a political group may cease acting as a terrorist group.[27] Another of the key differences between the party-terrorism literature and the end of terrorism literature is the attention in the latter to the abandonment of violence and the allowance in the former for the continued use of both violent and nonviolent political tactics.

We are less interested in explaining why terrorism ends than in explaining why political groups shift to and from terrorism. We draw attention to insights from the literature in order to gain leverage on the questions of which groups undertake these shifts and why.

Methodological Limitations and Case Selection

Arriving at answers to the harder question of why political groups transition between terrorist tactics and acting as political parties has also been hampered by the methods and cases most commonly selected in studies of party-terror linkages. The majority of the work on the political groups that have turned to and from terrorism has been undertaken in the form of case studies. Qualitative approaches serve an important role in this literature, providing descriptive insights into individual cases, which cannot be easily achieved through larger-*n* analyses. At the same time, while case studies can be used to derive and test theories, single case studies cannot be used simultaneously for both purposes. More to the point, there are limits to using a single case to derive general hypotheses for why political groups turn to and from terrorism. A potential bias can also be found in work relying on comparisons of two or a few cases, especially when these cases are situated within a single region or time period and when they represent one type of outcome. Moreover, while studies focusing on limited cases provide insights into the conditions under which some groups shift tactics and the types of groups that shift tactics, they fall short in offering insights into why other similar or similarly situated groups do not.

A further limitation becomes apparent when considering the breadth of cases receiving the bulk of attention. Many of the studies focus on a handful of well-known cases. In the past much of this attention was focused on the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and Euskadi ta' Askatasuna (ETA), both of which engaged in violent forms of political competition, while maintaining ties to political parties. Today more attention is given to Hamas and Hezbollah, two groups that have been identified as having engaged in terrorist tactics prior to turning to party politics.

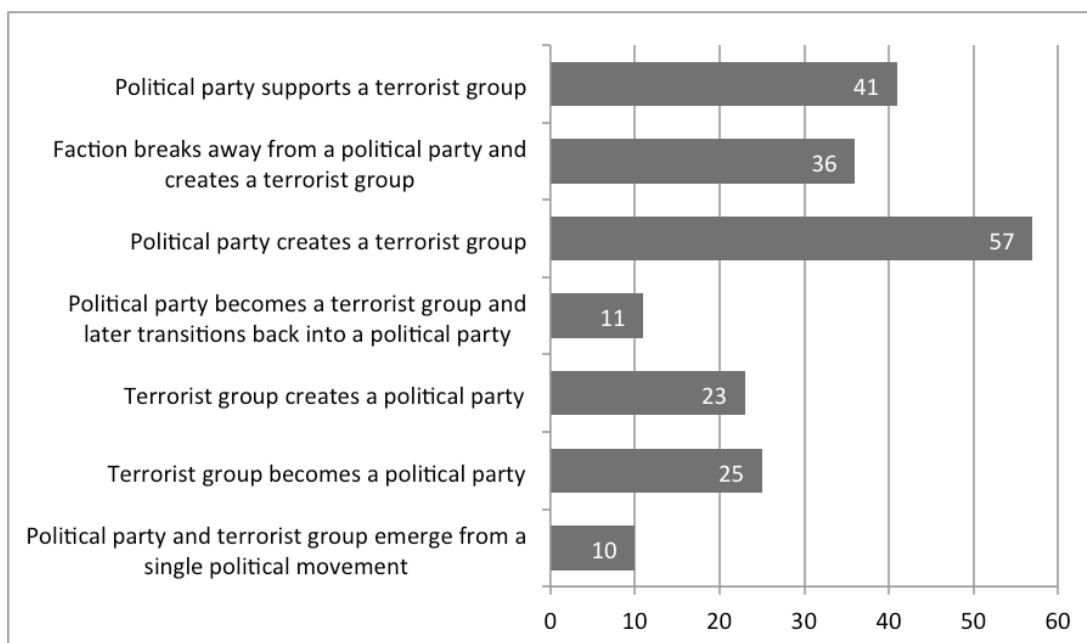
We address this limitation through our analysis of close to two hundred cases of party-terror linkages and approximately the same number of terrorist groups with no documented ties to political parties. We use a dataset that includes detailed descriptions of each political group as well as information by which these groups may be compared. We discuss the data in more detail before turning to a discussion and analysis of explanatory factors.

Data and Design

We analyze data contained in the dataset that was used in the 2008 edition of *Political Parties and Terrorist Groups*.^[28] This dataset includes information on terrorist groups operating at some point in time between 1900 and 2004. The dataset was constructed from descriptions of violent political groups found in several sources, including the MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, the United States Department of State's Patterns of Global Terrorism Project, and Schmid and Jongman's collaborative guide to terrorist groups.^[29] These sources include many more groups than are included in this analysis. The dataset is limited to those groups whose activities meet four commonly-accepted criteria for describing terrorist activity: (1) the use or threat of violence (2) against non-combatants (3) in order to influence a broad audience (4) for the purposes of achieving political goals.^[30] Rather than looking at violent political groups engaging in political violence, more broadly defined, we limit this analysis to groups engaging in a specific type of violent tactic: terrorism.

Applying this definition of terrorism, the dataset that originally included more than 2000 cases was whittled to 430 terrorist groups.^[31] Further analysis of each of these terrorist groups reveals numerous connections between them and political parties. Although each of the groups in the dataset has used terrorism, nearly half of the groups ($n = 203$) have also had ties to political parties (see Figure 1). Of these, two-thirds are cases in which political parties supported, created, or splintered and transitioned into terrorist groups ($n = 134$) and slightly less than one quarter are cases in which terrorist groups created or became political parties ($n = 48$). The remaining ten percent are divided between "life-cycle" transformations ($n = 11$) and splits within political movements ($n = 10$). "Life-cycle" transformations are cases in which political parties transitioned into terrorist groups and then remade themselves as political parties.^[32] In other cases, political parties and terrorist groups originate within a single political movement.^[33] Each of these types represents a shift in tactics. As Weinberg, Pedahzur, and Perliger point out, "we are dealing with a relatively common phenomenon...Links between parties and terrorist activities are by no means rare or exotic."^[34]

Figure 1: Types of shifts in tactics[35]



Three Types of Explanations

A review of the relevant literatures suggests at least three types of factors that contribute to changes in the relative attractiveness of political tactics: features of regimes, the type of party system, and group characteristics. Though these factors are not exhaustive, they provide a useful starting point for a developing literature.

Regime Characteristics

The first, and perhaps most studied, set of explanations for shifts to and from terrorism addresses the influence of regime characteristics. The relationship between regime type and terrorist tactics has been and continues to be the subject of an intense debate. From one perspective, democratic regimes are expected to discourage the use of violent tactics by protecting individual rights, facilitating peaceful political competition, and providing various channels for the expression and promotion of political agendas. Moreover, in democracies an independent judicial system provides a form of protection from oppression produced by the political apparatus. In contrast, authoritarian regimes stifle political violence by controlling political activities, placing limitations on competition, and suppressing dissent.[36] It seems that much of this debate pits measurements of the effect of democracy on the presence of terrorist groups, which is the Eubank and Weinberg approach, against the effect of democracy on the number of terrorist incidents, which represents the Sandler critique.[37] Eubank and Weinberg find that democracies are more likely to have terrorist groups.[38] Sandler, on the other hand, argues that understanding the link between democracy and terrorism requires an examination of terrorist

events rather than the presence of groups,[39] a critique Eubank and Weinberg answer when they find that terrorist events are also more likely to occur in democratic settings.[40] Recent work by Chenoweth suggests that intergroup competition can help to explain both the number of terrorist groups and acts of terrorism.[41] To the extent that democracy facilitates increases in intergroup competition and the formation of interest groups, it is possible to see how democracy can be correlated with increases in terrorist group formation as well as the incidence of terrorism.

Discussions related to counterterrorism policy add to the debate over regime type. Abrahms focuses on the liberal components of democracy when he constructs his argument that democracies are “superior counterterrorists.”[42] This is a perspective supported by Kibble in his argument that institutionalized tolerance and justice are important prerequisites for countering terrorism.[43]

As the focus of this project is on the presence of party-terror linkages, the expectation is that the original Eubank and Weinberg model for examining the presence of terrorist groups is more applicable to the party-terror research agenda. We expect that democracies are more likely to have political parties. Following Eubank and Weinberg, we expect that democracies are also more likely to have terrorist groups. Taking these expectations one step further, we expect that some democracies will have groups engaging in both party politics and terrorism. In addition, consolidated authoritarian regimes are expected to have fewer party-terror linkages in large part because they will not have the supply of political parties or the type of political party competition that can be found in democracies.

Democracies, minimally defined, are designated on the basis of the presence of elections, presumably of the free, fair, and frequent type. While we find that the overwhelming majority of party-terror linkages exist in states with presidential or parliamentary institutions (88%), we also recognize that the presence of these institutions cannot be directly equated with the presence of democracy. Still, the overwhelming majority of party-terror linkages are found in states with some type of democratic institution. A higher number of party-terror linkages are found in states with POLITY[44] scores ranging from weakly to strongly democratic than in states with strongly authoritarian regimes. At the same time, a graph of the frequencies of party-terror linkages at various POLITY scores reveals an unexpected finding. Only slightly more cases of party-terror linkages are present in consolidated democracies than in consolidated authoritarian regimes. Despite this finding, it is important to note the likely differences between political parties operating in consolidated authoritarian systems and those operating in consolidated democratic systems, especially in terms of their political influence, power, and operations. As with different types of regime, we are likely dealing with different types of political parties. With these findings in mind, we next direct our analysis to a discussion of regime strength and stability, where we find better support for the relationship between regime characteristics and the presence of party-terror linkages.

Discussions of regime strength and weakness are integrally related to discussions of regime type. We distinguish strong and weak regimes on the bases of institutionalization and capacity. Drawing on the notion of institutionalization, we distinguish between states with consolidated authoritarian regimes and established democratic regimes. Not all regimes are either strongly authoritarian or fully democratic. Some regimes have institutional arrangements oftentimes

associated with democracy—elections, political parties, and legislatures—while failing to meet the definitional requirement of a functional democracy (i.e. fairness of the electoral processes, preservation of civil liberties and etc.). These regimes, which mix elements of democracy and authoritarianism, are sometimes referred to as “mixed” regimes. Mixed regimes are generally understood to be weaker regime types,[45] though they may not be actively transitioning in the direction of authoritarianism or democracy.[46] States with weak regimes are often less capable than their fully democratic and strictly authoritarian counterparts at conditioning or controlling political competition. Weaker regimes lack the capacity to police the operations of political groups, missing an opportunity to prevent violence in the process. Moreover, unlike in states with consolidated regimes, institutions in states with mixed regimes are often relatively young, less developed, and in a process of transition; they may lack widespread acceptance; their political institutions may be subject to renegotiation; and they may be unprepared to produce policies capable of alleviating, rather than aggravating, grievances. Using the case of Spain as an example, Encarnación discusses the added risk that weak democracies will employ policies that are damaging to democratic legitimacy and simultaneously ill-suited for fighting terrorism.[47] Piazza also finds that weak regimes are especially vulnerable to terrorism.[48] Similarly, Wade and Reiter find that mixed regimes are more likely to experience suicide terrorism in contexts in which a minority religious group is also present.[49] Hegre, Ellingsen, Gates, and Gleditsch also make a connection between regime type and internal violence, finding “intermediate regimes” to be more likely to experience conflict than democratic or authoritarian regimes.[50] Consistent with these arguments is that of Wintrobe, who argues that democratic regimes and totalitarian regimes are less likely to experience suicide terrorism.[51] The condition of being simultaneously open to competition, yet lacking consolidation, is an inherent weakness of mixed regimes, which, in combination with other factors, contributes to an increased likelihood that political groups will resort to violence.[52] In contrast to consolidated regimes, unconsolidated, weaker, or less stable regimes have fewer resources from which to draw in order to discourage the political use of violence. In the absence of stable regime conditions and effective policing, political groups operating in these states may be more likely to shift between terrorism and party politics.

Our analysis of the data found evidence that supports these explanations of the relationship between regime strength and a group’s tactical shifts. Including both democracies and authoritarian regimes in the analysis, we find that political groups with party-terror linkages appear more often in states with weaker regime types than in states with stronger, more established regimes. Two-thirds of party-terror linkages occur in states with POLITY scores ranging from -8 to 8. In fact, party-terror linkages are three times more prevalent in states with weak regimes than in strong democracies and nearly four times more prevalent in states with weak regimes than in strongly authoritarian states. One notable finding is that there are spikes in the numbers of party-terror linkages occurring at the cusps of POLITY measures indicating strong democracy and strong authoritarianism, lending further credibility to the argument that regime stability matters, though perhaps not in the ways theorized within some of the literature, wherein expectations are based on static regime types rather than on changes in regimes.[53]

With regard to regime stability, Eubank and Weinberg find that stable democracies are more likely to experience terrorist attacks and that these terrorist attacks are more likely to be

perpetrated by the state's own citizens, an outcome that is distinct from, but not completely independent of, the presence of terrorist groups within a state.[54] Highlighting the interdependence of regime characteristics and complementing Eubank and Weinberg's argument, it is interesting to note Hegre, Ellingsen, Gates, and Gleditsch's findings that, while both democratic and authoritarian regimes have counterterrorism capacities, democracies are inherently more stable than authoritarian regimes, which are more stable than "intermediate regimes." [55] Other disruptions, which may lead political parties to embrace clandestine or violent activities, include foreign invasions and military coups. These may fuel a turn to terrorism among political groups, as happened following military coups in Algeria in the 1990s and Brazil in the 1960s. Findings such as these underscore the extent to which regime type, strength, and stability factor into explanations for terrorism. We expect that the majority of shifts between terrorist tactics and party politics will appear in weak democracies in which the unstable rules of the political game encourage or even compel groups to alter the methods they employ in order to obtain their goals, and not in strong, veteran democracies or in countries that have minimal experience with democratic processes.

On the other hand, while consolidated regimes are expected to experience lower levels of political violence[56] and the establishment of democracy has been tied, almost by definition, to an increase in opportunities for nonviolent political competition, the transition from authoritarianism to democracy can be treacherous. In addition to the risks posed by processes of democratization for international conflict,[57] democratization is also recognized as having dangerous domestic side effects with regard to creating conditions conducive to internal violence.[58] Drawing from these findings, we expect that changes in levels of democracy will be associated with changes in tactics. In particular, and in contrast to some of the democratization literature, we expect that increases in democracy (increases in levels of democracy or increases in the presence of indicators of democracy) will be associated with an increase in shifts to party politics, and that decreases in democracy (decreases in levels of democracy or decreases in the presence of indicators of democracy) will be associated with an increase in shifts to terrorist tactics. We also expect to find more shifts toward violent tactics in states with unstable regimes, especially when these states are experiencing democratic collapse. [59] Weinberg and Eubank's findings tying regime change to terrorism are particularly relevant in this regard.[60]

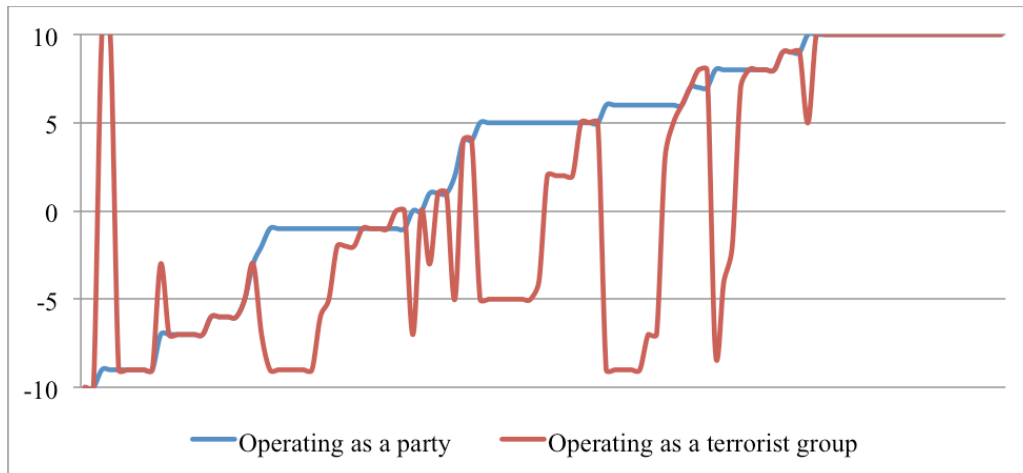
We can unpack the relationship between regime change, stability, and shifts in tactics in two ways. With regard to regime changes, we observe that most party-terror linkages are formed in states with one or more regime changes.[61] With regard to changes in levels of democracy, we find that increases in democracy are tied to an increase in the formation of party-terror linkages (mainly terrorist groups turning to legitimate political tactics). In fact, levels of democracy rise on average 3.5 points from the time of a group's formation to the time of a group's tactical shift to legitimate politics (1.26 and 4.77, respectively; see also Figure 2). The same does not hold for shifts to terrorism among political parties (see Figure 3). Decreases in levels of democracy are associated with transitions to terrorism among a minority of the political parties that undertake such shifts. Many more political parties turn to terrorism independently of significant changes in levels of democracy. In addition, in some cases, political groups transitioned to party politics under conditions of decreasing democracy rather than increasing democracy. In Figure 2 it is

clear that the level of democracy at the time of a shift to party politics is typically higher than the level of democracy at the time that a terrorist group was established. In Figure 3 it is clear that the level of democracy at the time of a shift to terrorism is typically lower than the level of democracy at the time the political party was formed. At the same time, both figures show that this is not universally the case.

Figure 2: Levels of democracy at the time of the establishment of terrorist groups and at the time of shifts to party politics



Figure 3: Levels of democracy prior to and at the time in which the party transitioned into a terrorist group



These differences can be explained in several ways. First, reductions in levels of democracy may coincide with more general repression, which may stifle various forms of political activity.

Second, it may be that political parties, which are proportionately less likely to undergo shifts in tactics than terrorist groups, are influenced by different factors than terrorist groups. In other words, causal mechanisms may differ between cases in which parties shift to terrorism and terrorist groups shift to party politics. Third, political parties are more likely to be older, less extremist, and more hierarchical than terrorist groups. Differences in explanations regarding shifts in tactics may be tied to the relative importance of organizational factors in explaining the formation of party-terror linkages. Finally, most of these party-terror linkages take place in states with weak regimes. Much of the variation in outcomes may be explained by variations in the environments within which these groups operate.

Furthering the discussion of regime characteristics, and pointing to some potential causes for inconsistencies among findings, Alonso and O'Boyle highlight the relevance of contextual factors. Alonso argues that the (mis-)interpretation of existing models of conflict resolution and peace-making helps to explain divergent strategy choices and outcomes, while O'Boyle questions whether different types of groups may offer different justifications for their choices of tactics.[62] As these works show, we find considerable variation in explanatory and outcome variables within this literature. Much of this variation can be explained by group-level analyses, an issue that we will address momentarily.

It is important to emphasize an additional factor, differences in institutional design among regimes, which is tied to regime type as well as choices among tactics. Differences in institutional design add an important element to explanations of the impact of regime type and characteristics. Many institutions have a bearing on access to power and, as a result, the ability for political groups to achieve their goals through legal political channels.[63] For instance, parliamentary systems are often viewed more favorably as being less rigid and more inclusive of diverse interests than presidential systems, whereas presidential systems—with their winner-take-all underpinnings and fixed electoral timelines—can be seen as inflexible and exclusionary.[64] In contrast, presidential regimes can be viewed as more institutionally stable, with their fixed timelines.[65] In fact, Schneider and Wiesehomeier argue that presidential systems are more war-prone than other types of systems.[66] When considered through the lens of political groups competing for influence within a political system, questions of legitimacy and stability are intertwined. For these reasons, we expect that violent tactics will be more attractive to political groups operating in states with presidential regimes, which may encourage competition while simultaneously making it more difficult to influence government.

There is preliminary support for the influence of presidential institutions on the formation of party-terror linkages. There is a slightly higher prevalence of political parties shifting to violence in presidential systems (48%) than in parliamentary systems (38%) or other types of systems. Many cases of tactical shifts take place in autocratic regimes, which are neither presidential nor parliamentary (12%). Shifts from party politics to terrorism are approximately 1.3 times more likely in presidential regimes than in parliamentary regimes. Shifts from terrorism to party politics are approximately 1.4 times more likely in presidential regimes than in parliamentary regimes. Even more interesting is the distinction within the subset of cases of political groups shifting to party politics. The data indicate that in presidential regimes, terrorist groups shifting to party politics are considerably more likely to become political parties (78%), whereas in parliamentary regimes, terrorist groups shifting to party politics are considerably more likely to

create political parties while continuing to use terrorism (88%). These distinctions are not evident among cases of political parties incorporating terrorist tactics.

Party System Characteristics

A second category of explanations for party-terror linkages can be found in the literature on party systems. A focus on party systems draws attention to local practices of political competition, which have an important influence on intergroup competition.

There are many ways in which party system characteristics influence the attractiveness of political tactics and, as a result, the makeup of political strategies. Different cleavage structures are institutionalized in different systems. Because of the potential problems associated with finding common ground, polarized party systems are of particular relevance to the discussion of selecting and shifting between political tactics.

A polarized party system is characterized by extreme viewpoints, stalemate, and, in some cases, exclusion. Polarization reflects “ideological distance” as well as “the attitudes of parties to the regime itself and to other parties in the regime,”[67] and may be associated with the presence of anti-system parties.[68] A “*bidding process*” or “mutually reinforcing extremisms” may provide a catalyst for tactical shifts favoring the use of violence.[69] Similarly, extremism, stalemate, or exclusion may make nonviolent tactics ineffective and unattractive.

The relationship between polarization and political tactics is dynamic and interdependent. High levels of polarization, which may be associated with exclusion or may lead to increases in levels of extremism, can be expected to encourage the strategic use of violence. The strategic use of violence can also be expected in societies characterized by “cultural distance” and long-lasting grievances.[70] This has been observed, for example, in the Basque region of Spain.[71] On the other hand, violence may bring about social polarization, as occurred in South Africa during Apartheid,[72] and the use of violence may bring about increases in polarization, “cultural distance,” and long-lasting grievances. In these cases, polarization may occur as a side-effect of the interactions of political groups.[73] In fact, political actors may conceive of polarization as a political tool, such as is evidenced through examples of the manipulation of ethnic identities for securing political support.

With regard to the implications of party system polarization for explanations of choices of tactics and changes in tactics, there is evidence suggesting that party system polarization coincides both temporally and geographically to regions with high numbers of party-terror linkages, especially among states with large numbers of political groups turning to terrorism.[74] Evidence of polarization in Europe and Latin America during the 1960s and 1970s coincides with shifts toward violence, providing the groundwork for further analysis at the level of individual political groups and the states within which they have operated (see Table 1).[75]

Table 1: Political parties turning to terrorism across space and time

	North America	Africa	Asia	Middle East	Europe	Latin America
1950	1	1			2	1
1960	5	2	5	6	6	12
1970	4	3	6	12	19	15
1980		2	3	4	5	12
1990		2				

Group Characteristics

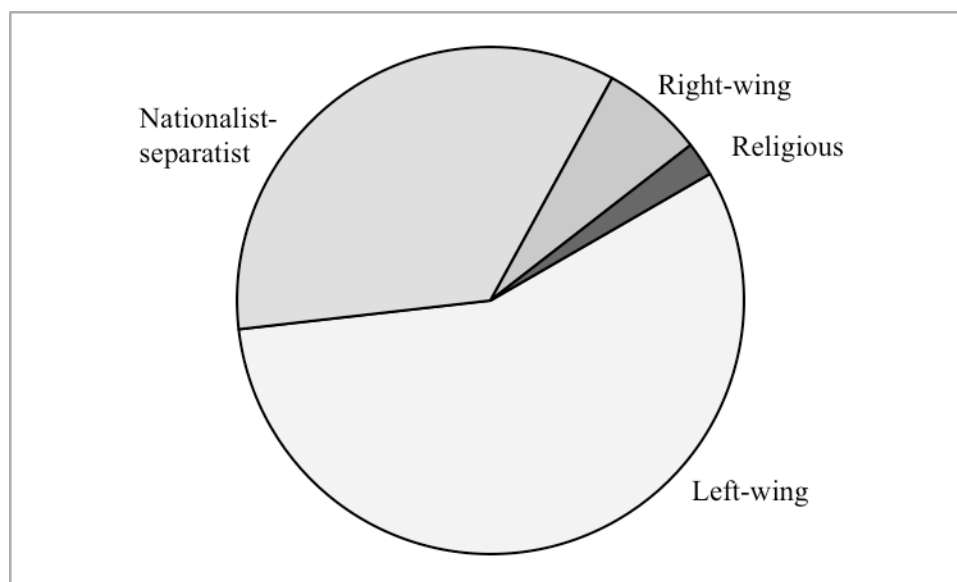
A third category of explanations for party-terror linkages relates to group characteristics.[76] The relative attractiveness of political tactics is influenced by a variety of group characteristics. Two types of influences are particularly important for this analysis. One is related to interpretations of political opportunities and the ways in which these interpretations interact with the perceived benefits of various political tactics. The other is related to the group’s ability to orchestrate shifts in tactics. Factors such as group ideology, group age, and organizational structure interact with the political environment and associated political opportunities to influence the relative attractiveness of various political tactics.

Ideology is one organizational characteristic influencing interpretations of political opportunities and the suitability of various tactics. Different ideologies are often associated with varying levels of extremism. The impact of extremism, in turn, is mediated by the environment within which a political group operates. In some environments, extremist groups have difficulty garnering public support and, as a result, are less likely to find success through electoral competition.[77] Poor electoral performance, a lack of support, exclusion, and perceptions of mass passivity can be linked to the resort to violence.[78] In other environments, especially those marked by higher levels of polarization, extremist groups are able to appeal to a segment of the population, in the process attracting public support.

In most cases, extremist groups are less likely to view the ruling regime as legitimate, making them less likely to participate in party politics and more likely to employ strategies made up of alternative tactics. These groups often maintain absolutist demands (i.e., all or nothing), making them more likely to view compromise as being akin to abandoning the group’s goals. Moderation is an important concession for political groups participating in party politics. A group that is unwilling to moderate will likely find less success in party politics and will be less likely to view these tactics as attractive. Although government policies encouraging group moderation through the appeasement of some of a group’s goals may lead to a reduction in public support for a group and an overall reduction in violence,[79] groups that moderate have been known to experience splintering, leading to the creation of more extremist and less extremist (more moderate) factions.[80]

These factors lend credence to the expectation that more extremist political groups are more likely to employ violent tactics. In fact, an analysis of the cases of party-terror linkages shows interesting trends in the relationship between ideology and tactical shifts. As compared to groups with leftist, rightist, and nationalist-separatist ideologies, far fewer of the violent groups that shift to party politics have a religious ideology (see Figure 4). This is explained in large part by the smaller number of religious terrorist groups operating during the period under study. Nearly twice as many groups maintained left-wing ideologies than either nationalist-separatist or right-wing ideologies. There were nearly four times more left-wing terrorist groups than religious terrorist groups. At the same time, whereas approximately 30 percent of violent religious groups are known to have ties with political parties, greater than half of leftist, rightist, and nationalist-separatist groups are associated with party-terror linkages. Also of interest is the fact that only one violent religious group transitioned to nonviolence by forming a tie with a political party; the other thirteen (of fourteen) groups forming party-terror linkages underwent the opposite shift, adding violent tactics to their strategic repertoires. The ratios of groups shifting to party politics are approximately equal for religious groups (7% of shifts undertaken by religious groups) and right-wing groups (9%), though these are far lower than among left-wing groups (26%) and nationalist-separatist groups (37%). In short, left-wing and nationalist-separatist terrorist groups have been more likely to turn to party politics than their religious and right-wing counterparts. The uncompromising nature of many religious and right-wing ideologies, especially in their extreme forms, may provide a partial explanation of this trend.[81] Cases of violent religious political groups are found overwhelmingly in the Middle East and Asia (forty-three of forty-six cases). In future studies, it would be useful to consider the cases with attention to context, recognizing that environmental factors may influence not only the formation of religious political groups, but also their strategic behavior. Furthermore, thirty-seven of the groups are identified as being Islamist, so it would be interesting to further disaggregate the cases by religious denomination, recognizing differences within religious communities as well as between them.

Figure 4: Ideologies of terrorist groups that turn to party politics [82]



Time is another important factor in determinations of the attractiveness of political tactics. Organizations with longer life spans have more time within which to experiment with a variety of tactics and more opportunities to experience the advantages or repercussions of these tactics. Over time, it may become apparent that one type of tactic is ineffective or insufficient for achieving a political group's goals. In addition, political groups with longer life spans are more likely to experience environmental changes, such as regime consolidation or collapse, party system polarization, shifts in government policies, and changes in people's experiences and expectations, which affect the relative attractiveness of political tactics and influence their strategic decision-making. Moreover, a group's level of extremism, like its tactics, can change over time. As time goes by, a maturing group—or a maturing leadership and membership—may moderate, substituting more attainable objectives and exchanging the absence of political gains for the chance at modest political gains.[83] Similarly, an aging membership or leadership may become less radical over time, also leading to a reduction in levels of extremism. This may occur as a result of experience, experimentation with alternative tactics, or changes in the interests or goals of individual members as they enter new stages of life. Over time, a number of political groups have undergone gradual shifts favoring an increased use of nonviolent tactics, including the IRA and Sinn Fein, Fatah, and ETA, although it is important to note that moderation—as with appeasement through government policies—may coincide with the formation of violent factions by more radical, and often younger, elements of an organization.[84] Changes in political opportunities and incentives take time to develop. Likewise, changes in tactics take time to implement. Looking at the issue from another perspective, groups may achieve longer life spans because they adapt to their environments, perhaps adopting new tactics and moderating their objectives over time. In this sense, longer life spans become the result of shifts in tactics rather

than their cause. For these reasons, organizations with longer life spans are more likely to view shifts in tactics favorably and are more likely to find nonviolent tactics attractive.

Statistical analysis strongly supports these contentions. After omitting all groups that had a brief lifespan,[85] as well as those groups that did not begin as terrorist groups, we found that the average age of the terrorist groups that have chosen to experiment with nonviolent tactics (23.3) is almost twice as high as the average age of the groups that did not use such tactics in any stage of their existence (12.2). An ANOVA analysis between the groups yields a significant ($p < .001$) result ($F = 17.203$). However, rather than arguing exclusively that longer life spans are a prerequisite for tactical shifts or that shifts in tactics lead to longer life spans, it is likely that both processes are at work. It is also probable that the less mature political groups that have yet to alter their tactics will undergo shifts at some future point during their life spans. Further research is needed to determine the answers to these questions.

Organizational structure is another important factor in political group decision-making. Organizational structures affect the ways in which decisions are made within an organization, affecting within-group communication, the sharing of ideas, and the uniformity of group experiences. Insights can be drawn from organizational theory. Hierarchical political groups are more likely to have a strong leadership with the capacity for top-down communication, centralized decision-making, coherent programs, and consistent enforcement or reinforcement of group objectives and operations.[86] In contrast, political groups organized as networks may lack this centralized management and leadership. A group's leadership is important for communicating changes to group objectives, conveying a need to reevaluate tactics and strategies, and constructing a platform for reinforcing shared experiences. For these reasons, groups with network structures will be less likely to collectively assess tactical alternatives or coherently implement tactical changes. As a result, groups with network structures are less likely to view changes in tactics as possible—much less attractive—alternatives.

Furthermore, political parties may be best described as hierarchically organized. When these organizations form ties with violent groups, they are more likely to form ties with groups organized hierarchically, which have a leadership with whom they can communicate. When political parties employ violent tactics, they are likely either to maintain their hierarchical structure or create hierarchically-structured militant branches.[87]

There is some preliminary support for these expectations. Excluding cases in which no organizational structure is identified, of all of the terrorist groups included in the dataset, approximately 70% are described as hierarchical. Among the subset of terrorist groups with ties to political parties, this increases to nearly 75% of the cases. In other words, hierarchical groups make up a larger proportion of groups undertaking shifts in tactics. The findings are less conclusive with regard to differentiating between cases in which the party-terror linkage is initiated by a political party or by a terrorist group. For both types of shifts, hierarchical organizational structures are present in approximately 75% of the cases. Furthermore, an apparent difference in the percentage of party-terror linkages associated with horizontally-structured political groups can be attributed, at least in part, to missing data. These findings suggest that regardless of the direction of shift—to or from terrorism—groups forming party-terror linkages are more likely to be hierarchically-organized than horizontally-organized.

Because groups are seldom, if ever, fully hierarchical or fully horizontal, a further disaggregation of the data on the basis of organizational structure may be necessary in order to parse out these distinctions and their relations to tactical shifts.

Concluding Remarks

While the literature on linkages between political parties and terrorist groups remains in its infancy, there is a considerable foundation upon which to build. This foundation includes the creation of a typology of party-terror linkages, which was introduced to comparative political scientists more than twenty years ago. It also includes a rich literature on terrorism and insights gained from the more general political science writings on a variety of factors relevant for explaining and understanding tactical and strategic shifts. These, in combination with the handful of other published works on the topic of party-terror linkages, make up a small literature, but a rich starting point for the development of this research agenda.

We build upon this foundation through the identification of key factors for explaining the shifts in tactics that lead to the formation of party-terror linkages, and our testing of these factors through quantitative analysis. In sum, what we offer in this article is a proposed starting point for the further development of this research agenda, with potential theoretical implications and policy applications for domestic and international security. An understanding of the foundations of party-terror linkages at the contextual and organizational levels can be drawn from an understanding of the conditions under which political groups turn to or from terrorism and the types of political groups that are most likely to undertake these shifts.

This analysis contributes to the considerable volume of work currently in progress on topics associated with uncovering explanations for party-terror linkages, but is not without limitations. We employ an existing dataset, which categorizes political groups based on their participation in terrorist activities. This dataset does not include the universe of political parties, which would provide a useful complement for understanding the conditions under which political parties choose *not* to turn to terrorism. Also, although every effort was taken to ensure that the dataset would be accurate, there is no expectation that it is perfect. Many terrorist groups, especially active groups, remain highly clandestine. Much of the information we know about groups may be called into question because of the high level of private information. Third, the statistical analysis is not highly sophisticated. We elaborate on simple descriptive statistics in order to point to trends and issues for further consideration. Fourth, rather than offering an integrated theory, something that is notably absent in this literature, we investigate explanatory factors in a manner that treats them as largely separate influences. Moreover, we draw attention to explanations found in the existing literature and highlight the factors that may help explain why and which groups turn to and from terrorism. Future scholarship may benefit from coding and quantifying these factors and conducting more sophisticated forms of multivariate analysis that identifies relative levels of importance for each factor.

The next steps for researchers interested in explaining cases of party-terror linkages will necessarily involve dealing with possible distinctions between explanations for cases in which political parties turn to terrorism and cases in which political parties engage in political violence, more generally-conceived. Future research should also delve further into differences among the

political groups operating under different conditions and the potential limitations of these differences for theorizing across cases. Furthermore, scholars will continue to benefit from the development of case-specific knowledge, which plays an integral role in the creation of new knowledge and is often done through elaborations of individual case studies. Finally, the contributions of scholars focusing on this field of research, complemented by the continuation of constructive discussions and debates regarding its key points, is what is most needed in the development of the current research agenda.

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[2] Leonard Weinberg, "Turning to Terror: The Conditions under Which Political Parties Turn to Terrorist Activities," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 23 (July 1991), pp. 423-438.

[3] Evidence for renewed attention to related questions comes from the number of papers being presented at recent political science conferences on topics related to political parties and terrorist groups, as well as from the number of dissertations being written on related topics.

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- [29] Alex P. Schmid and Albert J. Jongman, with Michael Stohl, *Political Terrorism*; MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Database <<http://www.tkb.org>> (accessed March 23, 2008); Office of the Coordinator of Counter Terrorism <<http://www.state.gov/s/ct>> (accessed February 22, 2010).
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[30] Schmid and Jongman with Stohl, *Political Terrorism*; Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006). See Weinberg, Pedahzur, and Perliger, *Political Parties and Terrorist Groups*, p. 28, for an overview of the construction of this dataset.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Weinberg, "Turning to Terror," p. 430.

[33] Ibid, p. 430.

[34] Weinberg, Pedahzur, and Perliger, *Political Parties and Terrorist Groups*, p. 28-29.

[35] This typology is presented by Weinberg and Eubank, "Political parties and the formation of terrorist groups" and Weinberg, "Turning to Terror." It is also the same typology used in Weinberg, Pedahzur, and Perliger, *Political Parties and Terrorist Groups*.

[36] See Håvard Hegre, Tanja Ellingsen, Scott Gates, and Nils Petter Gleditsch, "Toward a Democratic Civil Peace? Democracy, Political Change, and Civil War, 1816-1992," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 95 (Mar. 2001), pp. 33-48. Interestingly, while both democratic and authoritarian regimes are noted for their counterterrorism capacities, Hegre et al. argue that democracies are inherently more stable than authoritarian regimes, which are more stable than "intermediate regimes."

[37] William Lee Eubank and Leonard Weinberg, "Does Democracy Encourage Terrorism?" *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 6 (Winter 1994), pp. 417-435; Todd Sandler, "On the Relationship between Democracy and Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 7 (Winter 1995), pp. 1-9; William Eubank and Leonard Weinberg, "Terrorism and Democracy: What Recent Events Disclose," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 10 (Spring 1998), pp. 108-118. See also Leonard Weinberg, William Eubank, and Elizabeth Francis, "The Cost of Terrorism: The Relationship between International Terrorism and Democratic Governance," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 20 (Summer 2008), pp. 257-270.

[38] Eubank and Weinberg, "Does Democracy Encourage Terrorism?"

[39] Sandler, "On the Relationship between Democracy and Terrorism."

[40] Eubank and Weinberg, "Terrorism and Democracy: What Recent Events Disclose."

[41] Erica Chenoweth, "Democratic Competition and Terrorist Activity," *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 72 (Jan. 2010), pp. 16-30.

[42] Max Abrahms, "Why Terrorism Does Not Work," *International Security*, Vol. 31 (Fall 2006), pp. 42-78.

Max Abrahms. 2007. "Why Democracies Make Superior Counterterrorists." *Security Studies* 16(2): 223-253.

[43] David G. Kibble, "Is Democracy a Cure for Terrorism? A Review of Natan Sharansky's *The Case for Democracy: The Power of Freedom to Overcome Tyranny and Terror*," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 29 (Jun. 2006), pp. 383-391.

[44] Monty G. Marshall and Keith Jagers, "Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800-2009," *Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800-2009* (College Park, MD: Center for International Development and Conflict Management, University of Maryland, 2011) <<http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscr/inscr.htm>>.

[45] Polity IV uses the term "mixed regime" to describe regimes that are neither strongly democratic nor strongly authoritarian.

[46] See, for instance, Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, "The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (2002), pp. 51-65.

[47] Omar G. Encarnación, "Pinochet's Revenge: Spain Revisits its Civil War," *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 24 (Winter 2007), pp. 39-50; for an extensive discussion on the relations between crisis of national integration and legitimacy and the tendency of political parties to adopt violent tactics, refer to Weinberg, Pedahzur, and Perliger, *Political Parties and Terrorist Groups*, chapter 2.

[48] James A. Piazza, "Draining the Swamp: Democracy Promotion, State Failure, and Terrorism in 19 Middle Eastern Countries," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 30 (Jun. 2007), pp. 521-539. Piazza also finds that democracies in the Middle East are more likely to experience terrorism; although, it is likely that his observations are influenced, at least in part, by the subset of democracies on which he focuses.

[49] Sara Jackson Wade and Dan Reiter, "Does Democracy Matter? Regime Type and Suicide Terrorism," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 51 (Apr. 2007), pp. 329-348.

[50] Hegre et al., "Toward a Democratic Civil Peace?" See also Errol A. Henderson and J. David Singer, "Civil War in the Post-Colonial World, 1946-92," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 37 (May 2000), pp. 275-299; Oskar N. T. Thoms and James Ron, "Do Human Rights Violations Cause Internal Conflict?" *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 29 (Aug. 2007), pp. 674-705.

[51] Ronald Wintrobe, "Extremism, Suicide Terror, and Authoritarianism," *Public Choice*, Vol. 128 (Jul. 2006), pp. 169-195.

[52] Christina Schatzman, "Political Challenge in Latin America: Rebellion and Collective Protest in an Era of Democratization," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 42, No. 5 (2005), pp. 291-310. Schatzman offers a somewhat contradictory view, proposing that increases in democracy will lead to increases in violent protest. While there are obvious implications for potential increases in violence categorized as terrorism, Schatzman's focus on Latin America may suggest that his findings are unique to this region. Although it is recognized that democracies are more politically free and more likely to experience dissent, a further parsing out of the causes and effects of violent protest and a comparison of these findings to explanations of terrorism would be a useful step in the process of reconciling competing views on the value of democracy as a tool for countering political violence.

[53] Leonard Weinberg, Ami Pedahzur, and Arie Perliger, *Political Parties and Terrorist Groups* (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp.35-36.

[54] William Eubank and Leonard Weinberg, "Terrorism and Democracy: Perpetrators and Victims," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 13 (Spring 2001), pp. 155-164.

[55] Hegre et al., "Toward a Democratic Civil Peace?"

[56] See, for instance, Thoms et al., "Do Human Rights Violations Cause Internal Conflict?" and Henderson et al., "Civil War in the Post-Colonial World, 1946-92."

[57] Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, "Democratization and War," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 74 (May-Jun. 1995), pp. 79-97.

[58] Hegre et al., "Toward a Democratic Civil Peace;" Thoms et al., "Do Human Rights Violations Cause Internal Conflict?" For a contrasting perspective, see Storm, who argues, in the face of a correlation between authoritarianism and radicalization in the MENA region, that democracy promotion and democratization are tools for reducing, though not necessarily eliminating, terrorism. Lise Storm, "The Persistence of Authoritarianism as a Source of Radicalization in North Africa," *International Affairs*, Vol. 85 (Sep. 2009), pp. 997-1013.

[59] Weinberg, Pedahzur, and Perliger, *Political Parties and Terrorist Groups*.

[60] Weinberg and Eubank, "Terrorism and Democracy: What Recent Events Disclose."

[61] See also Weinberg, Pedahzur, and Perliger, *Political Parties and Terrorist Groups*, p. 36.

[62] Rogelio Alonso, "Pathways out of Terrorism in Northern Ireland and the Basque Country: The Misrepresentation of the Irish Model," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 16 (Win. 2004), pp. 695-713; Garrett O'Boyle, "Theories of Justification and Political Violence: Examples from Four Groups," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 14 (Summer 2002), pp. 23-46.

[63] Gerald Schneider and Nina Wiesehomeier, "Rules That Matter: Political Institutions and the Diversity-Conflict Nexus," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 42 (Mar. 2008), pp. 183-203.

[64] Juan J. Linz, "Presidential or Parliamentary Democracy: Does It Make a Difference?" in Juan J. Linz and Arturo Valenzuela (eds.), *The Failure of Presidential Democracy: Comparative Perspectives* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1994), pp. 3-75. See also Schneider and Wiesehomeier, "Rules That Matter."

[65] See Scott Mainwaring and Matthew S. Shugart, "Juan Linz, Presidentialism, and Democracy: A Critical Appraisal," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 29 (Jul. 1997), pp. 449-471. Mainwaring and Shugart provide a useful critique of Linz's argument, arguing that presidential systems are not highly rigid and may, in fact, lend stability to a political system. They also observe problems with legitimacy within parliamentary systems and note the potential for coalition formation in presidential systems. Especially relevant to our discussion is their argument regarding the relative importance of party system characteristics, a point to which we turn in the next section.

[66] Schneider and Wiesehomeier, "Rules That Matter."

[67] Ware, *Political Parties and Party Systems*, pp. 168-169. See also Giovanni Sartori, "European Political Parties: The Case of Polarized Pluralism," in Joseph La Palombara and Myron Weinber (eds.), *Political Parties and Political Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 137-176.

[68] Ware, *Political Parties and Party Systems*, p. 169; see also Sartori for a description of anti-system parties: Sartori, "European Political Parties," pp. 148-150.

[69] Weinberg and Pedahzur, *Political Parties and Terrorist Groups*, pp. 19-20. In addition, Ware elaborates on Sartori's discussion of centripetal and centrifugal forces within party systems. While centripetal forces can be linked to consensus formation and the gradual alleviation of intergroup tensions, centrifugal tendencies can be linked to a widening of the distance between groups and an increased probability that group interests will not be represented in government. Ware, *Political Parties and Party Systems*, p. 170. See also Sartori, "European Political Parties."

[70] Roberta Senechal de la Roche, "Collective Violence as Social Control," *Sociological Forum*, Vol. 11 (Mar. 1996), pp. 97-128.

[71] Luis de la Calle Robles, "Fighting for Local Control: Street Violence in the Basque Country," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 51 (Jun. 2007), p. 452.

[72] Abdul S. Minty, "South Africa: From Apartheid to Democracy," *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 24 (Mar. 1993), pp. 69-84.

[73] Adrienne LeBas, "Polarization as Craft – Party Formation and State Violence in Zimbabwe," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 38 (Jul. 2006), pp. 419-438.

[74] Weinberg, Pedahzur, and Perliger discuss the polarization of party systems during the 1960s and 1970s. See Weinberg, Pedahzur, and Perliger, *Political Parties and Terrorist Groups*, pp. 42-43.

[75] *Ibid.*, p. 42-43.

[76] Group characteristics including ideology and organizational structure are among the group characteristics addressed in Weinberg Pedahzur, and Perliger's *Political Parties and Terrorist Groups*.

[77] In cases in which a group is less likely to garner support through nonviolent tactics, it does not necessarily follow that the group will be more likely to garner support through violent means. At the same time, there are conditions under which violence has been used for political gain. For instance, violence may be used to evoke overreaction on the part of a government against a target population and, in return, give support to the group. See, for instance, Andrew H. Kydd and Barbara F. Walter, "The Strategies of Terrorism," *International Security* Vol. 31, No. 1 (Summer 2006), pp. 49-79.

[78] Weinberg, "Turning to Terror," pp. 433, 436; Martha Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 13 (Jul. 1981), p. 384.

[79] Wintrobe, "Extremism, Suicide Terror, and Authoritarianism."

[80] The formation of the Real Irish Republican Army in response to moderation on the part of the Irish Republican Army exemplifies this outcome. See Jonathan Stevenson, "Britain and the IRA: Legacies of Restraint," in George Kassimeris (ed.), *Playing Politics with Terrorism: A User's Guide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

[81] Weinberg, Pedahzur, and Perliger, *Political Parties and Terrorist Groups*, Ch. 2.

[82] For Figures 4 and 5, we omit groups lacking a clear ideology and those espousing an ideology other than the four main terrorist group ideologies, which are presented in this figure.

[83] See Audrey Kurth Cronin's book "How Terrorism Ends," for an in-depth treatment of the various reasons terrorist campaigns come to an end. Audrey Kurth Cronin, "How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns" (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

[84] Weinberg, "Turning to Terror."

[85] We eliminated political groups that survived less than three years, since these groups had a limited time span within which to shift tactics.

[86] Weinberg, Pedahzur, and Perliger, *Political Parties and Terrorist Groups*, p. 33.

[87] Ibid. p. 33. See also the debate between Bruce Hoffman and Marc Sageman in the pages of *Foreign Affairs*. Bruce Hoffman, "The Myth of Grass-Roots Terrorism: Why Osama bin Laden Still Matters," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 87 (May/June 2008), pp. 133-138; Bruce Hoffman, "The Reality of Grass-Roots Terrorism," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 87 (Jul./Aug. 2008), pp. 163-165; Marc Sageman, "Does Osama Still Call the Shots? Debating the Containment of Al Qaeda's leadership," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 87 (Jul./Aug. 2008), pp. 165-166.

Why Terrorists Overestimate the Odds of Victory

by Max Abrahms and Karolina Lula

History is the best teacher, but its lessons are not on the surface.

Kenneth Thompson (1960) [1]

Abstract

Terrorism is puzzling behavior for political scientists. On one hand, terrorist attacks generally hail from the politically aggrieved. On the other hand, a growing body of scholarship finds the tactic politically counterproductive. Unlike guerrilla attacks on military targets, terrorist attacks on civilian targets lower the odds of governments making concessions. This article proposes and tests a psychological theory to account for why militant groups engage in terrorism, given the political costs of attacking civilians.

Introduction

Terrorism is puzzling behavior to scholars. On one hand, social scientists generally assume that terrorists are rational political actors.[2] On the other hand, recent empirical research demonstrates that terrorism is a losing political tactic. Not only do terrorists seldom if ever achieve their political platforms via terrorism, but their attacks on civilians tend to dissuade governments from granting concessions.[3] Why, then, do terrorists engage in this counterproductive tactic?

Surprisingly little research has attempted to resolve this puzzle since Humphreys and Weinstein first identified it.[4] To square the circle, several scholars hypothesize that terrorists are irrational actors.[5] Other research contends that terrorists tend to be motivated by an alternative, apolitical incentive structure.[6] These claims are problematic because many studies indicate that aggrieved groups select tactics to promote their political agendas.[7] In this article, we propose and test an alternative explanation—that terrorists are motivated by political aims, but systematically overestimate the odds of achieving them for an essentially rational reason. Below, we develop this psychological explanation to account for the use of terrorism in light of its political costs.

Our argument proceeds in four main sections. In the first, we present the theoretical puzzle that terrorists are rational political actors who target civilians notwithstanding the negative political return. This section shows that whereas guerrilla campaigns against military targets often coerce government compliance, terrorist campaigns against civilian targets are a political failure. In the second section, we propose a psychological theory to explain why aggrieved groups engage in terrorist campaigns despite their abysmal political record. Because terrorist attacks have historically hailed from militant groups, any theory on terrorism must begin with the leadership.

[8] Our principal argument is that terrorist leaders overestimate the political effectiveness of terrorist campaigns because they draw false analogies from successful guerrilla campaigns, which are indeed comparatively profitable. In the third section, we present an eclectic mix of empirical evidence in support of the theory. The fourth section concludes by exploring the counterterrorism implications.

The Puzzle of Terrorism

A common assumption among social scientists is that terrorists are rational actors.[9] Demographic research on terrorists is confirming. In his studies of failed suicide bombers, for instance, Ariel Merari finds that they do not disproportionately suffer from psychopathology or any other known personality disorder.[10] Anat Berko, a criminologist in the Israel Defense Forces who interviewed dozens of failed Palestinian suicide terrorists, likewise finds that they seldom have “an emotional disturbance that prevents them from differentiating between reality and imagination.”[11] In his analysis of Salafi terrorists, Scott Atran affirms that they do not tend to exhibit any conspicuous cognitive infirmities.[12] Similarly, Marc Sageman reports a lack of mental disorders in his sample of Al-Qaeda affiliated terrorists.[13] In a précis on the mental health of terrorists, Jeff Victoroff observes that they appear cognitively normal.[14] Martha Crenshaw was an early proponent of this view, maintaining that “The outstanding common characteristic of terrorists is their normality.”[15] Louise Richardson agrees that “The one shared characteristic of terrorists is their normalcy.”[16] So, too, does RAND: “We should not expect terrorists to be disproportionally insane.”[17] In a review, Roxanne Euben concludes that those familiar with the psychological research on terrorists “will appreciate how handily they dispense with the remarkably resilient claim that they and those who recruit them are insane, irrational, brainwashed, or otherwise unable to fathom the nature of what they do.”[18] In sum, psychological assessments of terrorists indicate they are cognitively normal outside their use of terrorist tactics. Furthermore, the leaders of terrorist organizations are presumably even more likely than other members of the group to behave in a rational manner.[19]

The puzzle of terrorism is that despite the presumed rationality of the perpetrators, this mode of violence does not seem to advance their given political cause. For decades, terrorism specialists have noted that terrorists are political losers. In the 1970s, Walter Laqueur published a article entitled “The Futility of Terrorism” in which he claimed that terrorist groups do not attain their political platforms.[20] In the 1980s, Martha Crenshaw likewise observed that terrorists do not obtain their given political ends, and “Therefore one must conclude that terrorism is objectively a failure.”[21] Similarly, a RAND study noted that “Terrorists have been unable to translate the consequences of terrorism into concrete political gains...[I]n that sense terrorism has failed. It is a fundamental failure.”[22] In the 1990s, Thomas Schelling proclaimed that “Terrorism almost never appears to accomplish anything politically significant.”[23] Viginia Held went even further, claiming that the “net effect” of terrorism may actually be counterproductive.[24]

Admittedly, a universally accepted definition of terrorism eludes resolution.[25] A common distinction though is between non-state attacks on civilian targets versus military ones. Whereas the former are generally labeled as terrorist attacks, the latter are often labeled as insurgent, guerrilla, or militant attacks.[26] Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, a series of large-*n*

observational studies has shown that non-state attacks on civilian targets in particular actually inhibit government compliance. In this sense, terrorism is politically counterproductive,

In 2006, Max Abrahms published in *International Security* an article entitled “Why Terrorism Does Not Work,” the first large-*n* study on terrorism’s political effectiveness.[27] To test the effectiveness of terrorism, he analyzed the political plights of twenty-eight Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs), as designated by the U.S. State Department. The analysis yields two main findings. First, the FTO success rate is far lower than other scholars had asserted. Robert Pape, for instance, states that terrorists achieve their strategic demands over fifty percent of the time, whereas Abrahms shows that only ten percent prevailed politically.[28] In fact, the vast majority of FTOs have perpetrated terrorism for decades without any real signs of political progress. Second, the successful FTOs used terrorism only as a secondary tactic. Although non-state actors are known to employ a hybrid of asymmetric tactics, all of the politically successful FTOs directed their violence against military targets, not civilian ones. By disaggregating the FTOs by target selection, Abrahms therefore revealed the full extent to which terrorism—defined as non-state attacks on civilian targets—has historically been a losing political tactic.

Seth Jones and Martin Libicki subsequently examined a larger sample, the universe of known terrorist groups between 1968 and 2006. Of the 648 groups identified in the RAND-MIPT Terrorism Incident database, only 4 percent obtained their strategic demands.[29] More recently, Audrey Cronin has reexamined the success rate of these groups, confirming that less than 5 percent prevailed.[30] These low figures actually exceed the coercion rate, as terrorists may accomplish their demands for reasons other than civilian casualties. In fact, all of the studies conclude that terrorism does not encourage concessions. In his 2006 study, Abrahms contends that terrorism’s poor success rate is inherent to the targeting of civilians. Jones and Libicki claim that in the few cases in which terrorist groups have triumphed, civilian pain “had little or nothing to do with the outcome.”[31] And Cronin finds that the victorious have achieved their demands “despite the use of violence against innocent civilians [rather] than because of it,” and that “The tactic of terrorism might have even been counterproductive.”[32] Hard case studies have inspected the limited historical examples of clear-cut terrorist victories, determining that these salient events were idiosyncratic, unrelated to the harming of civilians, or both.[33]

Other recent studies provide even stronger empirical evidence that terrorism is not epiphenomenal to political failure. In a recent statistical article in *Comparative Political Studies*, Abrahms exploits variation in the target selection of 125 violent non-state campaigns. The analysis demonstrates that campaigns against civilian targets are significantly less effective than campaigns against military targets at inducing government concessions, even after controlling for a host of tactical confounds, including the capability of the target country, that of the perpetrators, and the nature of their demands.[34] In another new statistical study, Page Fortna finds that rebel groups in civil wars significantly lower the odds of achieving their demands by attacking the population with terrorism—again, after controlling for a host of methodologically complex selection issues.[35]

Studies on public opinion reach the same conclusion. Without exception, these show that terrorism does not intimidate citizens of target countries into supporting more dovish politicians. On the contrary, terrorism systematically raises popular support for right-wing leaders opposed

to appeasement. In a couple of articles, Claude Berrebi and Esteban Klor demonstrate that terrorist fatalities within Israel significantly boost local support for right-bloc parties opposed to accommodation, such as the Likud.[36] Other quantitative work reveals that the most lethal terrorist incidents in Israel are also the most likely to induce this rightward electoral shift. The authors conclude that heightening the pain to civilians tends to “backfire on the goals of terrorist factions by hardening the stance of the targeted population.”[37] These trends are not specific to Israel, but the international norm. Christophe Chowanietz analyzes variation in public opinion within France, Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States from 1990 to 2006. In each target country, terrorist attacks have shifted the electorate to the political right in proportion to their lethality.[38] In a summary of the literature, a RAND study noted: “Terrorist fatalities, with few exceptions, increase support for the bloc of parties associated with a more-intransigent position. Scholars may interpret this as further evidence that terrorist attacks against civilians do not help terrorist organizations achieve their stated goals (e.g., Abrahms 2006).”[39] In sum, terrorism presents a puzzle for social scientists: its practitioners are presumably rational, but their *modus operandi* is manifestly counterproductive. In the next section, we propose a theory to explain these counterintuitive axioms.

The False Promise of Terrorist Campaigns

Terrorist and guerrilla campaigns are not the exact same class of violence.[40] Increasingly, social scientists are distinguishing between terrorist campaigns, which are directed mainly against civilian targets, and guerrilla campaigns, which are directed mainly against military targets.[41] This distinction in target selection is crucial for predicting the strategic outcome of political violence. Whereas terrorist campaigns have an abysmal political track record, guerrilla campaigns are responsible for highly salient asymmetric victories, such as Hezbollah’s successful coercion of U.S. and French forces from Southern Lebanon in the 1980s. The variable political success rates of terrorist and guerrilla campaigns beg the question of whether leaders of aggrieved groups confound them—specifically, whether they overrate the odds of terrorist campaigns succeeding by drawing false analogies from guerrilla campaign victories.

On the surface, this explanation may seem to violate the accepted wisdom that terrorists are rational actors. But this objection would be mistaken for a couple reasons. First, psychological and rational explanations are not necessarily mutually exclusive.[42] Dan Reiter elaborates:

If one conceives of rational choice as maximizing utility given certain choices and information, then information-gathering strategies ought not be viewed as either rational or non-rational but rather as pre-rational. The fundamental tenet of classical rationality is that given certain information, preferences, and choices, a decision maker will act to maximize her utility. Rationality provides no guidance in determining what information is relevant, however, just as it does not determine what an actor’s preferences ought to be—both are what might be called ‘pre-rational’ assumptions. Therefore, it is inappropriate to deem as rational or irrational a particular information search or belief update strategy. Of course, in hindsight, we can judge some decisions as better than others, but this is not the same as judging some decisions as rational and some as irrational.[43]

Second, the research consensus is not that terrorists update their actions in Bayesian fashion—only that they are no less irrational than non-terrorists. As Loren Lomasky observes, social scientists ascribe to terrorists “no lesser rationality than that which social analysts routinely ascribe to other actors...”[44] A relevant question, then, is whether non-terrorists also confuse terrorist and guerrilla campaigns. Indeed, Paul Wilkinson noted that “Guerrilla warfare is often confused with terrorism” and that “It is an elementary but common mistake...to equate terrorism with guerrilla war.”[45] Even political scientists confound guerrilla campaigns and terrorist campaigns, leading to overestimations of their political value. When political scientists claim that terrorist campaigns are a winning method of coercion, their supporting examples are nearly always of non-state campaigns against military targets, not civilian ones.[46] In sum, the proposed psychological explanation is not only compatible with our understanding of essentially rational terrorist actors, but is also evident among non-terrorists whose rationality is rightly unquestioned.

In fact, analogical reasoning is a necessary, universal heuristic given our cognitive and information constraints.[47] Houghton details the cognitive process: “When a decision maker uses an analogy, he or she identifies a past situation (or analogical base), which seems particularly useful in understanding the nature of a present situation (or analogical target); the base is then ‘mapped’ onto the target.”[48] The political psychology literature emphasizes that leaders often rely on historical analogies to inform their decision-making.[49] Political leaders adopt analogies to assess the effectiveness of various courses of action.[50] Within policy circles, for example, the received “lesson” from World War Two is that appeasement will ultimately fail to placate the aggressor. The so-called “lesson of Munich” was repeatedly invoked by Harry Truman in Korea, Anthony Eden in the Suez, John Kennedy in the Cuban Missile Crisis, Lyndon Johnson in Vietnam, and George H.W. Bush in the first Persian Gulf War.[51]

Although historical analogies can help to simplify decision-making in a complex world, they frequently lead to sub-optimal decision-making.[52] Khong observes: “A recurrent tendency of policymakers [is] to use analogies poorly” due to “neglect of potentially important differences between situations being compared.”[53] Similarly, Jervis highlights how historical analogies tend to “obscure aspects of the present case that are different from the past one,” as “the lessons learned will be applied to a wide variety of situations without a careful effort to determine whether the cases are similar on crucial dimensions.”[54] Flawed analogical reasoning is so pervasive because analogies are generally chosen based on their salience rather than on their structural relevance.[55] Successful guerrilla campaigns are indeed highly salient, but do not offer reliable guidance on whether non-state attacks on civilians will prove equally effective.

The military diffusion literature strengthens the argument that leaders of aggrieved groups may adopt terrorist campaigns by drawing false inspiration from successful guerrilla campaigns. This literature stresses two relevant points. First, the diffusion of a military practice requires a “demonstration effect,” that is, a tactic scoring a highly visible victory.[56] Examples include the prominent battlefield accomplishments of the Napoleonic and Prussian military systems, which revolutionized warfare in Europe until the twentieth century; the rapid defeat and fall of France at the hands of the Hitler’s Blitzkrieg; and the lightning British raid on the Italian fleet at Taranto. All of these practices quickly became well-known throughout the Western world, sparking emulators.[57] Second, although demonstrably effective practices diffuse, they are rarely

perfectly replicated. In practice, most adopters are only selective emulators. In fact, it is not uncommon for the adopter to overlook the central reason for the supplier's military success.[58] In sum, the military diffusion literature underscores that international actors try to adopt demonstrably effective practices, but that they often get distorted, leading to sub-optimal political outcomes.

Terrorism is such an innovation. In the next section, we offer empirical evidence that leaders of aggrieved groups have in fact turned to terrorist campaigns to replicate the political successes of recently triumphant guerrilla campaigns. Although these asymmetric campaigns are indeed highly salient, such triumphs do not imply that non-state campaigns against civilians will likewise prevail.

Empirical Support

The advent of modern international terrorism occurred in July 1968, when members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine hijacked an *El Al* commercial flight en route from Rome to Israel. In the decade that followed, the number of terrorist groups in the world soared from ten to fifty-five, with a commensurate rise in terrorist incidents and fatalities.[59] As Paul Wilkinson has asked, "How did terrorism become a fashion which caught on all over the world?"[60] The answer seems to reside in the tectonic global events that immediately preceded it.

The pre-1968 period of the twentieth century witnessed the most politically successful spate of asymmetric campaigns in world history. National liberation movements in Africa, Asia and the Middle East achieved independence despite their military inferiority. The success of these non-state campaigns was due to the devastation wrought by the Second World War, normative changes in the international system, as well as to skillful military strategy. The leading strategists of the anti-colonial campaigns recognized the importance of engaging in selective violence against opposing forces rather than in indiscriminate violence against the population.[61] Abdullah Yusuf Azzam, Regis Debray, Vo Nguyen Giap, Che Guevara, Carlos Marighella, and other leading revolutionaries encouraged attacks on government targets, but warned their foot-soldiers that punishing the population would prove politically disastrous.[62] Guevara, for example, was adamant in his teachings to "Avoid useless acts of terrorism." [63] He stressed that the tactic is "generally ineffective and indiscriminate in its results, since it often makes victims of innocent people and destroys a large number of lives that would be valuable to the revolution." [64] In *Guerrilla Warfare*, his manual for asymmetric strategy, Che emphasized: "We sincerely believe that terrorism is of negative value, that it by no means produces the desired effects, that it can turn a people against a revolutionary movement." [65] In the *Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla*, Marighella likewise warns his foot-soldiers not to "attack indiscriminately without distinguishing between the exploiters and the exploited," but to instead direct the violence "against the government and foreign domination of the country." [66] This strategy was adhered to closely, as Laqueur notes: "Little or no terrorism erupted during World War II or its immediate aftermath, although there was a great deal of guerrilla warfare, which is something quite different." [67] Similarly, Wilkinson explains that terrorism was at most "an auxiliary tactic" in the anti-colonial campaigns. [68]

Ironically, however, these guerrilla successes had a profound impact on the rise of international terrorism. Martha Crenshaw, Bruce Hoffman, David Rapoport, and Paul Wilkinson note that the emergence of modern terrorism in the wake of these anti-colonial campaigns was not happenstance. New Left groups such as the Action Directe, Japanese Red Army, Red Army Faction, and Red Brigades sprang up throughout Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the United States, inspired by the political successes of the anti-colonial campaigns.[69] Wilkinson writes that these postcolonial terrorist groups and others emerged because they were:

...greatly attracted to emulating the models and style of anti-colonial and Third World liberation struggles. For example, admiration for the Cuban Revolution is a recurrent theme in the polemics of Vallieres, Gagnon and other terrorist ideologues of the F.L.Q. And Provisional I.R.A. leaders look eagerly at the history of EOKA and F.L.N. terrorism, oblivious of the glaring dissimilarities between these and their own situations. Yet if terrorists believe they are fighting a classic-style national liberation war this structures their whole perception of their role in society and gives them an exalted sense of historical mission.[70]

In fact, the leaders of these nascent terrorist groups often said that history's "lesson" was apparent: aggrieved, militarily inferior people can evidently coerce major political concessions with asymmetric tactics.[71] Although these terrorist leaders believed their violent campaigns would prevail due to the favorable political outcomes of the anti-colonial campaigns, their tactics differed in a crucial respect: whereas the anti-colonial campaigns exerted pressure on the occupying powers by targeting their troops, the New Left groups sought coercive leverage by targeting civilians, which infuriated local governments and undermined popular support for political change, as the leaders of the anti-colonial campaigns had anticipated. In marked contrast to the guerrilla campaigns that immediately preceded them, these newly developed terrorist groups systematically failed.[72]

In Rapoport's periodization of terrorism, the "New Left Wave" is supplanted in the 1990s by what he calls the "Religious Wave," which persists today.[73] This wave of terrorism also emerged in the immediate aftermath of high-profile guerrilla campaign victories. In 1983, the Hezbollah attacks on the American and French forces in Lebanon coerced the multinational peacekeepers into withdrawing; in 1994, Somali attacks on American peacekeepers coerced their withdrawal; and in between, attacks on Soviet forces coerced their withdrawal from Afghanistan. Upon completing the mission in Afghanistan, most of these militants dispersed throughout the Levant, Maghreb, Persian Gulf, and Western Europe, forming the backbone of what became known as Al-Qaeda.[74]

Even more important than this worldwide diffusion of fighters was their newfound belief in themselves as potential agents of political change. To the Mujahideen, Afghanistan demonstrated that they could "crush the greatest empire known to mankind." [75] Bin Laden and his lieutenants reasoned, "If the Soviet Union can be destroyed, the United States can also be beheaded," and "so we are continuing this policy in America." [76] In fact, they boasted that terrorizing the United States into submission "would be easier, God willing, than the earlier defeat of the Soviet Union" because "the Americans are cowards," a "paper tiger" that "after a few blows ran in defeat," as in Lebanon and Somalia.[77]

Based on this analogical reasoning, bin Laden concluded that the September 11, 2001, attacks would achieve “victory over them [Americans] just as we did before.”[78] As Omar Saghi points out, the Mujahideen underwent a “mental shift” after their trifecta of guerrilla successes by drawing an “analogy” between the front lines and their terrorist attacks on the United States.[79] Leading up to 9/11, bin Laden openly admitted, “We do not distinguish between those dressed in military uniform and civilians” because “Our enemy is every American male, whether he is directly fighting us or paying taxes.”[80] The military leaders of Al-Qaeda and its affiliates taught group members the same tactics as the jihadists had acquired in the training camps of Afghanistan, Lebanon, and Somalia—only this time, to be used against American civilians.[81]

Empirically assessing the impact of analogical reasoning is methodologically complex, but not without scholarly precedent. In a seminal study on the Vietnam War, Khong employs content analysis to determine whether historical analogies informed U.S. policymakers on the relative effectiveness of various strategic options.[82] Below is a content analysis of the historical campaigns Osama bin Laden invoked from 1994 to 2004 to determine the probability of terrorist tactics coercing the United States into withdrawing from the Middle East. The focus is on bin Laden’s statements for two reasons. First, he was the leader of one of the most important terrorist groups in world history. Second, the terrorist organization he led is categorized as a “religious” group, and this type of group has historically been the least successful in achieving political objectives.[83] If the analysis reveals that bin Laden relied largely on the successes of prior guerrilla campaigns to determine the prospects of his terrorist movement prevailing, such evidence would go a long way toward explaining the use of terrorism given its political inefficacy.

A potential limitation to this approach is that terrorist leaders have an interest in mobilizing constituents, so bin Laden may have publicly invoked successful guerrilla campaigns knowing that they are not actually analogous to attacking American civilians. Fairbank has claimed that history is a “grabbag (sic) from which each advocate pulls out a ‘lesson’” to advance his agenda.[84] This is indeed a concern, but not a terminal one. Psychological research demonstrates that there is seldom a great distance between discourse and reasoning.[85] Furthermore, the public statements of terrorist leaders are thought to reflect their true thinking, and this has been said about bin Laden in particular.[86] Still, to sidestep the objection that his public statements are merely propaganda, we analyze his private statements as well.[87] The content analysed represents the universe of bin Laden’s translated statements made in public and private between 1994 and 2004.[88] Collated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, this self-contained compilation of 98 interviews, correspondences, and fatwas are believed by counterterrorism officials to provide reliable insight into Al-Qaeda’s strategic mindset during that period.[89]

Figure 1 reveals that all 65 of the non-state campaigns invoked are guerrilla—not terrorist—in the sense that they targeted the government’s troops as opposed to its civilians. Figure 2 provides additional evidence that bin Laden overrated the political effectiveness of terrorist campaigns by confounding them with successful guerrilla campaigns. Consistent with the psychology literature, the vast majority of the analogies invoked are recent and thus particularly salient historical episodes: namely, the guerrilla campaigns in the 1980s and 1990s that forced the Soviets from Afghanistan, the peacekeepers from Lebanon, and the Americans from Somalia.

Figure 1: Al-Qaeda's Misuse of History: Analogies Invoked to Predict Terrorist Campaign Success

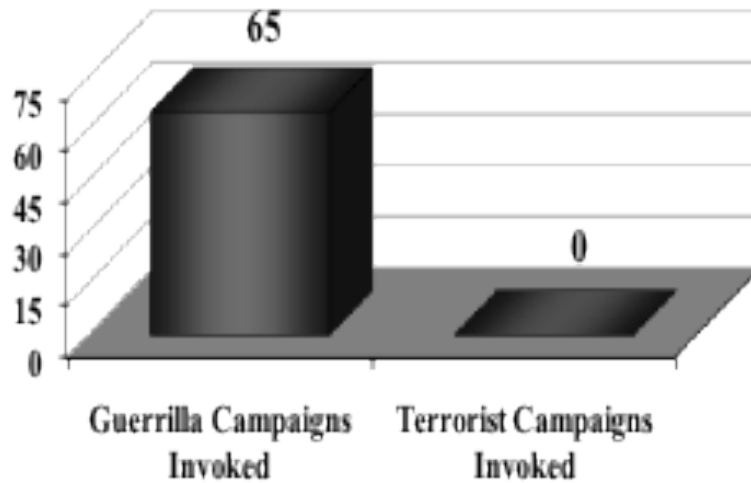
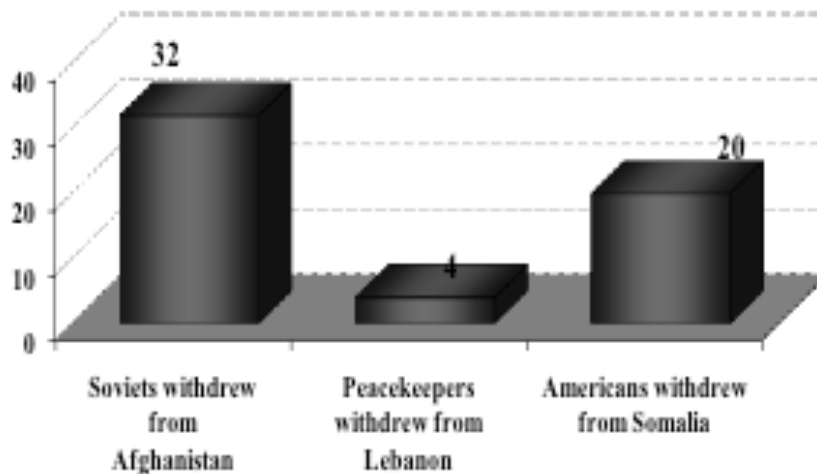


Figure 2: The Salience of Recent History: The Three Most Commonly Invoked Analogies



The favorable political outcomes of these guerrilla campaigns in Afghanistan, Lebanon, and Somalia were obviously not replicated in the September 11, 2001 attacks. Whereas bin Laden was quick to celebrate the former for ending those foreign occupations, he also lamented the latter for provoking the United States into increasing its troop presence in the Persian Gulf by a factor of fifteen.[90] Together, these figures provide compelling empirical and theoretical

evidence that bin Laden overestimated the likelihood that 9/11 would coerce American concessions by drawing faulty analogies with salient guerrilla campaign victories.

Al-Qaeda is hardly the only terrorist group in the current Religious Wave to use terrorism in order to replicate the political successes of recent guerrilla campaigns. Hezbollah's guerrilla campaign against the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) compelled them to withdraw from Lebanon in May 2000, and just a few months later, the Second Intifada erupted. That the bloodiest Palestinian terrorist campaign in history came in the immediate aftermath of the IDF withdrawal was not coincidental, according to Palestinian terrorist leaders. They said that just as the attacks on the IDF had coerced their retreat from Lebanon, attacks on the Israeli population would coerce it from historic Palestine. The leader of Palestinian Islamic Jihad explained the rationale behind the surge of Palestinian attacks against Israeli civilians: "The shameful defeat that Israel suffered in southern Lebanon and which caused its army to flee in terror was not made on the negotiations table but on the battlefield and through jihad and martyrdom, which achieved a great victory for the Islamic resistance and Lebanese people. We would not exaggerate if we said that the chances of achieving victory in Palestine are greater than in Lebanon." [91] The Hamas leadership offered the same rationale for its decision to blow up *Egged* buses and markets inside Israel: "The Zionist enemy only understands the language of jihad, resistance, and martyrdom; that was the language that led to its blatant defeat in South Lebanon and it will be the language that will defeat it on the land of Palestine." [92] In contrast to the guerrilla attacks on the IDF that forced its withdrawal from Lebanon, the terrorist attacks on Israeli civilians shifted the electorate to the right. This shift empowered Likud hard-liner Ariel Sharon to suspend the peace process, erect a wall in the West Bank, and reoccupy most of the territory. [93] Like the terrorist groups in the New Left wave, those in the Religious Wave have systematically failed to replicate the political success of the guerrilla campaigns that apparently inspired them.

Implications

Over fifty years ago, Sidney Verba instructed social scientists to embrace psychological explanations when they outperform assumptions of perfect rationality. [94] Contrary to the view of many political scientists, terrorists are not masterminds. Even their leaders make the same cognitive mistake as do other mortals—overestimating the political effectiveness of terrorist campaigns by drawing false analogies from recently successful guerrilla campaigns. To a surprising degree, this simple theory can account for the global diffusion of terrorism despite its political futility.

Although hardly the Bayesian updaters of rational choice models, terrorists do exhibit signs of learning. [95] Future research should further investigate how non-state actors adjust their tactics to emulate salient international successes. Already, the recent achievements of the Arab Awakening have tempered the international allure of terrorism as a political instrument. In the months leading up to his death, even Osama bin Laden commanded his lieutenants to refrain from targeting Western civilians. [96] According to contemporary news accounts, the growing realization of terrorism's relative ineffectiveness is behind the primacy of predominantly non-violent mass actions engulfing the Middle East and North Africa. [97] Indeed, the percentage of Muslim grassroots organizations in support of terrorism is now in steep decline. [98]

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Exploring Agreements of Convenience Made among Violent Non-State Actors

by Annette Idler

Abstract

This article aims to enhance our understanding of how different groups of violent non-state actors (VNSAs) interact. It narrows the conceptual gap that has existed in the literature on VNSAs and the complex and multiple types of relationships that exist among them in order to better comprehend their decision-making and the ramifications that emerge from these decisions and interactions. Drawing on recent field research in Colombia's border regions, the study develops a typology of VNSA interactions, conceptualised as a two-dimensional "clustery continuum" of VNSA arrangements. These borderlands lend themselves to such an undertaking because different types of VNSAs are present there and they unite an internal armed conflict context with a non-conflict, yet violent context by comprising both the Colombian and the neighbouring countries' border zones. Taking a holistic and nuanced approach, this article first links the silos of civil war, mafia and organised crime literature by exploring situations in which these different dynamics coalesce. Second, it assumes a transnational perspective rather than a purely national view by considering borderlands that include territory of various states. Third, it unpacks the different types of VNSA interactions by describing them as based largely on economically motivated "arrangements of convenience", rather than drawing on a dichotomy of conflict and cooperation. This case study yields insights on how to develop a more sophisticated understanding of VNSA interactions in other contexts as well.

Introduction

This article aims to enhance our understanding of how different groups of violent non-state actors (VNSAs) interact by conceptualising these interactions as a two-dimensional "clustery continuum" of VNSA arrangements. The study draws on recent field research in Colombia's borderlands, which epitomize the myriad and complex types of relations that exist between diverse kinds of VNSAs. Some major features of Andean borderlands add fuel to this precarious mixture: weak state governance systems, a low-risk/high-opportunity environment, and a proneness to impunity, rendering border zones "the place to be" for rebels, paramilitaries, post-demobilized groups, and criminal organisations alike. In such an environment, different groups are hostile to each other and fight for territorial control. And yet, VNSAs also cooperate to profit from illegal economic activities, especially drug trafficking.

The VNSA presence in borderlands has spurred state and civil society concerns regarding security policies and started to generate academic work on the causes and implications of the borderland status quo.[1] Though these works doubtlessly represent important contributions to understanding the security implications of VNSA-presence, significant gaps remain vis-à-vis the puzzling relationships among VNSAs. In particular, investigations into the transnational

relationships among VNSAs involved in illicit economic activities such as drug trafficking are avenues which have until now remained unexplored.[2]

To be sure, investigations on non-borderland areas in Colombia and in other regions of the world have examined the dynamics that are generated by the presence of armed groups and other VNSAs. However, this literature is very segmented and speaks to specific types of VNSAs only. For example, there is a large body of literature on how insurgent or paramilitary groups shape civil war dynamics, including Kalyvas (2006), Arjona (2010), Collier (2003) and Stanliland (2012).[3] Other works such as Gambetta (1993) and Varese (2001) look at how mafia groups interact with each other, and yet other works focus on the interactions of different drug cartels, for example in the Mexican context.[4]

Another growing body of literature has analysed how different types of VNSAs interact, yet these considerations are mostly confined to one country, such as Williams' (2009) work on Iraq, [5] or, guided by the post-9/11 security paradigm that focuses on the "crime-terror-nexus", they concentrate on the groups' long-term motivations rather than on the interactions among them as such.[6] The apparent absence of a conceptualisation of the different types of interactions has led to dichotomies of conflict and cooperation, which are represented by works on conspiracy theories,[7] conflict theories,[8] and in-house-criminality theories.[9] Only recently, scholars have started to take a more fine-grained look at interactions of different armed groups, an example being Stanliland's analysis of relationships between insurgents and the state in civil war contexts, yet not of interaction among various kinds of VNSAs.[10]

This article aims to complement these different works by taking both a more holistic and more nuanced approach. Colombia's borderlands lend themselves to such an undertaking because different types of VNSAs—including civil war actors, mafia organisations, networks of organised crime and common criminals—are present there. Also, they unite a civil war context with a non-conflict yet violent context by including both the Colombian "conflict-situation" and the neighbouring countries' "non-conflict situation". Against this backdrop, empirical evidence is used from these borderlands to develop a typology of VNSA interactions, conceptualised as a two-dimensional "clustery continuum of VNSA arrangements."

In doing so, this article first links the silos of civil war, mafia and organised crime literature by considering a context in which these different dynamics coalesce. Second, it assumes a transnational perspective rather than a purely national view by considering borderlands that include territory of various states. Third, drawing on a modified version of Phil Williams' (2002) business network theory, it unpacks the different types of VNSA interactions by describing them as based largely on economically motivated "arrangements of convenience", rather than drawing on a dichotomy of conflict and cooperation. This case study yields insights on how to develop a more sophisticated understanding of VNSA interactions in other contexts as well.[11]

Following a brief comment on methodology and categorisation, the article describes Colombia's borderlands, the dynamics of the Andean region and the global cocaine business, and the borderland department of Nariño, the focus of this study. Then a typology is offered of different kinds of VNSA interactions, followed by some reflections on how scholars and policymakers can make use of this conceptualisation in other regions as well.

A Word about Methodology and Categorisation

The methodology used to analyse multiple types of arrangements among different kinds of VNSAs is based on a case study design that draws on examples of arrangements in the Colombian southern border department of Nariño and other areas along the Colombian-Ecuadorian and Colombian-Venezuelan border. To these regions qualitative methods (complemented by quantitative dimensions) were applied. Various data sources and research methods were used. Over the period of nine months (August 2011 to May 2012), anonymous, semi-structured interviews were conducted in the Colombian departments of Cundinamarca, Nariño, Norte de Santander and Putumayo; the Ecuadorian provinces of Carchi, Esmeraldas, Pichincha and Sucumbíos; and the Venezuelan state of Táchira. Interviewees included academics, government officials, members of the state forces, staff of international and non-governmental organizations, ex-combatants, community leaders including Afro- and indigenous leaders, clerics, displaced persons and refugees. These data were complemented by participatory observation in civil society events and local community reunions, reviews of policy documents, media articles and secondary literature, as well as the evaluation of surveys and databases.

Before mapping the VNSA interactions two caveats are in order that arise from the particular nature of the study. First, the subject under investigation is associated to illegality and thus data is partly based on estimates and unofficial information. In order to mitigate this challenge, the variety of sources described above enabled source triangulation, which was then used to evaluate the validity of field research findings. Methodological triangulation allowed for further cross-checking. Second, given the informality of the VNSA groups and their interactions, labels serve the purpose of analytical clarity rather than to create typologies based on political or economic motivations. There have been cases in which small criminal gangs committed crimes in the name of groups, including the so-called Rastrojos or Águilas Negras, in order to gain leverage, although the latter distanced themselves from being authors of the crimes. Also, *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo* (FARC) militias in urban spaces operate in a functionally different way than FARC members in remote, rural areas. Thus, though reflecting their organisational membership, subsuming them under “FARC” might not necessarily speak to the differences in the ways in which they interact with other groups.

The Andean Borderlands and the Global Cocaine Business

Context is key to understanding any type of VNSA interaction. During the 1970s, Colombia became the world’s largest cocaine producer, with an increasing number of armed groups becoming involved in the cocaine business. Coca was primarily cultivated in Bolivia and Peru while Colombia was the centre of processing and trafficking. But with the emergence of two major drug cartels in Medellin and Cali during the 1980s, Colombian traffickers started to dominate the business. This benefited most armed groups, including guerrilla and paramilitary groups that formed part of Colombia’s decades-old internal armed conflict.[12] FARC and the *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN), two major insurgent groups that still operate today, started to coexist with the cocaine business by levying taxes on traffickers in exchange for protecting the illicit cultivations, laboratories and exports.[13] When the two cartels were destroyed in the early 1990s and the cocaine market became more disorganised, the cultivation of

coca within Colombia increased and the paramilitaries and FARC intensified their involvement in the drug business. While the former dominated international cocaine trafficking, the latter expanded their activities to direct control, production, and domestic distribution.[14] Officially, from 2003 to 2006, the paramilitary umbrella organisation United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia, founded in 1997, was demobilized, but this process concurred with the emergence of smaller successor groups, paramilitary splinter groups and criminal groups. They co-operate in drug trafficking and, at times, form alliances with FARC or ELN.[15]

Today, the cocaine business pervades the entire Andean region. Though the overall surface area of coca cultivation decreased from an estimated 210,900 hectares in 2001 to 149,100 hectares in 2010, coca cultivations are still widespread: for 2010, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime reports cultivation estimates of 30,900 hectares in Bolivia, 62,000 hectares in Colombia and 61,200 hectares in Peru.[16] Areas of coca cultivation have also been detected in the border zones of Ecuador, Brazil, Panama and Venezuela, often close to processing laboratories. Likewise, services connected to the cocaine business are provided throughout the region. Ecuador, for example, is crucial for money laundering and the provision of precursors.[17] Finally, all Andean states, particularly Ecuador and Venezuela, are starting points of drug trafficking routes to markets in Europe or the United States.[18]

In order to explore how different types of VNSAs interact, this analysis draws on examples from the Colombian Southern border department of Nariño,[19] complemented by examples from other areas situated along the Colombian-Ecuadorian and Colombian-Venezuelan borderlines (see Figure 1). Borderlands are convenient sites for this type of research because different types of VNSAs coalesce (civil war combatants, organized criminal networks, mafia, common criminals). Furthermore, assuming a transnational perspective that includes both sides of the borderline, the border context serves to scrutinise to what extent there are differences depending on whether the local political situation is a conflict or non-conflict context. Nariño in particular is a fruitful case to examine because it concentrates a high number of different VNSAs that interact with each other in multiple ways.

As Table 1 illustrates, a Colombian think tank has estimated that, as of 2008, there are over 2,300 members of various VNSA groups operating within this department.[20]

Table 1: Groups and Member Estimates

Group	Estimated Members in Nariño in 2008
Rastrojos	800
FARC	700
National Liberation Army (ELN)	400
Águilas Negras	180
Autodefensas Campesinas Nueva Generación	150
Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia	150

Figure 1: Map of Andean Borderlands, with Field Research Locations Highlighted



Source: University of Texas, Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, online at:

http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/americas/txu-oclc-256488229-colombia_pol_2008.jpg

Two reasons for the high concentration of VNSAs in Nariño stand out: first, the developments in Colombia’s security policies since the beginning of this millennium, and second, the department’s geostrategic relevance. First, the impacts of Plan Colombia were particularly drastic in Nariño’s neighbouring department Putumayo. Due to intense eradication efforts and the state forces’ military operations, both coca cultivations and armed groups shifted eastward to Nariño, where these groups have been gaining strength, particularly over the last five years. Second, Nariño comprises all stages of the cocaine production chain. Favoured by propitious climatic and geographic conditions, with almost 15,951 hectares of coca in 2010, Nariño has the

largest amount of coca cultivation areas of any Colombian department. The territory is also heavily used for the production of cocaine: processing coca leaves into coca paste, and crystallising this paste. 334 cocaine base laboratories (*cocinas*) and thirty-four hydrochloride cocaine laboratories (*crystalizadores*) were destroyed here in 2010. The fact that there are further laboratories that have been detected, but not destroyed (and presumably even more that have not been detected), shows the dimensions of this business within the department. Finally, Nariño is also a hot spot for the latter stages of the cocaine business. It has both a land border (with Ecuador) and a maritime border (with the Pacific Ocean), and thus comprises two of the seven starting points of international trafficking routes. A case in point is the route starting in Tumaco, where the cocaine is loaded on partially submersible vessels (called semi-submarines) in order to be transported via the Galapagos Islands to Central America, or Mexico and then trafficked into the US.

The Colombian state forces constitute a further armed group whose presence in the department is remarkably high. The number of state forces present in Nariño has increased from 6,000 active members in 2008 to 14,000 active members in 2011.[21] This presence influences the ways in which VNSAs interact and, also, members of the state forces engage in direct interactions with VNSAs. Considering the complex relationships that exist between VNSAs and state forces would go beyond the scope of this article; however, it definitely constitutes a fascinating separate issue on which further research is required.[22]

Categories of VNSA Arrangements

To explain the relationships among VNSAs, Phil Williams' conceptualisation of VNSAs as "business networks" can be used as a starting point. It postulates that the relationships between VNSAs are variable and that they have "arrangements of convenience"—that is, they form various types of linkages to pursue specific interests and can range from conflict and competition to co-ordination and co-operation.[23] Williams applies this concept mainly to the interactions of different criminal groups, but, as the works of Schmid and Naylor show, it can also be instructive regarding the interactions of different types of VNSAs.[24] The links between different VNSA groups are similar to those that can be detected in the licit business world, as Williams and Godson note: "The collaboration may take diverse forms ranging from strategic alliances and joint ventures at the most ambitious level through tactical alliances, contract relationships, supplier customer relations, to spot sales at the most basic level." [25] Through these links the different groups form a network which is adaptable, resilient, and conducive to expansion. This is advantageous for two reasons: it brings mutual benefit and spreads the risk.

Based on fieldwork in the Colombian-Ecuadorian and Colombian-Venezuelan borderlands, seven categories of arrangements of convenience can be identified in which different kinds of VNSAs may engage:

- i. Violent combat
 - ii. Spot sales and barter agreements
 - iii. Tactical alliances
-

- iv. Subcontract relationships
- v. Transactional supply chain relationships
- vi. Strategic alliances
- vii. Pacific coexistence

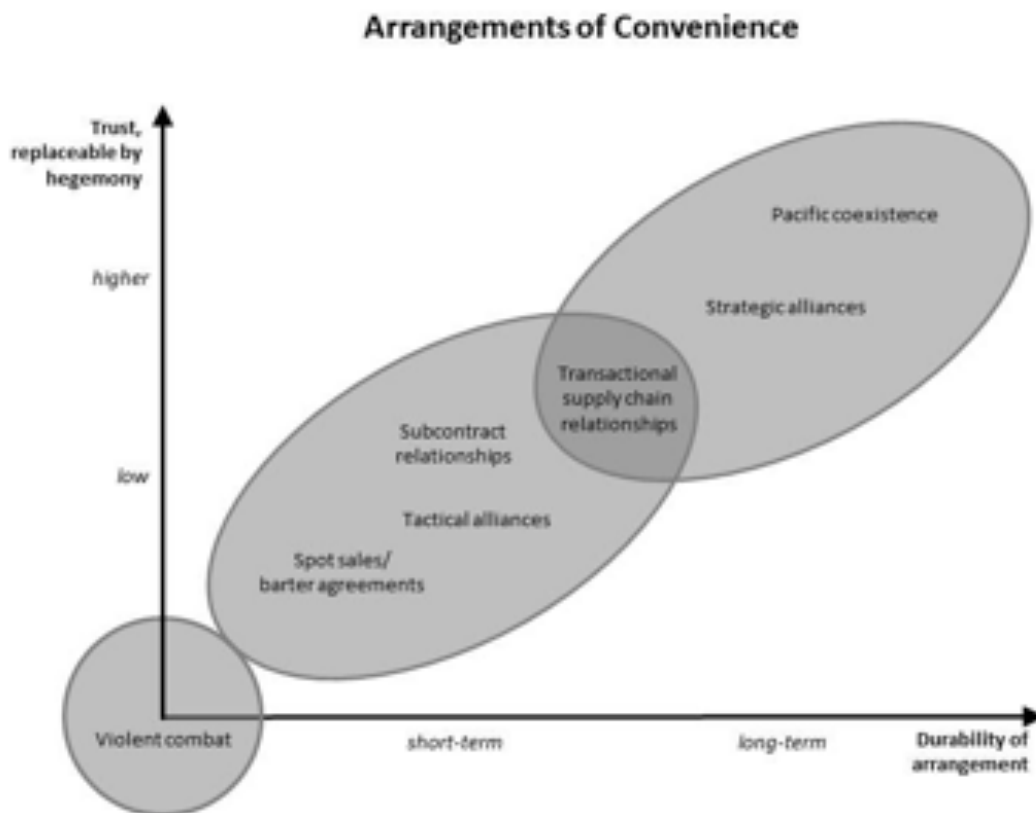
This typology serves analytical purposes and thus is a simplifying exercise. In reality, the categories are very fluid and flexible—i.e., the lines between the different types of arrangements are blurred. Given their dynamic nature, they can change over time and space. A certain type of arrangement that exists between one or more groups with another or other groups can evolve into another one: spot sales may evolve into tactical alliances to subcontract relationships and, eventually, they can be transformed into a strategic alliance. However, this does not necessarily occur in a linear way. Fragile arrangements such as tactical alliances may at once change into violent combat. Also pacific coexistence can “jump” straight into violent combat if one party to the arrangement does not comply with the tacit rules. Conversely, tactical alliances can develop directly into a strategic alliance. Furthermore, as indicated above, the different VNSA groups are not always easy to identify, since some may operate in the name of others or different subgroups operate differently under the same name.

Also note that they can overlap; they are not mutually exclusive. One group can engage in various arrangements simultaneously; for example, Group A can have a strategic alliance with Group B and, at the same time, engage in violent combat with Group C. Furthermore, different arrangements can be embedded into each other and form spatial enclaves. There might be an enclave of tactical alliances between Group C and D within a certain territory in which transactional relationships exist between Group A and Group B. For example, while the rural areas of Catatumbo are under FARC and ELN control, in villages within these areas post-demobilised groups have arrangements among themselves.[26] Finally, these arrangements do not take shape in isolation of other actors. VNSAs not only interact among themselves, they also engage in arrangements with state forces, local elites and external actors, among others. This typology does not comprehensively reflect this complex reality, but rather serves as an analytical tool to enhance understanding of VNSA interactions.

To increase the analytical leverage of these categories of arrangements, they can be conceptualised as comprising a two-dimensional “clustery continuum”, as illustrated in Figure 2. The vertical dimension constitutes the degree of trust between the groups that interact.[27] It can range from non-existent trust over low trust to higher trust. Importantly, trust can be replaced by hegemony of one group. For instance, if Group A is hegemonic and subcontracts Group B, this arrangement might be based on the fact that Group A is more powerful than Group B and thus Group B complies with the rules of the arrangement in fear of punishment rather than because of a trust-relationship between the two. The horizontal dimension is the durability of the arrangement. It can range from non-existent over short-term to long-term arrangements. This dimension combines temporality, stability and institutionalisation. The more stable and institutionalised the arrangement, the more durable it tends to be. Situating the seven categories

of arrangements on two axes that represent the two dimensions – the degree of trust (hegemony) and the durability of the arrangement – shows how they relate to each other.

Figure 2



Most notably, there is a correlation between the degree of trust and the durability of the arrangements. If there is no trust at all, the VNSAs are likely to fight each other; a minimal degree of trust is necessary in order to engage in spot sales or barter agreements; some more trust is required in order to make a tactical alliance work and so on. In brief, if VNSAs groups trust each other more, they seem to be more likely to engage in more stable relationships.

Based on these two dimensions, the seven categories of arrangements can be organized into three clusters. They differ regarding their anticipated durability and seem to concur with non-existent, low, and higher trust (or hegemony) respectively. The first cluster is *violent combat* which is determined by non-existent trust and characterised by a non-existent arrangement. The second cluster comprises *short-term arrangements*, in which we see a preponderance of spot sales and barter agreements, tactical alliances and subcontract relationships. These arrangements are based on a low degree of trust among groups and they usually are not very durable. Finally, the third cluster includes *long-term arrangements*. They are rooted in a relatively high degree of trust and may endure for extensive periods of time.

One should bear in mind that the durability of any relationship is a direct product of the local context; hence, one should refrain from defining “short-term” and “long-term” arrangements, which could be done by attributing a certain number of days, weeks, months or years to them. In reality, a tactical alliance may last three days, for example if two groups decide to use the same harbour to stock cocaine over three days until the illegal drug is shipped overseas. It can also last only one day, if this is the time that it takes for the VNSA groups to use the same trafficking route. Similarly, pacific coexistence may exist during two years, but it can also suddenly change into violent combat after six months, if power constellations have changed or personal interests come into play.[28]

In the same way as the durability of arrangements can be in flux, the limits between the three different clusters are vague, particularly between short- and long-term arrangements. In this regard, the grey zone in which transactional supply chain relationships can be situated stands out. Here, as will be explained below, low levels of trust are overcome by a broker, facilitating the long durability of these kinds of arrangements.

Based on empirical evidence from Colombia’s borderlands, VNSA arrangements across the region can be mapped in order to illustrate the two-dimensional “clustery continuum”. The focus is Nariño; however, additional examples from other areas along the Colombian-Ecuadorian and Colombian-Venezuelan borderline shall be included in order to consolidate the findings.

Non-existent Arrangement

(i) Violent combat

Violent combat may arise when there is no trust between groups and diverging or conflicting interests impede any kind of agreement. There is no agreement to share a certain territory or business, nor does one group agree to simply go away or let go. Hence, disputes, threats of violence and, ultimately, violent combat can arise—for example, in order to drive out or absorb another group, to defend a territory or business or in revenge of a previous event. Violent combat can also exist if, initially, there was an agreement (for example a tactical alliance), but one of the parties decides to “break the rules of the game” and no longer adheres to it. This is comparable to competition in the licit business world, yet based on the means of violence. Examples of Nariño include violent combat between ELN and FARC in the municipality of Barbacoas in 2010. In July 2011 the same region suffered clashes between Águilas Negras, Rastrojos, and the FARC. [29] Things are similar in the Colombian-Venezuelan borderlands. In Cúcuta in 2011, for example, which had been under the dominion of the Rastrojos, the Urabeños entered and began taking over control. This example shows that violent combat does not necessarily manifest itself in a traditional war battlefield. Rather, violence is employed in a more subtle, selective way. For example, the Urabeños gained control by killing Rastrojos’ informants and messengers that are hardly distinguishable from other civilians in an attempt to impose a new – their own – network of informants. An adolescent who hangs around near high school, a vegetable salesman, a lady selling “minutes” for mobile phones – anyone of them might be an informant and hence be killed or threatened due to the absence of an agreement between the two groups. Instances were also

found of overlapping and multiple arrangements that include violent combat. For instance, in Tumaco as of April 2012 there have reportedly been violent disputes between Rastrojos together with FARC on the one hand and Águilas Negras with smaller criminal gangs on the other hand.

The costs and benefits of violent combat between different VNSAs are obvious. As a downside, they have to invest material, financial and human costs in order to sustain the fighting. Yet if they win their fight, an increase in economic, social and/or political power, territorial dominion and prestige are just some of the prospects that may make it worthwhile for VNSAs to engage in such an undertaking. To be sure, the prospects of victory are not always based on such strategic long-term impacts. Violent disputes can also break out due to personal interests, for example if a local boss decides to operate independently or a group member takes action on his or her own. The reasons for such behaviour are manifold. They can range from personal revenge (for example, if a member of another group has an affair with his or her partner), greed, or internal power struggles (for example, with the objective of overthrowing his or her boss).

Short-term Arrangements

Short-term arrangements are comprised in the second cluster of the two-dimensional continuum of arrangements of convenience. They are based on low trust and tend to last over a relatively short period of time.

(i) Spot sales and barter agreements

Spot sales involve commodities, for example illegal drugs or weapons that are purchased immediately “on the spot”, either on a cash basis or as a barter agreement (for example, arms-for-drugs-deals). They can be destined for the internal market of the country where the deal takes place, or for export to markets in other regions such as the U.S. or Europe. Even though spot sales and barter agreements are often just a one-off transaction, they require a minimal degree of trust between the two parties of the deal or hegemony of one group. Also, spot sales and barter agreements are characterised by minimal institutionalisation and stability. At least at the moment of switching products or paying cash for a certain good, both parties have to share some common understanding on what the deal is about.

Driven by economic interests, such business deals can materialize very spontaneously. Leaders of hostile groups may sit together to undertake a deal one day because it brings benefits to both of them, and the next day they might fight each other again. The village of Llorente, on the road that connects Tumaco with Pasto in the Colombian department of Nariño, is notorious for such deals. Apparently, in 2007 it resembled a “business centre” where members of VNSA groups met to negotiate shipments, entries of precursors, and made payments to access trafficking routes or purchase illegal goods.[30]

Comparative advantages are key in these types of relationships. For example, in the case of arms-for-drugs deals in the northern part of Colombian Norte de Santander and in the Venezuelan state of Zulia, Colombian VNSAs exchange cocaine with arms provided by Venezuelan VNSAs. The Colombian VNSAs, particularly the FARC and ELN, need the arms to sustain the fight against the Colombian government. Against this, the Venezuelan VNSAs ship

the cocaine via international trafficking routes that start near the Lake of Maracaibo and continue via West Africa to end on the market of Western Europe. Consequently, the benefits that may arise for VNSAs from these types of arrangements are very high. However, the risk is also very high. Given the minimal degree of trust, deals can easily be dishonoured. Cheating and betrayals are common; also, treachery involving state forces has occurred. An important aspect in this regard is the illegality of these deals. Certainly, this characteristic brings huge benefits, especially in borderlands, which feature a low-risk/high-opportunity environment because the state presence tends to be rather low and border crossings increase the illegal products' value. Nevertheless, while the risk to be detected by law enforcement officials may be rather low, the risk of a "broken deal" is very high. Given that the deals are by no means legally binding, VNSAs have to base their calculations regarding whether to engage in them or not on the minimal degree of trust they might have and on the potential to use their power to enforce compliance. In other words, trust might be replaced by power of one group.

(ii) *Tactical alliances*

Tactical alliances are temporary collaborative agreements between different VNSAs. Trust tends to be rather low among groups in these types of arrangements. Based on immediate benefits and often personal considerations, they are only a little stable and institutionalised, hence they fall under short-term arrangements.

As the example of the city of Tumaco demonstrates, these features make them extremely fragile. [31] In Tumaco, Águilas Negras, Rastrojos, FARC militias of the mobile column Daniel Aldana, the Sinaloa cartel and other criminal groups are present.[32] Most of them are likely to form tactical alliances at times—for example, in the form of sharing intelligence to circumvent law enforcement measures, using the same wharf or transport routes to ship their illegal goods, or purchasing equipment, such as ammunition and weapons, or cocaine from the same brokers. These alliances may break if, for instance, a leader feels humiliated by actions of a member of the other group, if an alliance with another group promises greater benefits, or if someone is suspected to be traitor.

By definition, in most cases tactical alliances are not designed to serve long-term strategic purposes. In a similar manner, the costs and benefits materialize immediately. On the one hand, the most obvious benefits are the economic profits and increased social status that VNSAs can reap from tactical alliances. In the case of Colombia's borderlands, those places which constitute the starting points or key of international trafficking routes such as Tumaco or key hubs of "narco-transactions" such as Cúcuta are particularly attractive for VNSAs to engage in these arrangements. Near borders, especially maritime borders, the value of the illicit products that are at the core of these arrangements tends to be higher than elsewhere. The products have already passed most of the stages of the production chain and thus accumulated value. Moreover, the borderlands' low-risk/high-opportunity environment makes these deals extremely lucrative.

On the other hand, an obvious cost factor is the instability of these kinds of arrangements. Given the high opportunities that these deals provide, competition is high and "business partners" quickly replace each other. The rules of the games being rarely clear, the fragile nature of tactical alliances leads to high rates of mistrust. Quickly shifting support networks produce uncertainty

that often gives reason to engage in violence, which takes shape in selective homicides against potential traitors, suspected state collaborators, messengers, or informants. Since no one knows who is on whose side, on whom to rely, and to whom to talk, it is extremely difficult to establish who might be involved in those arrangements, and who is not. The lines between bystanders and active members are highly blurred. In Tumaco for example, schoolchildren are paid by members of VNSA groups to transport small arms in their school bags. In Ipiales, newspaper readers standing on a street corner or sitting on a park bank may be informants.[33] In such tense environments, emotions can lead to lethal acts of aggression, for instance as personal revenge. The minimal degree of trust among VNSAs, and the fact that many of such tactical alliances are based on personal considerations, can lead to dilemmas for each group member and destroy what could be called “group-internal social fabric”. How can one be loyal to their superiors if they might have switched sides? How can one rely on support of fellow group members if they might be traitors and have engaged in a temporary tactical alliance with the enemy to maximise their own personal benefits? In this regard, organisational structure matters. Members of groups that are organised hierarchically and that have a long history tend to face fewer dilemmas than those of groups which are highly fragmented and follow a network-like logic with independent cells or nodes led by rather independent middle-range bosses.

(iii) *Sub-contract relationships*

Sub-contract relationships among VNSAs are relationships in which one party accepts an offer of another party to provide certain services over a defined period of time. This can be a one-time service such as a contract killing or a service provided over a longer period of time, such as the provision of security services through modern mercenaries. In Tumaco, for example, the Águilas Negras are said to have been contracted by the Mexican Sinaloa cartel in order to provide security services.[34] These kinds of relationships are more institutionalised than spot sales and barter agreements, which are only one-off transactions. Also they are likely to be more institutionalised than tactical alliances.

Arguably, although there is a rather low level of trust, sub-contract relationships require more trust between groups than spot sales and barter agreements because the service provided takes place after the arrangements have been made. However, this trust-base can also be replaced by hegemony of one group. Often, the sub-contracted group becomes dependent on the “contractor,” or complies in fear of punishment. In Ocaña, for instance, post-demobilised groups are said to have contracted youth gangs in order to keep certain neighbourhoods under control.[35] Such sub-contract relationships can also take shape across borders, as seen in the case of San Lorenzo, situated in the Ecuadorian province of Esmeraldas which borders Colombia. In San Lorenzo, local youth gangs have been sub-contracted by Colombian post-demobilised groups.[36] Finally, sub-contract relationships can emerge from simple favours, a practice that has been common among many mafia structures in Italy, the United States and other parts of the world.[37] A gang boss might help out someone in need and, in return, sub-contract this person at a later point in time to provide a service. The advantage of such kinds of arrangements is that each party to the contract can make use of particular skills and experiences. For example, the youth gangs know the local context better than post-demobilised groups that come from other parts of the country,

and thus have better leverage to put pressure on them. Furthermore, sub-contract relationships spread the risk and increase impunity as law enforcement officials have more difficulties in tracing back the crime's intellectual perpetrator than would be the case in a direct crime. On the downside, the sub-contracted party enters into a relationship of dependence which can be very difficult to exit, and the contracting party has to rely on the trustworthiness or the effectiveness of threat of punishment in order to be sure that the service will be provided. Frequently, contract killers have turned against their own bosses in order to increase power; recent examples can be found in Putumayo earlier this year.[38]

Long-term Arrangements

Long-term arrangements are based on higher levels of trust and are more durable than short-term arrangements.

(iv) Transactional supply chain relationships

In the case of transactional supply chain relationships, the groups are at "arm's length". They respect territorial limits of influence within which each group exercises economic, social and/or political control. Since in most cases this leads to a territorial segmentation, the groups usually have limited commitment with each other, though being connected through financial or material transactions. The demarcations of influence can be drawn according to the supply chain along which illegal or legal activities (such as mining) take place. Accordingly, the territorial segmentation is reflected in the "division of labour" in which each group assumes one or several specific functions. Important examples for the Andean context are the production stages of cocaine: for example, the FARC protect and control the cultivation and the first production stages, a drug trafficker (or broker) buys the coca paste and sells it to the Rastrojos, and these or other groups are in charge of further processing and transporting. Another broker negotiates with international organised criminal organisations such as the Mexican drug cartels, who buy the cocaine and take over international trafficking of the final product.[39] This appears to be the case along River Mira: while the FARC's Daniel Aldana mobile column apparently controls Bajo Mira, the Rastrojos are said to control Alto Mira and Frontera and have links with Mexican drug cartels in charge of the international shipment. Notably, the operational territories of different VNSAs often coincide with an urban-rural divide.[40] Generally, rebel groups in control of coca cultivations and the first processing steps, particularly ELN and FARC, are principally present in rural areas.[41] Against this, the new emerging, post-demobilised, drug trafficking and "neo-paramilitary" groups, subsumed by the Colombian government under the general term BACRIM (*bandas criminales emergentes* – emerging criminal bands), tend to exercise territorial dominion in urban areas which are strategic for trafficking routes, international shipment and other connected services.

The broker role described in this example is crucial for understanding the considerable degree of stability and institutionalisation of the arrangement which one would expect to be based on high levels of trust. While short-term agreements feature low trust, and long-term agreements relatively high trust, transactional supply chain relationships are different. In this case, there

usually is no direct interaction between groups. Being an intermediate figure, the broker allows for relatively stable relationships by bridging the “trust-gap” that might exist between the groups—particularly if they have different ideological or political motivations, or simply differ in their economic interests. This might explain why insurgent groups have quite durable arrangements to engage in transactions with post-demobilised groups although the trust base is rather low. It might also explain why in some cases, rebels such as the FARC who protect coca cultivations and control the first processing from coca to coca paste suddenly switch “business partners” for the final processing into cocaine and the shipment: the broker might have found a higher bidder or the broker has changed. For example, in Catatumbo—a rural region in Norte de Santander—Víctor Ramón Navarro Serrano, alias “Megateo”, is an important broker. With an influence sphere that reaches to the Venezuelan side of the border, he is the puppet master of many of the most crucial deals relating to the cocaine business in the region and has contributed to maintaining the division of labour within the lucrative illicit drug business over many years.[42] So, while benefits arise from the specialisation and comparative advantages of each group, their dependence on the broker to merchandise the product, to buy the product that needs further processing or to ship it to the international market can constitute limitations on the VNSAs’ scope of decision-making as to how to manage their income sources.

(v) *Strategic alliances*

Strategic alliances are long-term commitments between different VNSAs that are based on a relatively high degree of trust and institutionalisation. They share intelligence, revenues, and/or expenses and might have “war pacts” in order to jointly fight against a third group.[43] In Nariño, ELN and FARC are said to operate jointly in the municipalities of Santa Cruz, Samaniego, Cumbitara, La Llanada and Los Andes, among others, to combat state forces.[44] Also in the area of Catatumbo, they seem to have joined forces. This is suggested by graffiti of the two group names at house walls, painted in the same colours and the same style, suggesting that they have been produced by one person and would have been eliminated if one of the two had rejected them.[45] In these cases, they share the same territory. The same applies to the relationships between Águilas Negras and Rastrojos, who apparently joined forces in Tumaco, though previously they fought each other.[46] Another type of example is the supposed strategic alliance between the FARC and the Mexican Sinaloa cartel, which allowed the FARC to conduct ideological work in Mexico.[47] Here, the two groups operate in different territories; it therefore can be cited as a special case of strategic alliances across different regions.

Strategic alliances can also be in force in only a limited territory. In Putumayo for example, the FARC are said to be present in the area surrounding Puerto Guzman, the Rastrojos in Puerto Caicedo, and a mix of various different VNSAs in Puerto Asís. The trafficking route from northern parts of Colombia via Putumayo to the Ecuadorian province of Sucumbios and finally the Ecuadorian capital city Quito connects these three places. Without being of much strategic importance as such, Puerto Caicedo in particular is an important transit point through which drugs and arms have to be transported. Therefore, if groups such as the FARC wish to cross the village, they have to engage in an arrangement with the Rastrojos who control it.[48] While being limited spatially, in temporal terms such an arrangement can be long-lasting. It is

implemented on a reiterative basis: the FARC or other groups not only cross the territory under the Rastrojos' dominion once, but on a regular basis in order to traffic drugs or arms. Usually, they pay some kind of "taxes" or "protection money". This arrangement guarantees that they can pass their merchandise without being attacked by the Rastrojos who, in turn, benefit from the financial profits they make out of this arrangement.[49]

Whether hegemony plays a role in strategic alliances is questionable. If two groups engage in a long-term arrangement and one of them is considerably more powerful, it suggests itself that the weaker one is absorbed by the stronger one. This can be the case because members of the less powerful group defect to the hegemon as they hope to reap more benefits out of it. In this case, they can be considered part of the hegemon and no interaction with a second group is taking place. Or the weaker group is absorbed because the hegemon forces group members to capitulate and join them and those who do not do so are killed; this scenario can be equalled with violent combat.

Similarly to the previously described arrangements, costs of engaging in strategic alliances involve the loss of the VNSA group's independency. Nonetheless, it can be an indispensable means to assert oneself against a third party, particularly state forces, and is therefore of considerable use if trust is relatively high among groups.

(vi) Pacific coexistence

Pacific coexistence is another long-term arrangement based on rather high levels of trust which tend to be comparatively stable. In this case, different VNSAs have tacit agreements of non-aggression and non-interference in each other's affairs.[50] They may share a territory and operate in a parallel manner without having any kind of interaction, or they operate in neighbouring territories and respect their territorial limits—for example, along important infrastructure elements such as oil pipelines and rivers or streams as well as land trafficking routes. In both cases, the VNSAs exercise economic, social and/or political control within the environment they are embedded in. To cite an example, in late 2007 and early 2008, FARC and Águilas Negras appeared to have an arrangement of pacific coexistence in Norte de Santander. [51] The advantage of such a relationship is the absence of risks or loss of independence which might occur in the case of other arrangements. However, despite trust, there is always the risk that the other party to the arrangement might disobey the rules of the game. Furthermore, without having any transactions, the group acts in isolation, which makes it less competitive in comparison to highly specialised VNSAs that rely on division of labour and comparative advantages to increase economic profits.

The Added Value of the Typology

From this analysis of the conceptual "clustery continuum of VNSA arrangements," we can derive insights on a number of important factors, including the drivers of group decision-making, the levels of violence that result from VNSA interactions, the variation in impacts on local communities, and the importance of group-specific characteristics. Importantly, these factors are

not only relevant to the context of Colombia's borderlands, but are also applicable to the study of other regions that face similar challenges arising from the activities of VNSAs.

(i) *Drivers of decision-making*

As the discussion of the typology's components has demonstrated, the rationale for VNSAs to engage in one or several arrangements of convenience is similar to the economic motivations that are decisive in the licit business world. First, arrangements among groups increase mutual benefits through maximising comparative advantages. In the case of transactional supply chain relationships, each link in the chain is different. In most areas of Nariño, Putumayo and Norte de Santander, the FARC control coca cultivations and are in charge of the first processing phase. To cite one example, they are historically rooted in rural areas of Putumayo where they receive the local population's support. The post-demobilised groups are concentrated in urban areas and have closer links to trafficking organisations from other countries, for example the Mexican Sinaloa Cartel or the Zetas. This analysis therefore suggests that some groups establish a certain division of labour within the illegal drug supply chain rather than controlling everything at once. Another factor that has seemed to be pivotal for VNSAs' decision-making is to spread the risk. In this regard, sub-contract relationships are cases in point. Contract killings considerably minimize the risk of being connected to particular crimes by law enforcement officials. The immediate perpetrator is often contracted by a middle man who works for someone else, hence, the intellectual perpetrator of a contracted homicide is hard to determine. VNSAs resort to such arrangements so that their crimes remain in impunity and, on top of this, the investment costs are not very high. For example, in the Ecuadorian coastal province of Esmeraldas, which borders Colombian Nariño, killers can be contracted for no more than twenty US dollars.[52] Surely, while comparative advantages and spreading the risk are reasons for VNSAs to engage in short- or long-term arrangements, diverging interests may lead to a situation of non-existent arrangements (e.g., violent combat).

To these rather generic points that drive VNSAs to make arrangements (or not) with other groups, one needs to add some additional factors that influence why a VNSA group decides to interact with others in one or several of the above outlined types of arrangements. Empirical evidence from Colombia's borderlands has shown that four factors are particularly relevant: first, the degree of trust between groups; second, the local context; third, the role of the state forces and other external actors; and fourth, the organisational structure of the VNSA group.

First, as outlined above, the degree of trust seems to correlate with the stability and durability of an arrangement. Hence, if Group A and Group B have only minimal trust in each other, they are unlikely to engage in a strategic alliance. Second, the local context shapes VNSA groups' decision-making. Being embedded in a context where a group has an historic stronghold, VNSAs are more likely to engage in more durable relationships with others. Conversely, contexts of recent interest to many groups leave VNSAs less clear about who has what kind of support from whom and are therefore often the setting of multiple different types of short-term arrangements, as seen in the case of Tumaco. Another defining variable is whether the state where the arrangements take place is in armed internal conflict or not. Comparing the Ecuadorian with the Colombian side of the Colombian-Ecuadorian borderlands demonstrates that most groups tend to

maintain a lower profile on the Ecuadorian side. To be sure, this might be a reflection of the fact that VNSAs in Ecuador do not overtly fight against state forces. However, also among themselves, they are more contained when it comes to resorting to violence, and thus the relationship type “violent combat” is not as likely as it arguably is on the “conflict-side” in Colombia. Third, state forces and other external actors play a role in VNSAs’ decision-making. On the one hand, Group A might decide to engage in a strategic alliance with Group B if this represents a way to defend itself against state forces. The same applies to tactical alliances. On the other hand, if Group A has been betrayed by Group B who is collaborating with state forces, this might be a reason for Group A to engage in violent combat against Group B.

Outlining the implications of other external factors—such as political or economic elites, international cooperation or external state forces—goes beyond the scope of this article. However, such external influences have to be taken into account if the decisions of VNSAs to engage in one or another arrangement of convenience are to be understood. Finally, organisational structure matters. A VNSA that is organised hierarchically with a centralised command is likely to operate very differently on the ground than VNSAs with fragmented leadership. Being more independent, in the latter case decisions are much more likely to be based on personal, short-lived considerations leading to short-term arrangements than in the former case, where strategic thinking and organisational benefits may be given more weight. This might explain why the Rastrojos (for example) seem to follow very different logics across the country. Near the border with Ecuador they might have a tactical alliance with the FARC, while in Cúcuta no such alliance is in force.

(ii) *Insights on violence*

Another added value of the typology is that it facilitates insights regarding the levels of physical violence that result from VNSA interactions. Long-term, trust-based relationships are relatively non-violent. If the arrangements last only for a short time, the situation is obviously more characterised by violence, since the breaking of any arrangement leads to violent combat. This might explain why the Rastrojos for example seem to follow very different logics across the country. If violence has not been registered over a long time period, this might be an indicator of a long-term arrangement between two or more VNSA groups, rather than the absence of them. Such a “tense calm” can easily reach a tipping point where violence bursts out, due to the infringement of the arrangement. The city of Ocaña in the Colombian department of Norte de Santander for example, had experienced a period of hundred days without homicides since January 2012, which could be considered a remarkable achievement, given Norte de Santander’s decade-long history of violence.[53] Nevertheless, this was just the preamble of an outburst of violence in the following months which is said to be related to struggles among various VNSA groups.[54]

(iii) *Variation in repercussions on local communities*

As a third analytical benefit, the typology can be used to better understand how local populations are affected by the presence of VNSAs. There is a growing body of literature on how

communities are affected by civil war dynamics.[55] However, these works focus on forms of violence and do not consider contexts that might not fit into the conventional framing of civil wars—that is, contexts where various different VNSAs are in complex relationships with each other, ignoring borders that define the political situation by separating states in armed internal conflict from non-conflict states. Organising the arrangements of convenience into the three clusters speaks to such contexts and offers an analytical tool to go beyond dynamics of violence. It points to the variation in how local communities are affected: while violent combat inflicts violence on local communities, short-term agreements produce high degrees of uncertainty and mistrust, and long-term agreements are hardly noticed from the outside as they come along with a shadow form of governance implemented by an illicit authority, leading to shadow citizen security.[56] Also, while violent combat among VNSAs offers little space for local communities to stay “untouched”, and short-term arrangements produce confusing dynamics in which no one knows who is on which side, long-term arrangements may help provide some “rules of behaviour” to which the local population can adhere in order to not be punished. A more detailed discussion of this can be found elsewhere, yet it is important to briefly raise these points so as to highlight the analytical added value.[57]

(iv) Group-specific characteristics

Finally, the two-dimensional clustery continuum and its components serve to enhance understandings of variation across different VNSA groups. Ideological proximity can be an important factor for groups to engage in long-term arrangements. Groups tend to trust each other more if they are politically or ideologically more aligned. This might be a reason why Colombia’s borderlands manifest several strategic alliances and pacific coexistence between FARC and ELN rebels, for example in the region of Catatumbo in the Colombian department of Norte de Santander, which borders with Venezuela, and in Samaniego, situated in the Colombian department of Nariño, which borders with Ecuador.[58] Against this backdrop, arrangements between these groups and post-demobilised groups, the so-called BACRIM, tend to be rather short-term. For example, in Tumaco there are tactical alliances between Rastrojos and FARC, but arguably no long-term arrangements.[59]

Conclusion

This article has attempted to narrow the conceptual gap that has existed in the literature on VNSAs and the complex and multiple types of relationships that exist among them in order to enhance understandings of their decision-making and the ramifications that emerge from these decisions and interactions. Conceptualising VNSA interactions on a two-dimensional “clustery continuum of VNSA arrangements” facilitates a more fine-grained picture of VNSA dynamics than has been available so far.

The concept’s analytical and methodological benefits lead to several conclusions. First, durability makes a difference. By unpacking the interactions according to their durability, it serves as an analytical tool to better understand local dynamics on the ground; these vary depending on the degree of stability and institutionalisation of the arrangements. Second, change

is relevant. Conceptualizing the interactions on a flexible continuum reflects the dynamic nature of these kinds of relationships. This allows accounting for both external factors that influence the arrangements of convenience among VNSAs (such as changing power levels) and for internal group changes, such as a modification in the group's organisational structure. Third, context matters. By taking into account the degree of trust and hegemony of the groups, the typology facilitates considering the local context and how it varies across regions. This approach also encourages us to consider how the local political situation impacts VNSAs when deciding which kind of arrangement they should engage in as part of their efforts to increase economic or political benefits and spread risk. Also, though the VNSA group might be viewed as the same across various regions, decisions on engaging in arrangements vary depending on local power and trust constellations, organisational independence, and particular interests that these groups have in the respective region.

In addition to the contribution to scholarship of a new analytical tool, this study reveals important policy implications. Equipped with a detailed understanding of how VNSAs interact and what the costs and benefits are for them to engage in specific arrangements of convenience, we can address these relationships and create incentives to untie them. In this line of reasoning, manipulating trust relationships among different groups might be a convenient entry point to influence VNSA interactions. For example, targeting the broker of transnational supply chain relationships—who has connections to various groups and negotiates with all of them—can produce more immediate and effective results than targeting the group in charge of processing or selling, since the broker can simply look for another business partner. Also, security policies to protect local communities benefit from this analytical tool. Knowing what kinds of arrangements produce what type of insecurity facilitates targeted policy responses that are designed to combat violence, uncertainty and mistrust.

To be sure, several important aspects remain to be investigated in order to increase the leverage of this analytical tool both for academics and policymakers across the globe. For example, more research is needed to determine whether there is a causal relationship between the degree of trust and the durability of the arrangements and how exactly a group's hegemony plays a role. Also a rigorous deepening of each category could offer even more revealing insights into the rationale behind them and the implications for the local context and beyond. Still, this study serves as a useful starting point to understand not only VNSA dynamics in Colombia's borderlands, but also other areas in the world where multiple types of VNSAs are present, such as Central America, the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region, certain areas in West Africa and the Golden Triangle in Southeast Asia. Consolidating it with empirical evidence from these and other regions could constitute an ambitious, yet promising way ahead to better understand and face the challenging dynamics that emerge from interactions among different VNSAs.

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Notes

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- [45] Interviews and conversations with local clerics, community members and staff of international agencies in El Tarra, La Gabarra, Tibú and Cúcuta, Colombia, April and May 2012.
- [46] Interviews with Colombian government officials, Pasto, October 2011.
- [47] Interview with intelligence analyst, Quito, March 2012.
- [48] Interviews with a local community leader and a member of an international agency, Puerto Caicedo, Colombia, March 2012.
- [49] Note that the “guarantee” is conditioned by the informality of the arrangement which entails the risks of noncompliance explained above.
- [50] Ávila and Núñez, “Las Dinámicas Territoriales,” 54.
- [51] Ávila and Núñez, “Expansión territorial y alianzas tácticas”, 58.
- [52] Interview with Ecuadorian academic security expert, Quito, July 2009.
- [53] Interview with mayor of Ocaña, Ocaña, May 2012.
- [54] Interview with international agency, Cúcuta, May 2012.
- [55] See for example Kalyvas, “The Logic of Violence” or Arjona, “Social Order in Civil War”.
- [56] See Annette Idler, “Arrangements of Convenience in Colombia’s Borderlands: An Invisible Threat to Citizen Security?”, *St Antony’s International Review*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 2012.
- [57] See Idler, “Arrangements of Convenience in Colombia’s Borderlands: An Invisible Threat to Citizen Security?”.
- [58] Interviews with local human rights non-governmental organisations in Pasto and Tibú, Colombia, October 2011 to May 2012.
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Exploring the Iran-Hezbollah Relationship: A Case Study of how State Sponsorship affects Terrorist Group Decision-Making

by **Marc R. DeVore**

Abstract

Understanding the impact of state sponsorship on the decision-making of violent non-state actors is among the more important issues to scholars of security studies. This article addresses the issue by examining the relationship between Iran and Lebanon's Hezbollah. To preview its conclusions, there are two main perspectives to consider with regard to the terrorist group – state sponsor relationship. First, state support has a powerful, yet indirect effect on violent non-state actor decision-making by shaping the options available to groups' leaders. Second, state sponsors can also directly leverage their aid to shape the strategic decisions of armed non-state actors, forcing their clients to either expand or restrict their activities. Because of inevitable lacunae and contradictions amongst published accounts, this study relies heavily upon primary sources and data collected during field research in Lebanon, including interviews with leaders from Hezbollah, the Lebanese Army, the United Nations' Peacekeeping Mission in Southern Lebanon (UNIFIL) and the rival Shia organization, Amal.

Introduction

Understanding the impact of state sponsorship on the decision-making of non-state armed actors is among the more important issues to scholars of security studies. Since the end of the Cold War intra-state wars and internationalized civil wars have outnumbered traditional inter-state conflicts by a factor of more than twenty-to-one.[1] As a consequence, the outcome of most contemporary conflicts hinges on non-state armed groups' capabilities. Because many of these groups are supported by one or more states, questions must be posed as to how state sponsorship shapes the decision-making processes of violent non-state actors.

This article addresses the impact of state sponsorship on decision-making within violent non-state groups by examining the relationship between Iran and Lebanon's Hezbollah, a group known among scholars and policymakers alike as an exceptionally capable organization. From its beginnings, Hezbollah demonstrated a high aptitude for conducting successful attacks against more powerful foes and displayed continued effectiveness over the course of three decades of conflict with Israel. Consequently, the organization has been referred to as the "A Team of terrorists" and is widely considered to be one of the world's most innovative armed non-state actors.[2] This analysis indicates that there are two main perspectives to consider with regard to the terrorist group – state sponsor relationship.

First, state support has a powerful, yet indirect effect on violent non-state actor decision-making by shaping the options available to groups' leaders. When states offer violent non-state actors sanctuary and steady financial assistance, they empower such organizations to undertake long-range planning and adopt a long-term perspective towards their struggle. Moreover, the ability

to pay regular salaries and use safe havens as loci for transferring knowledge within the organization enables the personnel of sponsored groups to develop a greater degree of professionalism and pursue improved organizational learning. In certain instances, sponsored violent non-state actors can also leverage the financial resources provided by sponsors to pursue “hearts and minds” campaigns predicated on their ability to provide social services and welfare benefits. In short, through the resources they provide, state sponsors fundamentally shape both the environment within which terrorist and insurgent leaders make decisions and the options available to them.

Second, besides indirectly influencing groups’ decisions by enhancing their professionalism and capabilities, state sponsors can also directly leverage their aid to shape the strategic decisions of armed non-state actors. In certain instances, states may encourage the escalation of violence by compelling the recipients of their support to attack targets or undertake actions they would normally have eschewed. In other cases, states can act as a constraining force; persuading a group to either forego or scale-back certain activities. In instances when state sponsors demand that armed non-state actors pursue escalation or exercise restraint, the latter are obliged to weigh the potential loss of support that might follow a refusal against the negative consequences that would likely ensue from a modification of its strategy, tactics or targeting.

Sponsorship’s Indirect Impact on Group Decision-Making

Scholars and policymakers alike have long asserted that active support from states enhances the overall capabilities of armed non-state actors, but relatively little has been published on how this support impacts decision-making within the group. Despite this lacuna, there are powerful reasons for anticipating that state sponsors will exercise both indirect and direct influences on decisions within armed non-state actors. Indirectly, the aid provided by state sponsors fundamentally shapes the opportunity costs of the strategies an organization *can* adopt. Secure finances and foreign sanctuaries enable non-state actors to embrace long-term strategies that rely on a high degree of professionalism, particular weapons systems can alter the military balance between terrorists and counter-terrorists, and training by state sponsors can widen a group’s intellectual horizons to include new tactics and techniques.

Before analyzing state sponsorship’s impact on decision-making within one particular non-state actor, it is first necessary to explore how the different forms of support states offer shape the opportunity costs of different forms of organizational behavior. To this end, the impact of the four distinct forms of support—financial assistance, material aid, sanctuary and political backing - articulated by scholars Daniel Byman and Bruce Hoffman - will be successively examined.[3]

With the steady financial support states can provide, violent non-state actors can take a long view towards their struggles. One reason for this is that well-resourced armed non-state organizations can pay their personnel regular salaries, which enables such groups to attract and retain promising human capital. Moreover, freed from the need to hold jobs on the side, individual terrorists and insurgents can devote themselves full-time to subversive and paramilitary activities, becoming ‘professional’ (as opposed to amateur) operatives.[4] Logically, these financially-secure, full-time professional cadres belonging to state-sponsored organizations can be expected to pursue strategies that are both more measured and sophisticated than counterparts

from organizations with tenuous financial incomes.[5] Besides changing how individual terrorists and insurgents view their struggles, financial support from states also permits long-range budgeting, which enables violent non-state organizations to pursue long-range strategic planning.

Besides changing the strategic outlook of violent non-state actors, financial sponsorship from states also enables these organizations to offer welfare benefits and social services in an effort to win the ‘hearts and minds’ of target populations.[6] Thus, rather than predatorily extracting wealth from a population, financially-supported armed non-state groups can compete with their state adversaries and other civil society actors for a population’s loyalty.[7] Amongst the benefits offered are: functioning judicial systems, healthcare, schools and running water.[8] Indeed, it is difficult to overstate the importance this welfare dimension—which can be conceptualized as a distinct operational front—of many contemporary intra-state conflicts. To give but one example, recent struggles amongst Fatah, Hamas and other groups to mobilize Palestinians in the occupied territories and refugee camps hinged on their comparative ability to use sponsor-provided resources to offer constituents social services.[9]

While financial support constitutes one way that state sponsorship impacts non-state actors’ calculations, the provision of weaponry constitutes another. Banned by international law from legally importing armaments, most non-state actors both depend on a narrow range of tactics and have trouble innovating. Consequently, state transfers of sophisticated weapons to their non-state protégées can dramatically increase the military options available to the latter, while degrading their opponents’ capabilities.[10] For example, the United States’ decision to supply Afghanistan’s mujahideen with man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS) in the 1980s reduced the Soviet Union’s ability to use tactical airpower against them; and Iran’s provision of explosively-formed projectiles (EFP) gave Iraqi Shiite militias new options for inflicting damage on coalition forces in the 2000s.[11]

Besides supplying money and weaponry, states also indirectly effect group decision-making when they provide violent non-state organizations with sanctuary. As Al-Qaeda’s travails since 9/11 demonstrate, it is extremely difficult for organizations to formulate effective policies and plan intricate operations when they are constantly on the run.[12] Moreover, organizations bereft of safe havens can only with great difficulty manage their assets and draw lessons from past operations because the standard bookkeeping and archival procedures necessary for routinized organizational management is a liability when financial records and archives are liable for seizure. Consequently, state sponsors foster conditions conducive to both better decision-making and to more effective organizational management by providing sanctuaries where their clients can plan and organize in comparative safety. Furthermore, it is easier for such organizations to transmit tactical lessons and tacit knowledge between their different units and between veteran and novice fighters when they can locate permanent training camps in safe havens.[13]

In addition to material support and the offer of sanctuary, states also indirectly shape decision-makers’ calculations within armed non-state organizations when they provide them with political support.[14] For groups fighting either to control a state or secede from one, diplomatic recognition and support in international forums provides non-state groups with an aura of legitimacy and complicates their opponents’ efforts to repress them. Such is especially the case

when state sponsors highlight (real or alleged) civilian casualties and human rights abuses to discredit counter-terrorist and counterinsurgent forces. For example, Arab states increased the diplomatic costs of France's counterinsurgency campaign and limited its political options by formally recognizing Algeria's anti-colonial Front de Liberation Nationale (FLN), raising the "Algerian question" at the UN, and criticizing French forces' use of torture.[15] Support of this variety can be expected to have a powerful, yet complex impact on decision-makers' calculations by simultaneously reducing the costs of attacks that might generate limited political blowback and raising the cost of operations that would place the organization 'beyond the pale' of international relations.

Taken as an ensemble, the support states offer armed non-state organizations can powerfully, yet indirectly influence the latter's decision-making processes. Because financial assistance enables groups to retain trained cadres and safe havens permit them to transfer knowledge within the organization, state-sponsored non-state organizations can develop a higher degree of professionalism and continue to perfect their tactical repertoire over time. Moreover, a wider variety of armaments and more thorough training increases the range of options available to such organizations. When combined with the long-range budgeting and strategic planning that state supported non-state actors can undertake, these institutional advantages encourage sponsored organizations to adopt a long term perspective towards their struggles. Overall, the greater tactical flexibility, long-range planning and professionalism of state-sponsored groups yield, under *ceteris paribus* conditions, enhanced effectiveness and greater durability. Thus, given the extreme attrition rate of armed non-state actors—with 90 percent of terrorist groups collapsing during their first year of existence—a state sponsor's aid frequently means the difference between being relegated to the status of historical footnote and developing the power needed to inflict meaningful damage on their opponents.[16]

State Sponsors' Direct Influence on Group Decision-Making

Besides these indirect effects of state sponsorship on decision-making in non-state groups, states can also leverage the aid they provide to intervene more directly in their clients' planning processes. Although ideological factors can contribute to states' willingness to assist groups, governments also seek to advance concrete foreign policy interests through their relationships with armed non-state actors. However, because the preferences of states and their non-state protégées are rarely identical, the former must compel the latter to deviate from their preferred courses of action if they will succeed in attaining their ends. In certain cases, states will use their influence to coax their clients into attacking targets they would otherwise have eschewed. In other cases, the dictates of national foreign policies will lead states to restrain their clients.

Many states are tempted to use the leverage that their sponsorship of insurgents and terrorists gives them to compel violent non-state actors to attack their opponents. In certain instances, governments exploit non-state actors in this way because using proxies to conduct attacks, rather than their own military and intelligence agencies enables them to deny their responsibility and, therefore, avoid reprisals.[17] In other cases, states compel non-state groups to attack their opponents because the latter are considered more effective at the tasks at hand than the state's

own services.[18] As a result of both motivations, states often compel violent non-state actors to attack targets they would not otherwise have considered.

For example, Iraq bribed a Palestinian group—Wadi Haddad’s Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – Exterior Operations (PFLP-EO)—to hijack the 1975 OPEC meeting and assassinate Saudi Arabia’s oil minister.[19] Likewise, Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceaucescu compelled a Marxist West European terrorist group he supported to bomb a Radio Free Europe office in Munich to stop its criticism of his regime.[20] In both of these cases, groups faithfully and skillfully executed missions whose accomplishment in no way contributed to their broader political objectives, which were respectively Palestine’s liberation and an end to capitalist democracy in Western Europe. When states instrumentalize non-state organizations to strike targets they would not normally have attacked, as occurred here, the end result is an enlargement of the latter’s target lists beyond what would normally have been the case, which could earn the non-state organizations new enemies that would otherwise have been better disposed towards their struggles.

While states sometimes push their non-state protégées towards violence against a wider-range of foes, their national interests can also drive them to counsel restraint.[21] Because the actions of armed non-state actors can precipitate military retaliation against their sponsors, states have an incentive to keep their clients’ level of violence below some ill-defined threshold, beyond which the sponsoring state itself becomes a target for retaliation. Consequently, states frequently find it in their interest to constrain their non-state clients’ activities. For example, Jordan cracked-down on the PLO in 1970 after the Palestinians refused to scale-back the raids they launched from Jordanian territory.[22] While the Jordanian case is extreme, states often seek to calibrate the activities of their non-state clients to maximize the damage against the state’s foes, while minimizing the risks of their suffering military reprisals.

Thus, states can use the leverage their sponsorship provides to compel non-state armed groups to expand or restrict their activities. In either case, state sponsor seek to coax their clients into adopting courses of action that the latter *a priori* consider sub-optimal. However, the considerable advantages that state support confers on terrorist and insurgent groups render it difficult for armed non-state organizations to categorically reject demands from their sponsors. Consequently, relations between states and their non-state clients are often characterized by dynamics redolent of principal-agent theory, with sponsoring states employing the power of their disposal to compel armed non-state actors to undertake activities these latter would otherwise never consider.

Case Selection

In this article, the focus is on Hezbollah’s relationship with Iran during Hezbollah’s first decade of existence in order to assess how Iranian sponsorship both indirectly and directly shaped decision-making within Hezbollah. To enhance the relevance of the findings, the analysis deliberately focuses on an organization widely regarded as one of the most formidable of its kind - Lebanon’s Hezbollah - whose state sponsor – Iran - is amongst the most active supporters of violent non-state groups. By examining how Iranian support shaped decision-making within Hezbollah, this study aims to provide both general insights into how state sponsorship shapes

their clients' decision-making processes and fresh insights about the specific relationship uniting one of the world's premier violent non-state actors and a state that is one of the most active supporters of such groups.

Now thirty years old, Hezbollah has acquired a reputation for competence equaled by few violent non-state groups. This fact led terrorism scholar Daniel Byman to refer to Hezbollah as "the single most effective adversary Israel has ever faced" and (former) Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage to opine that "Hezbollah may be the 'A-Team of Terrorists' and maybe Al-Qaeda is actually the 'B' Team." [23] Besides its acknowledged competence, Hezbollah is also one of the most geopolitically significant violent non-state actors. Hezbollah's military operations have exerted a continual pressure on Israel and its example of successful resistance has inspired Palestinian groups to emulate both its tactics and organizational practices. [24] This reality, as reflected in a recent survey of American policymaking elites, led informed observers to hypothesize that Hezbollah and Israel are the two entities most likely to go to war. [25] Moreover, besides opposing Israel, Hezbollah sent its veterans to advise insurgent groups in Iraq and used its military wing to strong-arm domestic Lebanese opponents in 2008. [26]

While Hezbollah is one of the world's premier violent non-state actors, Iran is one of the most active sponsors of such groups. As a number of scholars have demonstrated, Iranian support of armed non-state organizations is motivated by three distinct, yet interrelated considerations. Firstly, through support for anti-Israeli militant groups, such as the Palestine Islamic Jihad, Hamas and Hezbollah, Iran injects its voice into the Israeli/Palestinian conflict; an issue central to the Arab world that has enabled Iran to garner a degree of popularity otherwise unobtainable by a state that is both religiously Shiite and ethnically Persian. [27] Secondly, besides its desire for a greater voice in regional affairs, Iran has been driven to support violent non-state actors because of its de facto status as the self-appointed champion of Shia Muslims, who suffer from discrimination and oppression at the hands of Sunni governments. Within this context, Iran has sponsored Hazara militias in Afghanistan and terrorist groups in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain (both named Hezbollah in imitation of the Lebanese organization). [28] A third and final motivation for Iranian sponsorship of violent non-state actors is its conventional military weakness, which has led it to rely on proxies to deter or attack its adversaries. [29] As a result of the above three reasons, Iran is exceptional in terms of the number of organizations it supports and their role in its foreign policy.

Considering Hezbollah's importance as a violent non-state actor and Iran's prominence as a sponsor of such groups, the following pages first examine how Iranian support has indirectly affected decision-making within Hezbollah by shaping the opportunity costs of different strategies. After examining sponsorships' indirect influence, the study analyzes Iran's direct impact on Hezbollah's decision-making, including efforts to both expand and constrain its activities. Because of inevitable lacunae and contradictions amongst published accounts, this study relies heavily upon primary sources and data collected during field research in Lebanon. In addition to systematically examining published primary sources, leaders from Hezbollah, the Lebanese Army, the United Nations' Peacekeeping Mission in Southern Lebanon (UNIFIL) and the rival Shia organization, Amal were interviewed.

Sponsorship's Indirect Impact on Hezbollah's Decision-Making

Iranian sponsorship has played a critical, yet indirect role in shaping the strategies adopted by Hezbollah's leaders since that organization's creation in 1982. Within this context, Iranian financial aid enabled Hezbollah's founding cadres to adopt a long-range approach, wherein a combination of the professionalism of its combatants and the group's gradual development of social services would exhaust Hezbollah's Israeli adversaries and win it the allegiance of Lebanese Shiites. Likewise, Iran's provision of safe havens inside Iran itself and (through its intercession with Syria) within Lebanon's Beka'a valley, enabled Hezbollah's politico-military command structure to plan operations in relative security and permitted the organization to develop a sophisticated infrastructure of training camps and administrative facilities. Finally, Iran's constant political support—especially its intermediation vis-à-vis Syrian authorities—proved a *sine qua non* for Hezbollah to operate freely in Lebanon. Thus, taken as a whole, Iranian support was a prerequisite for Hezbollah to pursue the strategies that ultimately brought it such success.

Of particular importance to Hezbollah's rapid development is the fact that many Lebanese Shiites belonged to violent non-state groups and had acquired considerable military experience prior to Hezbollah's creation in 1982. Some Shiites—including the future leaders of Hezbollah's intelligence service (Husayn al-Khalil) and Jihad Council (Imad Mughniyah)—had joined Palestinian groups from 1969 onwards when the Cairo Agreement erected South Lebanon as a sanctuary that Palestinian guerrillas could use to attack Israel.[30] Many other Shiites acquired their military experience fighting in Lebanon's Civil War for the militia belonging to the country's established Shiite movement, Amal. However, Amal's status as Lebanon's Shiite movement *par excellence* was already being contested in the years prior to Hezbollah's creation by religious scholars dissatisfied with the increasingly secular platform adopted by Nabih Berri since he assumed control of the party in 1980.[31]

Given these preconditions, Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon provided the final impetus needed for the creation of a new, more militant Shiite movement—Hezbollah. When Berri ordered Amal's militia not to resist Israel's advance, many of his combatants spontaneously disobeyed his orders and joined Palestinian and Syrian forces in resisting the Israeli army as it approached Beirut.[32] Meanwhile, Israel's lightning advance through South Lebanon left the Shiite fighters formerly employed by Palestinian groups both unemployed and footloose, yet willing to carry on fighting Israel. At a higher level, Amal's chief military commander, Husayn al-Musawi, broke overtly with Berri and called for Shiites to resist the invasion in the name of Islam.[33]

The spontaneous and individual decisions of some Shiites to fight against invading Israeli forces laid the basis for the emergence of some form of insurgency. However, both the scope and strategy of the movement would likely have been far different in the absence of Iran's support. In its initial phases, Shiite resistance against the Israelis was conducted under the aegis of a wide range of small groups, ranging from disaffected Amal units to associations of Islamic students. [34] Without any hierarchy, village mullahs and seasoned militia leaders organized attacks as best they could. Moreover, Lebanon's Shia community was by no means united in opposition to Israel. Many Shiites in South Lebanon initially considered the Israelis liberators from

Palestinian domination, while Lebanon's largest Shiite party, Amal, adopted a wait-and-see approach to the invasion.[35]

Although it is impossible to ascertain with certainty what would have ensued had no state sponsored Shiite resistance against Israel, the disjointed origins of the resistance suggests that a counterfactual unsponsored campaign would have been both less controlled and less well-planned than what actually transpired. Thus, rather than a single monolithic entity—Hezbollah—managing a cohesive long-term effort to mobilize Shiites against Israel, resistance might have been characterized by local acephalous groups operating independently of one another. Although such uncoordinated resistance can be troublesome, as witnessed by Iraq's anti-American Sunni insurgency, its strategic impact is often lessened by the absence of centralized military leadership or coherent political direction.[36] Without the resources needed to remunerate their members or provide social services, such groups also employ terror and intimidation to control their constituent populations, risking popular backlashes (e.g. equivalent to Iraq's 'Anbar Awakening').[37]

Recognizing the shortcomings of the spontaneous, unsponsored resistance that followed the Israeli invasion, three Lebanese clerics who knew Iran's Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini travelled to Tehran where they appealed for Iranian support to form an Islamic resistance movement.[38] Khomeini and his inner circle responded enthusiastically to this request and began plotting to supply the nascent anti-Israeli resistance with a range of different types of support. First, in exchange for an annual subsidy of 9 million barrels of Iranian oil, Iran convinced Syria to allow it to use Lebanon's Syrian-occupied Beka'a Valley as a safe haven where the anti-Israeli resistance could organize itself.[39] Once this has been negotiated, Iran initially deployed 5,000 members (soon thereafter to be reduced to 1,500 and later 300) of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) to establish training camps and begin managing the influx of financial assistance that followed.[40] Thus, Iran provided, in short order, Hezbollah with sanctuary, financial assistance and political support.

Iranian aid had an almost immediate impact on decision-making within the nascent Shiite resistance. Having been launched disjointedly by groups dispersed across the southern half of Lebanon, decision-making was originally confined to the local level and lacked any strategic dimension whatsoever.[41] However, Iran's offer of the Beka'a Valley as a sanctuary provided a locale where a common politico-military command structure could be forged. Consequently, the leaders of numerous Shiite resistance groups converged on Beka'a after Iran's Revolutionary Guards arrived in July. There they hammered out a common platform that nine delegates signed—including three former Amal cadres, three leaders of small religious groups, and three clerics connected with the Da'wa (Islamic Call).[42] The negotiations that led to the adoption of this platform, which is known as the 'Manifesto of the Nine' and has been referred to as Hezbollah's founding act, were influenced by Khomeini's representative in Syria, Ali Akbar Mohtashemi, and bore an Iranian imprimatur.[43]

Within this context, the document called for jihad against Israel, emphasized Islam as the movement's organizing principle and declared the signatories' adherence to the doctrine of *wilayat al-faqih* (rule of the supreme jurist) that accords supreme temporal authority to an Iranian cleric.[44] Despite the general nature of this platform, its adoption paved the way for the

formation of a centralized politico-military decision-making body - the *Shura*, or Council - whose initial numbers are unknown and reportedly varied, but later stabilized between seven and nine.[45] While the Shura would guide Hezbollah's political and military activities, the organization's adoption of the doctrine of *wilayat al-faqih* meant that Iran's supreme religious leader (through emissaries) could adjudicate disputes within Hezbollah or define new broad directions for the organization to follow. Ultimately, this combination of a domestically-based collective decision-making body with a foreign authority empowered to resolve intra-organizational disputes enabled the resistance leaders to gradually forge a multitude of spontaneously-formed local resistance groups into a single movement.[46] Thus, by prompting the centralization of authority under Hezbollah's Shura, Iranian sponsorship radically improved decision-making within the movement.

While Iran's sanctuary and organizational aid were crucial to Hezbollah's development of centralized decision-making bodies, its long-term commitment to providing financial aid fundamentally shaped the strategic options available to Hezbollah's policymakers. Whereas unsupported organizations are frequently obliged to adopt short time horizons, hoping that spectacular acts will either achieve their strategic ends or at least attract donors, state-sponsored groups *can* pursue their goals over the long-term, gradually building their own capacities and seeking to eventually exhaust their opponents' resolve. Within this context, Iran's firm commitment to support the resistance with an annual subsidy estimated at \$140 million during the 1980s gave Hezbollah's leaders the leeway to adopt either short- or long-term strategies.[47] Given a choice, Hezbollah's leaders wisely decided upon the latter policy of preparing for a long war because they recognized that Israel's military superiority rendered the organization's prospects for short-term success illusory.[48]

In keeping with their decision to use Iran's financial aid to build an organization suited to prolonged conflict, its founders enshrined in the Manifesto of the Nine that, "Resistance against Israeli occupation, which is a danger to *both the present and future*, receives ultimate confrontation priority... This necessitates the creation of a Jihad *structure* that should further this obligation, and in favor of which all capabilities are to be employed (emphasis added)."[49] In short, Hezbollah's leaders seized the opportunity provided by Iranian aid to embark on the long-term strategy of developing an organization that could mobilize Lebanese Shiites and inflict a steady stream of casualties on Israel.[50] To this end, Hezbollah's leaders embarked on a long-term campaign to win Shiites' "hearts and minds" by providing them with social services and welfare benefits.[51] In the years prior to Israel's invasion, Hezbollah's future leaders personally witnessed how Palestinian guerrilla groups alienated southern Lebanon's inhabitants by provoking Israeli reprisals while failing to provide any countervailing benefits to Lebanon's population. As a consequence, Hezbollah's founding cadres concluded that the organization could only sustain a long-term struggle if they could offer Shiites tangible benefits and mitigate the losses they suffered in the conflict.

To highlight their commitment to win the "hearts and minds" of Lebanese Shiites, Hezbollah's governing Shura (Council) adopted the slogan of building a "society of resistance." As part of this strategy, Hezbollah developed generous welfare initiatives - financed by Iran's Martyrs Foundation - to encourage families to support their male members' decisions to fight for Hezbollah. As one of Hezbollah's welfare agencies forthrightly argues, "The martyr goes

forward welcoming martyrdom while relying on resistance institutions, which take care of his son and family after him.”[52] Examples of such welfare provisions include comprehensive medical care for injured fighters, vocational schools, and employment in subsidized workshops for fallen fighters’ dependents.[53]

Beyond providing welfare benefits to fighters and their families, Hezbollah’s leaders developed services to succour Lebanese civilians caught in the cross-fire between Hezbollah and Israel. The objective of such services was to prevent the collateral damage generated by Hezbollah’s resistance from triggering a popular backlash against the organization, as the earlier Palestinian guerrilla campaign had provoked in southern Lebanon. Beginning in 1983, Hezbollah paid 70 percent of the medical costs of civilians injured in its clashes with Israel.[54] Recognizing that war’s material effects also alienated non-combatants, Hezbollah’s decision-makers launched the *Jihad al-Binâ* (Reconstruction Campaign) in 1985 to rebuild damaged homes.[55] Through this agency, Hezbollah rebuilt 1,200 lodgings by 1993, and another 16,000 prior to 2006.[56]

Besides the purely instrumental purposes of incentivizing fighters’ families to accept the loss of loved ones and recompensing civilians for collateral damage, Hezbollah’s founding leaders also pursued a long-term strategy of using social services to penetrate Shiite civil society. Shiites had been comparatively neglected by the Lebanese state even before the countries’ civil war and were virtually bereft of government social services at the time of Hezbollah’s foundation.[57] Although the existing Shiite movement, Amal, had attempted to provide social services, its efforts had suffered from poor management and endemic corruption.[58] Consequently, Hezbollah’s decision-makers perceived an opportunity to improve the organization’s performance legitimacy by providing social services the state and other political parties could not.

With Iran’s assistance, Hezbollah began its campaign to provide social services in 1982 when the affiliated Imam Khomeini Assistance Committee opened its doors in Lebanon, whence it would grant 130,000 scholarships and provide financial assistance to 135,000 needy families.[59] With a gift of 30 Iranian tractors, Hezbollah expanded its activities in 1988 to improving the existence of rural Shiites by organizing agricultural co-operatives.[60] That same year, Hezbollah organized the first regular garbage collection service that Beirut’s Shiite suburb, the Dahiya, had known since the Civil War began in 1975.[61] As its administrative capabilities expanded, Hezbollah broadened its community engagement activities to include: micro-credit loans, providing clean water in South Beirut, building low-cost housing, and managing an affordable healthcare system.[62]

Over time, Hezbollah’s social services achieved the objectives its founding decision-makers had set for it. By the 1990s, the perception that Hezbollah alone could provide adequate social services enabled the organization to build an unrivaled popular base within Lebanon’s Shiite community.[63] Nevertheless, although Hezbollah’s “hearts and minds” campaign was domestically managed, it depended on Iran’s financial assistance. As one study of Lebanese militias’ provision of social services concluded, “Iran’s contributions have placed Hizballah in the strongest financial position of the... organizations examined.”[64] Hezbollah’s own director of media relations, Ibrahim Moussawi, likewise conceded that the organization’s provision of

social services depended on the generosity of both Iran's government and its principal Ayatollahs, who contribute independently of the state.[65]

In keeping with its long-term efforts to win the "hearts and minds" of Lebanese Shiites, Hezbollah's founding cadres also adopted a long view of their military confrontation with Israel. In their eyes, the key to victory was building the organizational capacity to inflict a steady stream of casualties over a prolonged period of time, rather than pursuing spectacular results in the short term. Iran's support was, moreover, considered vital for such a strategy to succeed because only salaried, full-time insurgents could acquire the requisite expertise to enact this strategy and re-training for new tactics could only be conducted in a safe haven, such as Iran provided in the Beka'a.[66]

As part of their long war strategy, Hezbollah's decision-makers embarked on a policy of gradually building up the organization's combat strength. Hezbollah was able to attract both veteran Shiite fighters formerly employed by Amal and Palestinian groups, and eager young recruits, by offering salaries of \$150-200 per month.[67] However, Hezbollah's leaders' insistence on thoroughly vetting recruits meant that many volunteers waited six months or more before being inducted into the organization and might wait even longer after training before being infiltrated into Israeli occupied zones. Meanwhile, Hezbollah's Shura forced many of its founding militants to temporarily suspend their resistance activities by insisting that all members—even clerics who would have administrative duties—should graduate from a common 45-day paramilitary training course held in the Beka'a before being considered active.[68]

While Hezbollah's leaders emphasized quality over rapidity in recruitment and training, they also sought to encourage continuous tactical improvements by rotating seasoned fighters between the front and training camps in the Beka'a. Through continuous contacts between active fronts and its secure rear area, Hezbollah decision-makers created an environment where fighting methods could be continuously developed and refined. For example, after Israel developed effective defenses for its command posts after several successful Hezbollah suicide attacks, Hezbollah shifted to attacking vulnerable logistics convoys. Then, when these targets became increasingly well defended, Hezbollah abandoned suicide attacks altogether in favor of roadside improvised explosive devices (IED) and complex ambushes.[69] Hezbollah constantly enhanced its ability to inflict casualties in keeping with its dedication to incremental improvement over the long term. For example, during the period of 1990 to 1993 alone -for which good data exists - Hezbollah progressed from losing five fighters for every Israeli soldier killed to 1.5.[70]

The long-term strategy Hezbollah's decision-makers adopted in the early 1980s has paid significant dividends over time. Faced with its inability to halt the steady attrition of its forces, Israel withdrew its armed forces from most of Lebanon in 1985 and then retreated from its so-called "security zone" in South Lebanon in 2000.[71] Moreover, Israel's efforts to coerce Lebanon's Shiites into turning against Hezbollah, either through the "Iron Fist" occupational policy of 1985 or the deliberate bombing of Shiite civilians in 1993 during "Operation Accountability," repeatedly foundered because of the popularity Hezbollah's social services provision had generated.[72]

Although Hezbollah's long war strategy was designed by the organization's founding cadres, it was an indirect product of Iranian aid. Within this context, it is doubtful whether Hezbollah

would have developed the centralized decision-making structures needed to formulate such a strategy had Iran not provided it with political support and a sanctuary in the Beka'a Valley. Likewise, the group's "hearts and minds" campaign, which was predicated on the provision of a wide-range of social services, depended on generous long-term Iranian funding. Finally, the organization's military emphasis on gradually building its fighting potential was only possible because Iran provided the money needed to employ full-time combatants and its sanctuaries were essential to the organizational learning and the diffusion of new tactics. Thus, state sponsorship was a prerequisite for the type of campaign Hezbollah's leaders chose to implement.

While state sponsorship was a necessary condition for Hezbollah's long war approach, it did not deterministically shape that strategy. Indeed, whereas Hezbollah's leaders made creative and intelligent use of the resources Iran provided, other groups have made less effective use of equivalent largesse. For example, the Iranian-sponsored Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ) never pursued a "hearts and minds" campaign based on the provision of social services and developed an authoritarian leadership structure far different from the consensual politics of Hezbollah's Shura. As a consequence, PIJ failed to develop deep roots in Palestine's civil society and was severely disorganized by Israel's 1995 assassination of its leader, Fathi al-Shiqaqi.[73] Thus, although Iranian sponsorship made it possible for Hezbollah's decision-makers to adopt the strategy they successfully pursued, it was not the only driving force and only yielded substantial benefits because an experienced cadre of policymakers adopted an efficient course of action.

Iran's Direct Impact on Hezbollah Decision-Making

Clearly Iranian sponsorship had a powerful, yet indirect effect in shaping both Hezbollah's decision-making processes and the strategic options that its Shura could choose between. At times, however, Iran's government exerted a more direct influence on Hezbollah's decision-making. Although a shared Shiite identity and religious militancy contributed to Iran's decision to support Hezbollah, geopolitical factors were also part of the Iranian government's calculations.[74] Consequently, Iranian leaders periodically sought to use Hezbollah as a proxy to attack its enemies and therefore coaxed the organization to enlarge its target list to include objectives it would otherwise have never considered. At other times, however, Iranian decision-makers worried lest Hezbollah's actions prove deleterious to their foreign policies. On these occasions, it used its leverage as Hezbollah's sponsor to restrain the organization. Thus, foreign policy considerations could alternatively lead Iran to exert an escalatory or a restraining influence.

The root cause of Iran's efforts to enlarge Hezbollah's target list lies in the different objectives pursued by the state sponsor and its client. As an organization whose key constituency resides in southern Lebanon and which was formed in response to Israel's invasion, Hezbollah privileges operations against Israel to the exclusion of other objectives. Indeed, jihad against Israel has been one of the constant leitmotifs in Hezbollah's political platform, which has evolved considerably since the organization's founding.[75] To the extent that they have independently considered targeting non-Israeli objectives, Hezbollah's decision-makers have largely focused on Lebanese political forces. During the Civil War, Hezbollah's leaders expressed a willingness to fight Lebanon's premier Maronite Christian militia, the Lebanese Forces, which had periodically

allied itself with Israel.[76] Likewise, Hezbollah viewed other Lebanese political movements with a large Shiite following—particularly Amal and the Lebanese Communist Party—as potential rivals for its key domestic constituency.

In sharp contrast to Hezbollah's preoccupation with Israel as its primary opponent and secondary focus on other Lebanese movements, the Islamic Republic of Iran had a wide range of adversaries during the 1980s. Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini considered the United States an existential menace and resented both its freezing of Iranian assets and the arms embargo that crippled Iran's armed forces. France also attracted Iran's ire. By offering asylum to the Shah's last Prime Minister, Chapour Bakhtiar, and the leadership of the anti-Khomeini terrorist group, the Mujahedin-e Khalq, France had become a hotbed for opposition to Khomeini's regime. To make matters worse, France was a major supplier of weaponry to Iraq and refused to repay a \$1 billion loan that the Iran's Shah had accorded Eurodif, a French state-owned company.[77] Finally, Iran also considered the Soviet Union an adversary because of its arms exports to Iraq and ties with Iranian Marxist groups opposed to Khomeini.[78] Isolated internationally and embroiled in a ruinous war with Iraq, the Iranian government could count on only a single ally, Syria, which demanded Iranian aid to consolidate its control over Lebanon. In short, fundamental differences in the power positions and strategic objectives of Hezbollah and Iran periodically led the latter to coax the former into enlarging its target list.[79]

One of the first and most dramatic occasions when Iran compelled Hezbollah's decision-makers to expand their target sets culminated in the October 1983 suicide attacks against the American and French contingents of the four nation Multinational Force (MNF), which had played an increasingly contentious role in Lebanon's Civil War since 1982.[80] According to the most detailed accounts yet available, Iran's ambassador in Syria, Ali Akbar Mohtashemi, initiated preparations for the attack by contacting the Iranian IRGC commander in the Beka'a Valley to request that Hezbollah attack the MNF. The IRGC commander, Ahmad Kan'ani, convened a meeting with key Hezbollah decision-makers, including future general secretaries Abbas al-Musawi and Hassan Nasrallah.[81] The fact that the impetus for the attack came from Iran's Damascus Embassy suggests that Syria may have requested Iranian aid in countering MNF activities it considered prejudicial to its interests in Lebanon.

Hezbollah's leaders chose to conduct a vehicular suicide attack similar to the one it had conducted against an Israeli military headquarters in Tyre the previous November. Originally, the MNF's Italian contingent was the designated target, but the objective was later changed after intelligence sources indicated that American Marines and French paratroops were more vulnerable.[82] Tactically devastating, Hezbollah's two suicide attacks killed 300 military personnel (241 Marines and 59 paratroops) and precipitated the MNF's withdrawal from Lebanon; paving the way for Syria's eventual return to Beirut.

While the 1983 attacks on the MNF provide one example of Iran directly intervening in Hezbollah's decision-making, the Lebanese hostage crisis of 1982 to 1991 constitutes another. Indeed, the event that triggered the Shiite kidnappings of foreigners was the disappearance of four Iranian embassy personnel travelling in a Christian-controlled region in Northern Lebanon. To compel the United State to help locate its missing diplomats, Iranian agents kidnapped David Dodge, President of the American University of Beirut, and smuggled him into Iran via Syria.

[83] However, Iran's direct involvement in this hostage-taking backfired because the United States was able to quickly ascertain Dodge's whereabouts and lobby Syria into pressuring Iran for Dodge's release. Faced with the shortcomings of using Iranian agents to abduct Westerners, Iran's decision-makers chose to use local proxies to continue pursuing the same strategy.[84]

The evidence available suggests that Hezbollah's Shura viewed kidnapping American and European expatriates as a policy that could rebound against them. The organization's first Secretary General, Sobhi Tufayli, declared that the kidnappings were a "mistake" that "ruined the image of the resistance." [85] Likewise, its third Secretary General, Nasrallah, remarked that "Hezbollah is eager to see the end of this hostage issue, since its fallout ended up entirely on the party's shoulders." [86] Indeed, the Shura's current and past members all deny that the organization played a direct role in the kidnappings. However, strong evidence suggests that two prominent Hezbollah military commanders—Imad Mughniyah and Husayn al-Musawi—masterminded the kidnapping of at least 87 of the 110 Westerners abducted. [87] Moreover, most of the hostages were reportedly held in Hezbollah- or IRGC-controlled facilities in Beirut's southern suburbs and the Beka'a Valley. [88]

Given these facts, Iran's IRGC may have either bypassed Hezbollah's Shura to plan the abductions with field commanders or compelled Hezbollah's Shura to conduct a kidnapping campaign that the organization took great pains to disavow. However, what is clear is that Iranian demands largely set the tone of the hostage negotiations and that these demands and the pace of kidnapping grew in keeping with Iranian perceptions of the hostages' value. [89] For example, French hostages were progressively released as France acquiesced to Iranian demands to expel the Mujahedin-e Khalq's leadership and resolved the dispute over the Shah's \$1 billion loan to France's state-owned Eurodif Corporation. [90] Likewise, Iran used its American hostages to bargain for clandestine arms sales. However, the Reagan Administration's extreme eagerness to trade arms for hostages paradoxically led Iran to retard hostages' release. According to former Hezbollah Secretary General Tufayli, Hezbollah reached an agreement with the hostage takers to release all foreign detainees in May 1986, but former National Security Advisor Robert McFarlane's trip to Tehran led the Iranian government to demand the deal's cancellation because "They [Iranian leaders] wanted to sell the hostages piece for piece [in exchange for weaponry]." [91]

Besides instigating both Lebanon's hostage crisis and attacks on the MNF, Iran also intervened in Hezbollah's decision-making by directing the organization to attack French peacekeepers in southern Lebanon. Established in 1978 to mitigate war's effects in southern Lebanon, the peacekeepers of the United Nations' Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) were popular with the region's Shiite inhabitants and had never tried to prevent Hezbollah's anti-Israeli operations. However, Iran desperately sought to coerce France into curtaining its arms shipments to Iraq and expelling Iranian dissidents. [92] To this end, it compelled Hezbollah's decision-makers into targeting UNIFIL's French contingent in a campaign of roadside IED attacks. As a consequence, Hezbollah killed four French peacekeepers in two IED attacks in September 1986. Nevertheless, rather than acquiesce to Iranian demands, France withdrew the bulk of its personnel from UNIFIL, which limited Iran's ability to coerce them. [93]

Thus, Iran leveraged its position as Hezbollah's sponsor in the early 1980s to compel the organization's decision-makers on at least three occasions to expand their attacks to include Western nations' soldiers and civilians. Hezbollah has also been accused, with less hard evidence presented, of assassinating Iranian dissidents abroad and helping Iran organize terrorist attacks in Paris. Ultimately, Iran's direct interventions to expand Hezbollah's targeting helped the Iranian government achieve such important foreign policy objectives as obtaining American weapons, persuading France to expel the regime's opponents and strengthening Syria's hold on Lebanon. For Hezbollah itself, this direct and escalatory Iranian influence on its decision-making was less salutary. While Hezbollah's leaders universally view the hostage crisis as having tarnished the organization's image, the lasting enmity generated by the attacks on the MNF led American policymakers to insist on Hezbollah's continued "terrorist" status and drove their French counterparts to strive to diplomatically weaken Hezbollah's position inside Lebanon.

Although the desire to apply pressure to its foes prompted Iran to intervene directly in Hezbollah's decision-making to expand the organization's activities in certain respects, Iran's need to preserve its only foreign alliance—that with Syria—also led it to restrain Hezbollah in other ways. Despite Syria's acquiescence to both Hezbollah's creation in 1982 and Iran's use of the Bekaa Valley to support the movement, tensions inevitably underscored relations between a revolutionary movement seeking to create an Islamic republic (e.g. Hezbollah) and a secular dictatorship attempting to establish its hegemony over Lebanon (e.g. Syria). Within this context, the first incidents broke out between Syria and Hezbollah in 1986 after Syrian troops deployed to Hezbollah-controlled areas within Beirut. Tensions escalated dramatically in early 1987, when Hezbollah attempted to assassinate Syria's top intelligence officer in Lebanon and the Syrian Army responded by cold bloodily executing 27 Hezbollah fighters. Hezbollah's leaders transformed the funeral of these 27 "martyrs" into a demonstration of force, mobilizing a crowd of 50,000 mourners that chanted "death to Syria." [94] Recognizing that Hezbollah and Syria were on the verge of open conflict, Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani personally reined in Hezbollah's decision-makers and compelled them to call for extreme restraint on the part of their rank-and-file members. [95]

A graver crisis between Hezbollah and Syria broke out the following year when Hezbollah came to blows with its principal Shiite rival, Amal. Although the two movements had been competing non-violently to control Lebanon's Shiite-inhabited regions since Israel's 1985 withdrawal, their rivalry erupted into an intra-Shiite civil war in 1988. During the next two years, these Shiite rivals fought a conflict that was arguably the bloodiest either had ever engaged in. Over time, their superior discipline gave Hezbollah's fighters the upper hand, despite Amal's superior numbers. [96] Because Amal had been Syria's closest ally in Lebanon, Syria risked being drawn into an overt conflict with Iran's client, Hezbollah. For Iranian leaders, the prospect of war between their only international ally and most important non-state client was such that they acted vigorously to restrain Hezbollah. [97] To this end, Iranian diplomats obliged Hezbollah's policymakers to accept a ceasefire and the negotiated settlement of the Amal/Hezbollah dispute via a quadripartite committee composed of representatives of Amal, Hezbollah, Syria and Iran. [98]

Between 1989 and 1992, Iran intervened a third time to moderate Hezbollah's behavior by convincing its decision-makers to accept the peace accord ending Lebanon's Civil War and partake in electoral politics. During the Civil War, Hezbollah's leaders repeatedly condemned Lebanon's pre-war constitution and called for a radical change in the country's political system. Indeed, the most authoritative statement of Hezbollah's political ambitions—its 1985 Open Letter Addressed to the Oppressed in Lebanon and the World—suggested that Lebanon should be remodeled along Islamist lines, proclaiming, “We call on all the populace to be conversant with it [Islam].... We also call upon the population to adhere to its teachings at the individual, political and social levels.”[99] However, when a viable peace process began in 1989, its logic ran contrary to Hezbollah's stated objectives. In a series of negotiations mediated by both Syria and Saudi Arabia, Lebanese factions agreed to disarm and engage in democratic electoral politics within a slightly-modified sectarian constitutional order. The resultant agreement—the Document of National Reconciliation, signed in Taif, Saudi Arabia—soon generated conflict within Hezbollah's Shura.[100]

Led by Secretary General Tufayli, conservative Shura members urged Hezbollah to reject the so-called Taif Accord and proclaim their preference for an Islamic republic.[101] As one hesitant step in this direction, Hezbollah publicly expressed dissatisfaction with the Accord's arrangements, which it branded as “minimal” and “insufficient.”[102] However, the prospect of Hezbollah becoming a “spoiler” to the Taif Accord alarmed Iranian leaders because the Accord was supported by an unprecedented coalition of Syria, the Arab League and the United States; meaning that Hezbollah's obstructionism could have severe foreign relations consequences for Iran.

Consequently, both Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and Iranian President Rafsanjani pressured Hezbollah's Shura to accept the Accord and participate in future democratic elections. As a result of Iran's activism and latent divisions in Hezbollah's leadership, the Shura refused to renew Tufayli's mandate as Secretary General and elected the pro-Accord Abbas al-Musawi to replace him in May 1991.[103] Additional Iranian pressure was needed to sway Hezbollah's decision-makers to participate in Lebanon's first post-war election, in August 1992. Indeed, Shura's deciding vote, wherein ten out of 12 members voted for participation, occurred less than two months prior to the election and was announced only 50 days prior to voting-day. [104]

In short, foreign policy considerations drove Iranian policymakers to intervene in Hezbollah's decision-making to restrain the organization on three separate and well-documented occasions. In each case, Iran sought to curb behavior that could lead to a rupture between it and its principal ally, Syria. Only in the case of the Taif Accord did relationships with a broader range of states appear to matter. That Iran placed such importance in its relationship with Syria can perhaps be attributed to both its extreme isolation and the many dossiers (i.e. opposition to Iraq and the Arab-Israeli peace process) where their interests converged. In retrospect, Iran's restraining influence also proved beneficial to Hezbollah itself, as the organization would have been gravely weakened had Syria cut-off the Iranian aid that flowed to it through Syrian territory or closed Hezbollah's training camps located in the Syrian-occupied Beka'a Valley. Indeed, the fact that Iran repeatedly needed to restrain Hezbollah from a conflict with Syria suggests that either Hezbollah's prior successes against foreign powers (e.g. the MNF's withdrawal in 1984 and

Israel's 1985 retreat) lulled the organization into overestimating its own power or revolutionary, violent non-state actors may have an inherent tendency to strategically overreach themselves.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion, the preceding analysis of Iranian support's impact on decision-making within Hezbollah demonstrates the complex, yet powerful influence that a state sponsor can have on its clients' operations. Within this context, Iran's lavish assistance indirectly shaped decision-making within Hezbollah by defining both the physical environment where decisions were made and the options available to its leaders. Nevertheless, although external support was a prerequisite for the long war approach Hezbollah embraced, this course of action was only one amongst many the group could have adopted and how Iranian-supplied resources were used ultimately depended on Hezbollah's leaders. Besides this pervasive, yet indirect effect of Iranian aid, Iranian policymakers also repeatedly intervened directly in Hezbollah decision-making processes to either expand or restrain the group's activities. Thus, although an armed Shiite resistance to Israel's invasion would probably have emerged even in the absence of a sponsoring state, Hezbollah's centralized decision-making structure, long-term strategy and most dramatic actions were all directly or indirectly shaped by Iran.

As illustrated by Hezbollah's case, state sponsorship plays a critical indirect role in shaping both how violent non-state actors make decisions as well as the potential courses of action amongst which they can choose. Although Shiite resistance against Israel was initiated by seasoned Amal veterans and popular clerics, Iran's political support and provision of sanctuary was crucial to uniting the efforts of these talented administrators into a centrally-directed movement. Similarly, Iranian money was essential for the recruitment and retention of experienced combatants whose skills improved the military options available to Hezbollah's political leaders. Thus, Iranian aid indirectly enhanced the quality of Hezbollah's decision-making process.

Perhaps as a consequence of these improvements to its decision-making process, Hezbollah's Shura effectively employed a wider range of strategic options that Iranian sponsorship provided. Within this context, Hezbollah deftly exploited the financial security provided by Iran's long-term support to launch a "hearts and minds" campaign, using social services to gradually enlarge its support amongst Lebanese Shiites. Similarly, Hezbollah leveraged the professionalism possible amongst salaried fighters and the organizational learning potential of permanent training camps to conduct a long-term, attritional campaign predicated on Hezbollah's ability to inflict a stream of casualties on Israeli forces. Throughout this process, a combination of adequate salaries paid to combatants and generous welfare provisions for fallen fighters' families ensured that Hezbollah never suffered from a shortage of willing martyrs. Although the above components of Hezbollah's long war strategy were all pioneered by the movement's founding cadres, each depended on Iranian aid and can therefore be considered an indirect product of Iran's sponsorship.

In addition to its indirect impact on Hezbollah's decision-making, Iran frequently intervened directly in Hezbollah's decision-making process to impose its preferences. At times, these interventions had an escalatory effect, driving Hezbollah to attack American and European targets that the organization would have otherwise avoided. Executed with considerable tactical

acumen, direct Iranian efforts to expand Hezbollah's target set yielded tangible benefits for Iran, but arguably proved infelicitous for Hezbollah over the long term by earning it the enmity of several great powers. While Iran's foreign policy sometimes prompted it to urge Hezbollah to attack a wider range of targets, at other times it restrained it lest Hezbollah's actions prove detrimental to Iran's interests. During the period in question, Iran intervened most frequently to restrain Hezbollah's decision-makers when these latter adopted courses of action that risked undermining Iran's relationship with Syria. Given the importance of the Syria-Iran alliance to Hezbollah's own success, Iran's restraining influence arguably benefitted Hezbollah as well.

In light of both these indirect and direct efforts, the net impact of Iranian sponsorship on Hezbollah's decision-makers was positive during the period in question. However, when the interactive processes between state sponsors' inputs and policies with client organizations' decision-makers are examined in detail, it becomes possible to envision many scenarios when groups' leaders will fail to effectively use the resources provided by a state sponsor. For example, while a state's support increases the options available to non-state organizations' decision-makers, there is no guarantee they will use those opportunities judiciously. As already discussed, the PIJ failed to use the resources Iran provided to conduct a "hearts and minds" campaign similar to Hezbollah's. In certain cases, sponsors' resources may even lead violent non-state organizations' decision-makers to adopt counterproductive strategies. Within this context, Communist states' support for Oman's Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arab Gulf (PFLOAG) prompted the organization's decision-makers to abandon their hitherto successful insurgent tactics for a more ambitious conventional effort to control "liberated areas." [105]

Like sponsorship's indirect impact on group decision-making, direct sponsor interventions in decision-making can also have a deleterious impact on their clients. Within this context, certain sponsor efforts to broaden their clients' targeting may invite catastrophic retaliation against these latter. For example, if Iran prompted Saudi Arabia's Hezbollah al-Hijaz to attack the American troops residing in the Khobar Towers in 1996, as is widely suspected, then Iran's impact on Hezbollah al-Hijaz's decision-making was detrimental insofar as this attack prompted a crackdown from which the organization never recovered. [106] As a corollary to harming violent non-state organizations by encouraging a reckless escalation in their activities, state sponsors could theoretically harm their clients by imposing excessive restraints. For example, both Abu Nidal (Sabri al-Banna) and Carlos the Jackal (Ilich Ramirez Sanchez) were eventually consigned to virtual inactivity by their respective Iraqi and Sudanese sponsors, when they wished to avoid attracting retaliation.

In sum, as a result of both its indirect and direct effects, state sponsorship exercises a momentous, yet complex effect on decision-making within violent non-state organizations. Although sponsorship opens new horizons to terrorists and insurgents, the effective use of the resources provided depends on both characteristics intrinsic to the non-state actors themselves and the strings attached, in terms of direct interventions in their decision-making, by sponsoring governments. In Hezbollah's case, the net effect of Iranian sponsorship was undeniably positive for the organization. Nevertheless, such is not always the case and many state-sponsored violent non-state organizations have remained ineffective either because their decision-makers failed to

exploit the aid provided or because the negative consequences of sponsors' direct interventions in their clients' decision-making outweighed the benefits provided by greater resources.

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Notes

[1] Lotta Themnér & Peter Wallensteen (2011) "Armed Conflicts, 1946-2010," *Journal of Peace Research*. 48 (4), 525-536.

[2] The focus of this study is armed non-state actors in a general sense, rather than insurgencies, militias or terrorist groups per se, because the central argument is applicable to all three categories of organization. In fact, Hezbollah possessed characteristics of all three types of armed non-state actor in the 1980s. If it is accepted that terrorism involves employing violence against civilians for the purpose of generating fear, then most of Hezbollah's activities during this period were *not* terrorism, but guerrilla warfare against Israeli military forces. Likewise, Hezbollah's battles with Amal over the control of Shiite population centers between 1988 and 1990 saw the organization behave and fight like a typical, albeit well-disciplined Lebanese militia. Within this context, Hezbollah's only activity that emphatically constituted terrorism consisted of the kidnappings of foreign civilians that it perpetrated. cf. Daniel Byman (2003) "Should Hezbollah be Next?" *Foreign Affairs* 82/6, 54-66; and Judith Harik (2004) *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*. London: I.B. Tauris, p. 163-75.

[3] Bruce Hoffman (1998) *Inside Terrorism*. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 258-267. Daniel Byman (2005) *Deadly Connections: States that Sponsor Terrorism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 53-78.

[4] Brian Jackson (2001) "Technology Acquisition by Terrorist Groups: Threat Assessment Informed by Lessons from Private Sector Technology Adoption," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 24 (3), 200-02.

[5] Adam Dolnik (2007) *Understanding Terrorist Innovation: Technology, tactics and global trends*. London: Routledge, p. 127-45.

[6] Some violent non-state actors have relied on funding from ethnic diasporas to pay salaries to personnel and pursue the 'hearts and minds' of populations through the provision of services. See Richard English (2003) *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, passim.

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- [12] Daniel Byman, 2005, 65-67.
- [13] James Forest. 2007, "Training Camps and Other Centers of Learning," In James Forest (ed.) *Teaching Terror: Strategic and Tactical Learning in the Terrorist World*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 75-96.
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- [21] Daniel Byman (2005), 50-52, 75-78.
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- [38] Nicolas Blanford, 47.
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Terrorist Group and Government Interaction: Progress in Empirical Research

by **David B. Carter**

Abstract

Much progress has been made in the literature on terrorism and political violence over the last decade or more. More specifically, the proliferation of cross-national quantitative empirical work on terrorism has generated numerous advances and insights. While the volume of published work is impressive and the key findings are helpful to both scholars and policy-makers, much remains to be done. This paper argues that future work in this area can be improved with progress in several key areas. Interaction between a violent group and the government it targets is central to much of our theory. However, the theoretical implications of this interaction are not fully exploited with current data and prominent methods of analyzing it. Suggestions are provided that are intended to aid future researchers in addressing this point and in exploiting synergies between cross-national quantitative work and qualitative case study work.

Introduction

The political science literature on terrorism and political violence has greatly proliferated in the last decade. Building off of seminal work by Schmid,[1] Eubank and Weinberg,[2] Enders and Sandler[3] and others, the quantitative empirical literature in particular has taken off. This proliferation of large-N quantitative empirical work on terrorism has produced a number of important and useful findings. For instance, we now have a better understanding of the relationship between regime type and terrorism. In fact, the literature on terrorism and regime type has arguably developed in ways that are analogous to the long-established quantitative literature on inter-state disputes. As in the literature on inter-state disputes, many of the key findings and arguments in the cross-national quantitative terrorism literature rely theoretically on strategic interaction. In the terrorism literature this interaction is most often between a violent group and the government. The argument in this paper suggests that scholars doing cross-national empirical work would benefit from making the analysis of group-government interaction more explicit both theoretically and empirically. The main points in the article are illustrated with a focus on developments in the burgeoning literature on regime type and terrorism.

Arguably, the most common finding in cross-national studies is that democracies experience more terrorism. This finding is fairly widely replicated, across studies of attack frequency, attack lethality, group emergence, as well as the count of groups in a country.[4] A large literature has grown out of this finding that seeks to unpack and understand the mechanism (or mechanisms) driving this pattern. This development bears some resemblance to the massive ‘democratic peace’ literature that explores why democracies do not tend to use military force against other democracies in inter-state disputes.[5] The finding is fairly widely replicated, and much effort

has gone into explaining it.[6] In fact, researchers in the terrorism literature have begun to explore the importance of institutional variation among democracies, with work on electoral institutions, the level of political competition, and executive constraints among other factors.[7] The motivation to distinguish among democracies is similar to work in international conflict that distinguishes between new and established democracies, or draws key differences among parliamentary democracies.[8] This parallel with one of the better developed and long established areas in the international conflict literature, which has roots going back more than four decades, illustrates how quickly the cross-national study of terrorism has developed. While the theoretical literature has not necessarily grown as quickly as the empirical literature, several important developments have been made here as well.

Specifically, much progress has been made thinking about groups that utilize terrorist violence as rational and strategic actors. Building on the seminal work by Sandler, Tschirhart and Couley,[9] as well as Crenshaw[10] and others, scholars have developed a useful set of ideas about how the use of terrorist tactics fits within a larger strategy relative to a set of political goals. In fact, even work that does not explicitly adopt a strategic or game-theoretic framework often uses this kind of logic. Much of the growing body of theoretical work on terrorism explores the strategic rationale behind the use of terrorist violence and particularly how terrorists interact and bargain with the governments they target.

This article argues that important work remains to tie these related strands of literature together in terrorism research. Much quantitative literature on terrorism implicitly examines the relationship between groups and governments. However, theoretical ideas about how group-government interactions influence patterns in terrorist violence are not often directly modeled. This article proceeds as follows. First, the key theoretical ideas about how terrorist violence is strategic relative to a target government are surveyed, with a focus on studies that explore regime type as a key factor. This review suggests that the connections between seemingly disparate strands of the literature are quite close. Next, the argument is made that group-government interactions are often not identified in a theoretically palatable way by either our econometric models or the most often analyzed data sets. Finally, some tentative suggestions are provided on how future researchers can help bridge these gaps. Future researchers need to collect data that does a better job identifying group-government interactions, better incorporate theory into their statistical models, and exploit important synergies between cross-national quantitative and conflict or group specific qualitative work.

Regime Type and Group-Government Interaction

Much recent work on terrorism theoretically focuses on some aspect of the interaction between groups and the government targeted by their political demands. There are several key aspects of the relationship between a targeted government and terrorist groups that have received attention in the literature. First, a strand of literature focuses on the ability of governments to respond forcefully to terrorist campaigns. A second strand of literature focuses on ease of 'peaceful' access to the political system. Finally, another strand of literature focuses on whether governments respond to terrorism with concessions or not.[11] Furthermore, much of the work connecting terrorist violence to political institutions or government response focuses on regime

type as a key variable. These strands in the literature are outlined, followed by a discussion of how the field can improve via better linkage among them and improved research design.

To Provoke or Not To Provoke?

A prominent idea that connects terrorist attacks and government response is that groups can benefit from provoking a draconian government response, an idea that has also been promoted by theorists such as Fanon[12] and Marighella.[13] Kydd and Walter term this a “strategy of provocation”, [14] arguing that groups strategically use terrorist attacks to provoke a counterproductive government response. The key for a terrorist group using a provocation strategy is getting the government to employ harsh responses that lead to significant collateral damage, or negative externalities. The exact nature of the externality and the mechanism by which it helps the group varies. Lake[15] argues that a harsh government response sends a signal to potential group supporters that the government is not moderate and unwilling to negotiate. Bueno de Mesquita suggests that a government’s counterterrorism response can have negative economic externalities that make potential recruits easier for the group.[16] Bueno de Mesquita and Dickson allow for a harsh response to help a group due to either economics or through government signaling its “type”. [17] Regardless of the exact mechanism, the basic argument is that groups use terrorism in part to provoke a harsh government response that can be helpful to them.

Despite the recent prominence of the provocation idea, a large body of work argues that terrorism is often deterred by the prospect of a harsh government response. In his study of suicide terrorism, Pape argues that terrorism is used against democracies precisely because they are constrained in responding harshly with brute force.[18] Similarly, Li finds that governments with more constrained executives experience more (transnational) terrorist attacks.[19] The argument is that an institutional setup that constrains the executive makes it more difficult to employ a swift and effective response to attack campaigns. Scholars such as Schmid [20] or Li[21] argue that democracies typically have far greater constraints on their executives, which may help explain why democracies experience more terrorism.[22] In sum, this strand of thought about government response suggests that groups do not prosper in the face of swift and perhaps harsh government responses. The reason for this could be that they strategically employ terrorism against regimes that are less likely or able to forcefully respond,[23] or perhaps that they are much more likely survive the government onslaught in regimes that are unable or unwilling to employ maximum repression.

While the ‘provocation’ and ‘avoidance’ ideas about the effect of harsh government response seem at odds with each other, they are potentially reconcilable.[24] Kydd and Walter suggest that democratic regimes are the most susceptible to a strategy of provocation.[25] Democracies are unable to be maximally repressive in response, but also face considerable public pressure to respond forcefully and observably.[26] Thus, the argument is that they often respond harshly enough to generate negative externalities, but not forcefully enough to eliminate a group.[27] If this were true empirically, it could help to explain why democracies experience more terrorism and be consistent with a broader pattern of groups avoiding targeting particularly repressive regimes.

Relatedly, there is evidence that variation in how much terrorist activity particular democratic regimes face across time is affected by government ideology. The basic idea is that right-oriented governments are more apt to use force in response to terrorism, whereas left-oriented governments are more apt to be concessionary.[28] Berrebi and Klor show that right-wing party governments in Israel experience less terrorism than left-wing party governments.[29] Koch and Cranmer replicate this finding in a cross-national study, showing that left-oriented governments experience more transnational terrorist attacks than right-wing governments.[30] In sum, there is evidence that within democracies, variation in levels of terrorism is explained by the ruling party's willingness to respond forcefully to attacks.

The notion that democracies are not as capable of forceful counterterrorism responses is related to a broader set of ideas about liberal democracy and terrorism. Numerous scholars have suggested that freedoms of association, movement, and related political rights facilitate the organization and operation of terrorist organizations in democratic regimes.[31] Thus, democracies are more attractive targets not only because they are not good at employing brutal forceful responses, but because their liberal policies facilitate the formation and maintenance of organizations. This is likely important because violent dissident groups are typically not terribly powerful and consist of a small number of members, especially when they are recently formed. An implication of this argument is that the lack of political freedom in autocratic regimes makes the start-up of dissident organizations much more difficult. For example, it would be difficult for a democracy in Western Europe to make membership in the Muslim Brotherhood punishable by death, which Hafez al-Assad's Syrian government did in the early 1980s.

There is reason to doubt explanations of terrorism that focus on how constrained governments are in their ability to repress. The literature on authoritarianism points out that repression is a risky strategy that is not obviously a dominant one for autocrats,[32] which is related to the focus in that literature on how and why autocrats purchase loyalty.[33] Aksoy, Carter and Wright show that not all non-democracies are less likely to experience terrorism than democracies.[34] Not only is there significant variation among autocracies with different institutional makeup, but autocracies in which the opposition is organized via active political parties (legal or otherwise) experience levels of terrorism not significantly different from democracies. While participation in autocratic legislatures can reduce the incentives to use terrorism, the increased collective action capacity of the opposition in these regimes makes terrorism significantly more likely than in non-democracies with no opposition parties. Relatedly, Findley and Young show that the existence of an independent judiciary is associated with less terrorism.[35] They argue that an independent judiciary, whether in a democracy or non-democracy, makes bargains between terrorist groups and the government more credible, as future governments cannot as easily renege and crack down on the group.

This discussion highlights how the focus on constraints on democracies' repressive capacities relative to non-democracies is questionable. Accordingly, a related vein of literature focuses on other important political institutions that are significant and can provide alternative explanations for why democracies have generally experienced more terrorism than non-democracies. Specifically, too much focus on repressive capacity tells us a very incomplete story about institutions that affect dissidents' decisions to attempt to influence politics via violence or peaceful participation.

Alternatives to Violence?

Another prominent set of arguments about why some regimes experience more terrorism relies on differences in how political institutions relate to policy-making. This strand of literature (at least implicitly) points out the importance of viewing the use of terrorist tactics as one choice in a wider array of instruments. The focus is thus on how political institutions either make peaceful participation relatively fruitful (or not). The comparison to autocracies is again often a motivation for scholars, although most extant studies focus much more on democratic institutions relative to autocratic institutions.

The literature that focuses on the influence of domestic political institutions emphasizes that groups choose between peaceful and non-peaceful participation. Chenoweth and Stephan [36] provide evidence that suggests that non-violent resistance movements are considerably more successful than violent resistance movements.[37] Relatedly, Abrahms [38] provides evidence that groups that employ terrorism are rarely successful, which is at odds with the arguments of scholars such as Pape.[39] These findings raise serious questions about why groups choose terrorism and why terrorism is more frequent in democracies. If groups employ the tactic of terrorism with a policy goal in mind, as much of the literature presumes, then why the dismal track record? Furthermore, why are democracies, who provide peaceful means to redress grievances targeted disproportionately?

Young and Dugan focus on the number of veto points faced by political actors interested in changing government policies.[40] Since by definition, terrorist groups seek political goals, the ease of attaining these goals peacefully influences their willingness to use violence, which is costly. Young and Dugan show that countries with a higher number of veto players that can block potential policy changes through the 'normal' political process experience more terrorist attacks. [41] This is further evidence consistent with the idea that terrorism is one of several potential instruments that can be used to attempt to influence or change policy. The number of veto players is quite highly correlated with democracy, which suggests that this may be a compelling explanation for why democracies have experienced more terrorism. The question is whether veto players in non-democratic and democratic regimes are comparable in terms of how amenable they are to influence. For instance, pivotal players in U.S. politics can be intensively lobbied and elected officials can be voted out of office. However, this does not work in as clear of a manner for dictators or key member of a dictator's winning coalition.

Another set of studies focuses on how electoral institutions influence the ease of access to the political system. The seminal work here is Powell's 1982 study; he shows that democracies with more permissive electoral rules are better able to channel dissent to peaceful forms of participation.[42] The basic theoretical idea is that proportional electoral systems are better suited to peacefully accommodate a diverse set of political interests relative to majoritarian or plurality rules.[43] Small or politically marginal groups have a better chance of gaining representation when electoral thresholds are lower. On the face of it, this idea holds a lot of promise for explaining terrorism with domestically oriented goals.

Li initially explored this idea in an analysis of transnational terrorism, although the connection between electoral system type and transnational terrorism was not found to be robust.[44] Aksoy

and Carter find evidence that electoral rules affect domestically oriented groups conditional on their goal structures.[45] The emergence of groups with within-system goals (i.e., policy changes within the existing system) is lower when electoral rules are more permissive, while groups with anti-system goals—i.e., goals that necessitate a complete overthrow of the existing regime—are not affected by electoral rules.[46] Furthermore, the higher rate of group emergence in democracies is a function of anti-system groups, as democracies are not more likely to experience within-system group emergence.[47] This helps to reconcile the puzzle of why democracies, with greater opportunity to peacefully access the political system, experience more terrorism.

The prospect of access to the political system via peaceful participation undoubtedly affects the calculation of many groups considering the use of violence. However, more intense political competition has been suggested to be associated with higher volumes of terrorist activity. Chenoweth shows that countries with greater levels of inter-group political competition experience more terrorism.[48] Given that democracies typically have higher levels of political competition via elections, this is proffered as an explanation for why democracies experience more terrorism. Aksoy shows that terrorist attacks are clustered around election times, but that the relationship is only significant in countries with restrictive (i.e., majoritarian) electoral systems.[49] Thus, around election times when political competition is most intense, competition is related to terrorism but only when competition tends to exclude small or marginal groups.

Tactical Choice and Government Response

Much of the literature (at least implicitly) analyzes terrorist groups' choice between terrorism and peaceful means of participation. However, there is also much to explore about groups' choice among different violent tactics. It is well-known that in many cases groups that use terrorist tactics are also groups that use guerrilla (or insurgent) tactics.[50] Daniel Byman put it well in stating that “not all groups that use terrorism are guerrillas but almost all guerrillas use terrorism.”[51] Thus, for many groups with political goals, the choice is not between peaceful politics or the use of terrorist tactics; rather, the choice set also includes using guerrilla tactics by targeting government forces directly.

A recent wave of work has begun to explore groups' tactical choice. Bueno de Mesquita argues that groups employ terrorist tactics when they do not have enough public support to sustain “war-fighting” or guerrilla tactics.[52] This mirrors the ideas of de la Calle and Sánchez-Cuenca, who argue that groups use guerrilla tactics when and where they control territory, while those that are too weak relative to the government to control territory use terrorism.[53] Rebel groups are able to control territory when they face weak low-capacity governments. The connection to the civil war literature here is important, as state capacity is a key factor in civil war onset.[54] In fact, Findley and Young show that much of the terrorism measured by the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) takes place during civil wars in the regions where fighting is ongoing.[55]

Abrahms finds that groups who initiate terrorist campaigns are much less effective than groups who pursue guerrilla campaigns.[56] He argues that governments resist providing concessions to groups that target civilians. Carter explores how groups choose tactics in anticipation of the government's response.[57] He analyzes Western European democracies' responses to terrorism

since 1950, which is well-suited to an investigation of whether groups indeed play a “strategy of provocation.”[58] Interestingly, the evidence suggests that groups strategically employ terrorist tactics (as opposed to guerrilla tactics) when they want to avoid a government crackdown. Moreover, about one-third of the groups included in his analysis mix tactics across time, which suggests that studying either guerrilla or terrorist tactics in isolation is likely problematic.

These studies suggest that future empirical work needs to more explicitly account for how terrorist group decisions are a function of anticipated government response. This is a theoretical point that is well-established (for example, see Crenshaw [59], Sandler, Tschirhart and Couley[60], Bueno de Mesquita[61], Bapat[62]). However, the integration of this insight into quantitative empirical work on terrorism is underdeveloped. Furthermore, while Carter [63] analyzes whether a government responds forcefully or not to an attack, much of our theory also speaks to whether groups expect to extract concessions through the use of violence (for example, Pape [64], Bueno de Mesquita[65], Bapat [66]). A study by Dugan and Chenoweth [67] represents an important step in this direction, as they introduce data that connects violence to government crackdowns and conciliation in Israel. They argue that conciliatory responses to terrorism are quite effective relative to forceful response.

Some of the best work on how different government policies affect insurgent violence has been done using micro-level data on particular conflicts. For instance, Berman, Shapiro and Felner [68] show that when a government effectively improves service provision, this reduces insurgent violence. This is a very important finding, as it suggests that we need to account for how a wider range of government actions relate to the choices violent groups make. Furthermore, Condra and Shapiro [69] and Blair et al.[70] provide striking evidence that we also need to give careful thought to the role of the civilian population in conflicts. Although civilians almost always play a role in theory (if only implicitly), detailed data on civilian reactions to the government, a violent group, and the outcome that comes from their interaction is lacking in cross-national empirical work.

In sum, this discussion suggests several inferential challenges that faces future researchers. First, as Byman’s analysis suggests, many groups simultaneously use a mix of tactics, so violent groups might use terrorism until they gain enough public support to control territory and employ guerrilla tactics.[71] Thus, scholars analyzing terrorism in isolation may make mistaken conclusions about the overall level of violence in a country. Furthermore, if the choice among tactics is strategic and related to government response, which public theorists such as Marighella suggest, analysis of groups’ choices of tactics without taking into account government response can lead to incorrect inferences.[72] Finally, the public is widely thought to play a key role in whether violent groups are successful or not and both violent groups and the government have incentives to work for public support.[73] Thus, future researchers should continue to strive towards analysis of terrorism that accounts for the broader context.

Connecting Theory and Data

Progress has been made in thinking about tactical choice (either peaceful or violent) and government response. However, much potential progress remains, as existing methods of analyzing terrorism data and the quality of commonly used data sources themselves are often

inadequate relative to theory. Furthermore, the face validity of how we interpret the results from cross-national regressions is often questionable. There are three big issues to be discussed here.

First, existing cross-national data sources on terrorism have significant shortcomings. The range and quality of the cross-national data sources on terrorism have increased considerably. However, most of the data sources record individual attacks, i.e., event data, without much information on government response. Furthermore, given that the decision-making unit of interest is the group, more group-level data sources are in order.[74] Finally, beyond the need for more and better refined group-level data, we need data that connects group decisions explicitly to actions of the targeted state. Given that much of our theory links groups' choices of tactic to the anticipated response of the targeted government, our data needs to contain this information. Relatedly, the country-year format in which we measure the number of attacks, lethality of attacks, or number of groups contained in a country is not ideal to assess ideas about group-state interaction. This is related to the point made by Young and Findley that monadic analysis is not always appropriate.[75] An early and important example of work that accounts for both group attacks and government responses was provided in 1993 by Enders and Sandler.[76]

Second, the standard methods we use to model terrorism data are often not good matches for our theory. A wide range of studies put forth a theoretical idea that relies on strategic interaction between groups and the government. However, the standard quantitative empirical approach does not model this interaction or explicitly account for how it should affect key relationships between variables. Rather, typical empirical models assume that the dependent variable (e.g., the count of terrorist incidents in a given country in a given year) is a linear function of a set of important variables (e.g., executive constraints), and that the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable can be modeled with a functional form such as the widely used negative binomial model. It is well known that the standard approach to modeling these variables is not necessarily consistent with the idea that the relationship between groups and governments is strategic. [77] Furthermore, this can lead to bias in estimation that is equivalent to the well known problem of omitted variable bias.[78]

To make this point more concrete, consider as an important explanatory variable the degree of centralization of a country's police force. Suppose our interest is in how police centralization affects both a group's utility for using terrorism and the government's utility for responding forcefully to an attack. For a group, a decentralized security or police force, e.g., the United Kingdom during the 1970s, perhaps makes a swift and unified response to terrorist incidents difficult. When a group makes the decision to use terrorism or not, they strategically anticipate government response and take into account the structure of the country's police force in assessing what the character of the response will be. Thus, for the purposes of illustration, suppose that employing terrorism is positively influenced by the degree of decentralization of the security apparatus. For low or moderate levels of terrorism, the government might be constrained from responding effectively to the threat.

However, if the threat becomes great enough, as it did in the case of the UK in Northern Ireland, a government will be pushed to find a way to deal with the threat from terrorism in a unified manner. In the case of the UK, because of the decentralized nature of the police force the special counterterrorism unit was tied to the military rather than the police. Several observers suggest

that because the IRA (and other groups) faced a counterterrorism unit tied to the military, this explains the harsh response relative to what groups faced in other Western European countries such as Germany (for example, see Peter Chalk's study of West European terrorism and counterterrorism [79]). Thus, in estimating how the level of decentralization in the police affects the group's utility for employing terrorism, we need to account for how government response to group attacks can affect the attractiveness or effectiveness of attack campaigns. In this illustrative example, increasing levels of group violence up to a point might benefit the group but start to hurt the group if the campaign becomes so violent that the government is pushed to implement a harsh response that will be very costly to the group.

This illustrative example suggests that group decisions to carry out fewer or more attacks, or to carry out attacks of greater or lesser severity do not necessarily have monotonic effects on the group's welfare.[80] By this, we mean that the effect of increasing or decreasing the severity of an attack campaign does not always strictly increase or decrease the group's utility. Rather, for example, it can increase initially at low to medium levels of violence and then decrease at very high levels of violence. Unfortunately, our standard empirical specifications do not accommodate this kind of logic. Important exceptions in the terrorism literature are Carter [81] and Dugan and Chenoweth.[82] Carter uses a strategic choice model along the lines suggested by Signorino,[83] while Dugan and Chenoweth uses a flexible non-parametric model that has the potential to pick up these kinds of relationships.[84] This is a hard problem, as most of our data is not designed in a way that makes this kind of modeling approach straightforward.

Specifically, to estimate a model that accounts for strategic interaction, the data needs to include dependent variables measuring group and government choices. Furthermore, the dependent variables measuring group and government actions need to be theoretically linked to each other. Thus, for each group attack we need to measure the government's response to that specific attack. Also, given that a group chooses between different tactics, peaceful and violent, we ideally want to be able to measure peaceful and violent tactics and the government's response to them. This is undoubtedly a high standard for data collection. However, it is attainable as recent data collection efforts have begun to measure a variety of group and government tactics (e.g. Dugan and Chenoweth). [85]

Third, the way we interpret key results from our econometric models could be improved. While there are several potential areas of improvement, I will focus here on the connection between key results and important cases. Interpretation of important results, such as how higher levels of executive constraints are associated with more terrorism, usually have clear implications for important cases. However, it is not as common as it could be in the quantitative empirical literature to build case studies (or even brief case illustrations) in our papers to aid in interpreting results.

It would improve the face validity of key results if scholars employed something similar to a "most likely" criterion to choose particular cases to further explore key results from a statistical model.[86] Thus, if high levels of executive constraints really encourage small or marginal political groups to employ terrorism,[87] what is the case or set of cases in which we should most likely see qualitative evidence of this? This is similar to the mixed-methods approach advocated by Lieberman [88] in comparative politics research. In the field of terrorism studies, it

also suggests a way for qualitative and quantitative scholars to exploit natural synergies and connections in their research. Ideally, examination of a “most-likely” case (or set of cases) can be done both qualitatively and relative to the predictions of researchers’ statistical models for the case being examined.[89]

Conclusions

Much progress has been made in the literature studying terrorism and political violence over the last decade or more. More specifically, the proliferation of cross-national quantitative empirical work on terrorism has generated numerous insights. In particular, a large body of work has improved our understanding of the relationship between regime type and terrorism. Much of this work puts forth an argument for why democracies experience more terrorism than non-democracies. The argument in this paper suggests that several of the key explanations for why democracies experience more terrorism are linked.

Future research should work to develop better data and more theoretically appropriate empirical models that can exploit these linkages. The volume of published work is impressive and the key findings are helpful to both scholars and policy-makers. However, much remains to be done to empirically explore how political institutions and other key regime attributes influence the incentives of groups to use violent and peaceful tactics. Furthermore, our understanding of how group decisions strategically anticipate government actions is underdeveloped. This underdevelopment is largely a function of existing data sources, although the field is rapidly advancing on this front.

Finally, cross-national empirical work should make more use of key cases to probe the plausibility of key findings. Researchers’ suggestion that some set of variables has an effect on patterns of terrorism almost always has bearing on relevant cases. Consider a claim such as “higher levels of executive constraints increase incentives to resort to terrorism.” If this is a valid claim, researchers should be able to examine cases in which executive constraints are high, and perhaps other contextual variables are favorable (e.g., high electoral thresholds) and find some evidence that these factors are associated with both group members’ decision to use terrorism and governments’ inability to effectively respond to terrorist campaigns. This ‘mixed method approach’ has the potential to complement further exploration of the interactions between dissident groups and the governments they target.

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Notes

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The Decision Calculus of Terrorist Leaders

by J. Tyson Chatagnier, Alex Mintz and Yair Samban

Abstract

This article contributes to the literature on terrorist group decision-making by introducing a new procedure, Applied Decision Analysis, in an attempt to understand how leaders of terrorist organizations make decisions. We examine twenty-three decisions taken by leaders of three terrorist organizations: Al-Qaeda, Hamas, and Hizballah. We also demonstrate the use of the Applied Decision Analysis procedure to uncover the "Decision DNA" or "decision code" of leaders of such organizations. After reviewing the results and insights derived from this analysis, we conclude with implications for policies to counter terrorism.

Introduction

Recent studies of terrorism have tended to focus on the motivations of terrorists in general, and of suicide terrorists in particular. Nationalistic, religious, and economic factors have been found to motivate terrorists, as well as the existence of a charismatic leader, the desire for revenge, and a significant quest.[1] Although this research has contributed significantly to our understandings of terrorism and the suicide terrorist's mind, it has not examined the strategic calculus of terrorist *leaders'* decisions. However, as Terris [2] notes, the study of international events "has shifted focus from states to leaders as the main unit of analysis." This is an important change, as leaders' decisions are "the proximate cause of events that drive international politics." [3] It is the leader of the terrorist organization who makes the important decisions, even if there are a number of loose networks of terrorists that operate worldwide.[4]

Terrorists' acts are usually parts of coordinated campaigns, directed by a larger organization.[5] In this paper, we argue that understanding why a decision was made by an organization requires understanding the decision calculus of its leaders. Networks are very important, but networks as a whole do not make decisions. Individuals do. More importantly, leaders of terrorist organizations make the critical decisions. Because the leaders of these organizations drive the organization's decisions and actions, research focusing on the leaders of the terrorist organization as the unit of analysis is essential to our understanding of terrorism.

In this article, we extend the extant research on terrorism [6] while introducing a new procedure, Applied Decision Analysis, in an attempt to understand *how* leaders of terrorist organizations make decisions. We examine twenty-three decisions taken by leaders of terrorist organizations. Specifically, we analyze the decision patterns of the leadership of three terrorist organizations: Al-Qaeda, Hamas, and Hizballah. Consequently, we take a leader-centric approach to the study of terrorism decision-making. We also demonstrate the use of the Applied Decision Analysis procedure to uncover the "Decision DNA" or "decision code" of leaders of such organizations. We do so by "reverse engineering" decisions made by Osama bin Laden, Hassan Nasrallah, Khaled Mashal and Ismail Haniya.

We proceed in the following manner: we begin with a brief review of previous work on terrorist decision-making. We then introduce the Applied Decision Analysis (ADA) procedure, and explain how it can be applied to leaders' decisions. We then demonstrate the use of ADA in the analysis of 23 cases involving international terrorism, and discuss the results and insights derived from this analysis. We conclude with implications for policies to counter terrorism.

Previous Explanations of Terrorist Decision-Making

Previous research that has analyzed how terrorists make decisions has focused primarily on explaining the *reasons* that terrorists have for joining violent organizations or committing violence (or even suicide terrorism) in the name of a cause. This research has focused upon terrorist subordinates, rather than leaders. Moreover, it has suffered from the cognitive-rational divide that plagues much of the field of political decision-making.

Rational Actor Explanations

Decisions explained through rational choice rest on the following assumption: actors make decisions in line with their preferences, pursuing the alternatives that they believe will bring them closest to the optimal outcome.[7] In recent years, scholars have proposed individual level rational choice theories, often using logic consistent with expected utility theory to explain how or when it might be rational for a person to become a terrorist[8] or a suicide bomber.[9] These studies have tended to rely on insights from studies of sociological influences on potential terrorists[10] and studies on the psychology of suicide and deviant behavior[11] to construct models that forecast the circumstances under which some individuals would prefer engaging in terrorism to remaining peaceful members of society.

While the rationality of political violence, including suicide terrorism may seem somewhat incompatible with reality, there is actually considerable evidence reported in these studies that, based on the anticipated rewards of such actions, the *expected utility* of becoming a suicide bomber can be higher than continuing to live as a peaceful member of society.[12] The rational choice models that have been produced in recent years have stood out as elegant demonstrations of why a phenomenon utterly incomprehensible to most is so widespread. One such study is Bueno de Mesquita's[13] model predicting which individuals will turn to terrorism and when. Using a game theoretic model, which suggests that declining economic conditions increase terrorist supply while demand stays relatively stable, allowing organizations to choose the best from among potential applicants, he explains two apparently contradictory empirical findings: that terrorists in general and suicide terrorists in particular tend to be at least as well off as their non-terrorist counterparts[14] and that nations with declining or less developed economies are more likely to experience terrorist attacks.[15]

To some extent, these rational analyses can be extended to terrorist organizations. When rational choice studies are applied to terrorist groups, they attempt to explain why the organizations employ violent means to pursue their goals. Consistent with the rational school, it has long been noted that terrorists see terrorism as the best strategy for achieving their political goals.[16] The capstone work in this area is Robert Pape's seminal 2003 study, in which he claims that suicide

bombing is a highly effective tool for eliciting political change. To support this claim, he examines suicide campaigns between 1980 and 2001, concluding that terrorism pays. More recently, however, a number of studies have emerged that challenge Pape's conclusion, arguing that terrorists have generally been unsuccessful in extracting concessions from states.[17]

Cognitive, Psychological Explanations

Other scholars have used competing cognitive psychological approaches to understanding terrorism decision-making. Such approaches are inherently psychological and are typically focused on the individual level of analysis. These studies seek to understand *how* terrorists think and to construct profiles of the types of individuals who are likely to become terrorists. The purpose of such psychological analyses is to comprehend terrorists fully so that their actions might be predicted.

Studies that involved interviews and case analysis [18] have been able to contribute to our understanding of what drives suicide bombers. While not based on medical diagnoses, these studies do further academic knowledge of a profile of terrorists. This might be helpful in identifying potential terrorists and preventing them from taking such actions. Additionally, Post et al.[19] stress the importance, not only of individual characteristics, but of general context and social psychological factors in understanding suicide terrorism.[20]

The idea of terrorism as deviant behavior and deviant behavior as a side effect of mental illness has given rise to a vast number of proposed psychoses from which terrorists might plausibly suffer.[21] While this has been an area of study for decades, it has yielded no firm conclusions. As Victoroff notes, these psychological theories have been embroiled in “fierce controversy,” and the findings that have been reported have been based on “multiple nonscientific assumptions” and “impressionistic interpretations of...cases.”[22] The problem with these approaches is that they generally require comparative psychoanalysis. This would necessitate psychiatric evaluations of multiple terrorists in an unclassified setting. Furthermore, even those cognitive psychological studies that do not require individual psychiatric analysis are often plagued by methodological problems that severely limit potential explanatory power.[23] Thus, it is unsurprising that relatively little progress has been made.

While research on decision-making of terrorists has done much to advance our understanding of the mind and motivations of the terrorist, it suffers from a major shortcoming. The cognitive-rational divide forces us to choose between predicting outcomes and understanding processes. The most unfortunate result of this schism is that in general decision-making, “the strengths of one [school] often mirror the weaknesses of the other.”[24] This often leaves scholars with two well-told half-stories that are difficult to connect.

Rational and Cognitive Explanation

As a solution to this problem, we advocate the use of the Poliheuristic theory of decision-making in the study of terrorism. The theory has been offered as the *link* between cognitive and rational theories of decision-making.[25] Poliheuristic theory employs a two-stage process to tap the strength of cognitive explanations by providing an accurate description of the decision process,

while leveraging the ability of rational choice methods to predict an outcome accurately. According to Poliheuristic theory, in the first stage of the decision process, terrorists employ a “non-compensatory principle” to reject any alternatives that fail to meet certain criteria.[26] In the second stage, the terrorist simply selects the alternative from the remaining choices with the highest net gain. While it allows for specific information (e.g., the variability of the non-compensatory dimension) to be incorporated, the theory also provides guidelines that allow it to be applied to many different decision makers, including leaders of terrorist organizations, terrorists and activists.[27]

The second problem with previous work on terrorist decision-making is its lack of focus on terrorist *leaders*, despite the general consensus in the literature that knowledge of leaders is crucial for understanding the decisions made by terrorist organizations. Both the cognitive and rational approaches used in the past have had difficulty in addressing leaders.

In this article, we propose the use of a technique called Applied Decision Analysis (ADA), and show that it can be easily applied to the leadership of terrorist organizations. Moreover, when used on multiple decisions of the leader of an organization, it can uncover a decision pattern or “decision DNA” for terrorist leaders.[28] The use of ADA provides a substantial increase in predictive power and insights about the way decisions are made by leaders of terrorist organizations, while simultaneously bridging both of the two major schisms in studies of terrorist decision-making. Below we briefly introduce Applied Decision Analysis and apply it to twenty-three decisions of leaders of terrorist organizations.

Applied Decision Analysis

Applied Decision Analysis is a procedure for developing descriptive (and predictive) decision profiles of individual decision makers, such as leaders of terrorist groups.[29] The procedure consists of two key steps. First, the analyst must identify the decision matrix - the alternatives, dimensions and implications of the alternatives corresponding to each dimension - of the decision maker. The second step involves the analysis of each decision through the use of multiple decision models (e.g., elimination by aspect, lexicographic, poliheuristic, or utility maximizing) to understand how the leader made the decision.

Step 1: Identifying the Decision Matrix of the Leader of the Terrorist Organization

A decision matrix consists of a set of alternatives, the dimensions (or criteria) for selecting among these alternatives, and an assessment of the implications of each dimension for each alternative. Weights (or levels of importance) can be assigned to each dimension, if the analyst observes that dimensions should receive unequal weight in the analysis. The analyst can also use counterfactual scenarios to analyze potential actions and reactions of leaders of terrorist groups.

Alternatives

The set of alternatives includes the likely courses of action a decision maker (e.g. the leader of the terrorist organization) may reasonably consider when faced with some decision problem. For

example, when involved in negotiations with a state, a terrorist organization's leader may consider the following: "Continue with Attacks," "Temporarily Halt Attacks," "Stop Attacks," or "Continue Attacks while Negotiating" (so-called "negotiation under fire"). In contrast, state leaders may, when faced with a terrorist act, consider, for example, the following alternatives: "Negotiate" or "Use Force."

Dimensions

A dimension or a decision criterion, is an organizing theme relevant in evaluating the alternatives. Thus, if the leader of a terrorist organization is concerned with the consequences of a decision while in negotiations with a state, then public support,[30] the flow of financial contributions, recruitment levels,[31] intra-group rivalries, inter-group competition, and other variables related to this general organizing theme may be used to evaluate his alternatives. Among other reasons, organizations use terrorism to increase their market share of popular support.[32] Examples of other dimensions that may influence the terrorist leader's decision are "Relations with other Countries (e.g., Iran or Syria)" and "The Likelihood of Operational Success."

Implications

The implications consist of a description of the likely consequences of an alternative for a given dimension. Obviously, each alternative has implications corresponding to each dimension. For example, in the case of the terrorist leader, the "Stop Attacks" alternative has implications for the organization's political standing, relations with other countries, and operational success of the organization – which are all relevant dimensions.

Ratings

Implications can be rated by the analyst, for example, from -10 (very bad) to +10 (very good). For instance, if choosing the alternative "Temporary Halt Attacks" is likely to result in a loss of public sympathy or a decline in financial contributions, the analyst should assign a negative rating (very bad, -7 or -8) to the political implications of "Temporary Halt Attacks." In contrast, if "Continue Attacks" is likely to lead to an outpouring of public sympathy and increasing recruitment levels, then this alternative should receive a positive rating (e.g., very good, or +8).

Weight

Weights indicate the importance level of each dimension, for example from 1 (not important at all) to 10 (very important). Thus, in the terrorist leader example, the analyst assigns different weights to the political, military, nationalistic, diplomatic, and operational dimensions, unless he/she considers each dimension to have equal weight in the decision.

Once a leader's decision matrix is constructed, it can then be analyzed to uncover the leader's decision rule. Previous research has used Applied Decision Analysis to understand decisions

made by national leaders [33] as well as by Osama bin Laden.[34] The technique becomes more powerful and insights become more refined when it is applied to a larger number of cases for a single decision maker.

Step 2: Uncovering the Decision Code of Leaders of Terrorist Organizations

In the analysis stage, the analyst utilizes five decision characteristics in order to categorize decisions.[35] By examining these characteristics (to the extent that they are available), and comparing them to existing decision theories (e.g., expected utility theory or Poliheuristic theory), the analyst can determine the decision rule used by the leader to make a particular choice. For example, if the leader eschews the alternative with the highest overall utility in favor of something else, then he cannot have used a decision rule based in expected utility theory. If it is clear that he stopped before considering all of the alternatives, then the decision rule may be consistent with a satisficing rule, such as cybernetic theory.

Using these cognitive process characteristics, it is possible to discern the decision rule used by an individual in making these decisions. The analyst can examine multiple choices made by an individual (e.g. leader of a terrorist organization) and classify them accordingly. This will reveal a particular decision pattern, which can be further refined by collecting additional observations.

Data to be inserted into the decision matrix can be obtained by interviewing experts, by using a Delphi technique, by analyzing classified (if possible) and unclassified information, conducting content analysis of publications of the organization, or by relying on a key expert.

Terrorist Leaders and Decision DNA

Uncovering the decision characteristics for a terrorist leader involves the analysis of multiple decisions in a manner similar to the one proposed by the Applied Decision Analysis procedure. This analysis helps us to determine how the leader of the terrorist organization makes decisions as well as his/her general decision pattern. Once one conducts such an analysis and uncovers the pattern of decision-making of the leader and/or the organization, the results can aid in designing effective counterterrorism strategies that take advantage of this unique knowledge, and exploit the weaknesses of organizations' leaders.

In this project, we have used this procedure to uncover the decision patterns of four leaders across three different groups. We have relied on a key expert (Yair Samban who is a co-author of this study) and our knowledge, to construct the decision matrix for each leader. The 23 matrices appear in Mintz et al (2011).

Table 1: Terrorist Decisions Analyzed

Organization	Leader	Decision
Al-Qaeda	Osama bin Laden	1993 World Trade Center Bombing
		Merger with Egyptian Islamic Jihad
		Attack on the USS <i>Cole</i>
		September 11th Attack
		Decision not to Claim Responsibility
		Decision to Claim Responsibility
		March 11th Bombings in Madrid
		July 7th Bombings in London
Hamas	Khaled Mashal	Boycott of 1992-1996 PLC Elections
		1993-2001 Suicide Bombing Campaign
		2005 <i>Hudna</i> (Ceasefire) in Cairo
		Participation in 2006 PLC Elections
		Kidnapping of Gilad Shalit
	Ismail Haniya	Negotiation with Palestinian Authority
Hizballah	Hassan Nasrallah	Response to Israeli Withdrawal from Lebanon
		Involvement with October 2000 <i>Intifada</i>
		Response to 2003 Invasion of Iraq
		Direction of Hizballah following Syrian Withdrawal
		Response to July 2006 Israeli Attack
		Hypothetical Decision Given No Israeli Attack
		Political Campaign Following Gemayel's Assassination

Table 1 lists the twenty-three decisions that we analyzed in order to uncover the decision patterns of the leaders of various terrorist organizations. The decisions in Table 1 represent key choices that were made by each of these leaders. Each of these decisions was a major turning point for the organization in question, and the analysis is therefore useful for furthering our understanding of how terrorist organizations make decisions. Each decision was analyzed in detail, in order to reveal the particular decision characteristics and decision rule for a given leader. Notably, we consider a variety of decision types, including both organizational and operational (i.e., choices about the use of terrorist tactics). In this way, one can get either a full picture of the decision

makers, or a more niche, limited analysis of a concrete area of their decision style and decision rule.

Each case provides some information that can be used to construct the more general decision profile for the individual being assessed. Each leader has a unique profile, his "decision fingerprint," in terms of which dimensions are most critical, how alternatives are evaluated and which decision rule he typically uses. Once we examined each of the decisions in Table 1, separate pictures emerged for the various groups, based on the organization type and its implications for the leader's decision pattern. Specifically, we find fairly robust support for a Poliheuristic style of decision-making: leaders of terrorist organizations eliminate alternatives that threaten them politically. They then conduct a more rational analysis but only on the remaining alternatives, in a two stage process that combines cognitive and rational calculations. Such an insight could not have been detected without the use of Applied Decision Analysis, which systematically reconstructs the decision calculus of decision makers and allows the analyst to gain an understanding of both the decision processes and rules.

Specifically, using the ADA procedure allows us to move beyond simply looking at outcomes, and to trace the processes of leaders' decisions. It requires the in-depth study of various decisions (cases) in order to identify crucial decision characteristics and patterns. These characteristics would be missed by a more cursory examination of the choices. By applying the procedure in a systematic fashion, we are able to identify patterns, and to use what we learn from the decision analyses to eliminate potential alternative decision rules and explanations.

Results

The Importance of the Political Dimension

Generally, the Applied Decision Analysis we utilized to analyze 23 decisions of terrorist organizations revealed that within the various heuristics (cognitive shortcuts) used by terrorist leaders, the political dimension is non-compensatory. This means that when faced with a serious decision problem, a leader of a terrorist group will initially eliminate all alternatives that will negatively affect his political or personal survival. This dimension is "non-compensatory" in that any alternative that is unacceptable politically will be rejected, regardless of its advantage on another dimension. This is an important finding, as it demonstrates that it is not the military dimension that is always dominant in the decision calculus of leaders of terrorist organization, but the political dimension.

Secondly, having analyzed all 23 decisions, we argue that the dominant specific non-compensatory political factor (inter-group standing, intra-group standing or both) of a terrorist leader is affected primarily by the characteristics of the organization he leads.

Although all the leaders we examine appear to be concerned primarily with their political standing, what political standing entails varies by leader. In particular, the structure of the organization affects the degree of influence of the political-organizational dimension.

The effect of the structure of a terrorist organization on leader's decision-making pattern

In their early years, terrorist organizations compete for market share—they seek public support for their acts.[36] We call this inter-group rivalry, as the terrorist groups compete with one another to dominate the scene and to be the top organization in the given area. These younger groups are concerned primarily with a public opinion dimension, unwilling to accept alternatives that will damage their standing with the mass public, as this could render the organization irrelevant.

In contrast, leaders of organizations with a more solid standing in the public, are more affected by the political-organizational dimension (the internal political competition within the organization). As such, the leaders and members are concerned with maintaining and gaining power within the group, and may sacrifice the good of the organization for personal expediency. It can involve vying for position between leaders, competition for promotion between members, or power struggles between factions. What is important is that the competitors seek real power and control within the group. It is important to note, however, that the public opinion dimension, though no longer paramount, remains one of the more important dimensions. Though leaders are more concerned with their internal position, they still would prefer to lead a top organization to one that has severely fallen in the public eye.

We call the third and final form of rivalry superiority. In many ways it resembles the intra-group rivalry: leaders seek to top one another and become the top figure in their organization or for their cause. The key difference between the two types is that while the intra-group rivalry is a struggle for real authority, the superiority battle is about symbolic power. In organizations affected by superiority struggles, a figurehead leadership position might be as important as one that wields considerable power.

In our analysis of the Hamas, Hizballah and Al-Qaeda organizations, we have found that each fits into one of the categories fairly well. Importantly, the characteristics that lead the organizations to be grouped as such affect the ways in which the various leaders make decisions, and the dimensions that are of paramount importance to them. While they are all political actors, concerned primarily with their own status, the political dimension can change subtly for each actor. These political patterns are summarized in Table 2, below.

Table 2. Dominant Political Consideration

Organization	Dominant non-compensatory dimension of leader	Decision-making pattern
Hizballah	Inter-group rivalry	<i>Public:</i> Primarily sensitive (risk-averse) to challenges to the leader's public-political standing vis-à-vis other political groups (outside of the organization)
Hamas	Intra-group rivalry	<i>Organizational:</i> Primarily sensitive to challenges to organizational cohesion and the leader's standing <i>within</i> the organization
Al-Qaeda	Both	<i>Superior:</i> Primarily sensitive to challenges to the leader's symbolic standing; constantly attempts to overshadow other competing figures.

The most important political factor for Hamas is the intra-group rivalry. That is, factions within the organization battle one another for supremacy. Because Hamas has established itself as a powerful and formidable organization, it need not compete for market share to establish itself anymore. Rather, leaders of the factions within Hamas select alternatives that will increase their power relative to their intra-group rivals. This is characterized, for example, by the rivalry between the three major contenders for leadership of Hamas after the 2004 assassinations of Yassin and Rantissi. While each of the three presumably desires what is best for the organization, they also hope to propel themselves above their rivals and to assume the leadership of Hamas. This means that the structure of the organization leads decision makers to place primary importance on the personal political dimension. In the first stage of decision-making, the leader of the terrorist organization rejects those alternatives that will damage them relative to their intra-group rivals. They then select the overall best decision (i.e., the best decision for the organization) from the remaining alternatives.

In contrast, leaders of Hizballah face an inter-group rivalry. However, unlike many terrorist groups in this situation, Hizballah is not some fledgling organization competing for name recognition. Rather, the group finds itself in this position due to its attempt to enter into Lebanese politics as a legitimate political party. As such, it must compete with other Lebanese parties for electoral victories, while attempting to maintain relevance among the traditional supporters of such organizations (i.e., the extremists). Leaders of Hizballah, then, are forced to seek alternatives that will maintain or increase the standing of the organization in the public eye, thus solidifying their power in Lebanese politics and the Arab world. Because of the necessity of balancing public opinion, ambitious individuals and factions within Hizballah do not have the

luxury of engaging in intra-group rivalry. The delicacy of the situation could potentially lead to a weakening of the organization if its leaders chose not to consider the public's view of the group first and foremost. Indeed, the compartmentalization and strict hierarchy of Hizballah both follow from and reinforce this situation. This makes the personal political dimension far less important than the organizational political dimension for such a group.

The late Osama bin Laden and his Al-Qaeda organization personified the superiority principle. What is important within Al-Qaeda is not simply gaining authority within the organization or even gaining power *for* the organization. Rather, bin Laden in particular was concerned with attaining a status akin to "top terrorist." That is, he hoped to be seen as the world's foremost crusader for his cause. In order to do this, he must have had to maintain his position as leader of Al-Qaeda, and must have also made Al-Qaeda into one of the world's most fearsome and prominent terrorist groups. The actual ability of Al-Qaeda to damage its enemies and bin Laden's actual control over the day-to-day affairs and planning were less important than this symbolic aspect. This was apparent in several of bin Laden's decisions. In earlier years, it was at least as important for bin Laden to maintain control over Al-Qaeda following the merger with al-Zawahiri's Egyptian Islamic Jihad because of the prestige that the position carried as for the power. Even more telling were bin Laden's recent decisions regarding attacks against Europe. In both cases it would have benefited Al-Qaeda more to concentrate fully on the insurgency in Iraq, while bin Laden would have gained nothing concrete by taking the offensive (i.e., his real authority over Al-Qaeda would not increase at all). However, by returning his name to the papers – at the expense of his lieutenant, al-Zarqawi – bin Laden was able to reestablish his status and symbolic importance. The superiority principle requires that the leader take into consideration both the personal and organizational political dimensions, as both are necessary for the attainment of superiority. As such, both are non-compensatory. In this case, the decision maker was not so much constrained by the organizational structure, but rather by bin Laden's own egomania, which in turn structured the organization to some degree.

For each of these organizations and each of the archetypes into which they have been grouped, politics is always important. Indeed, both the inter-group (personal political) and intra-group (organizational political) dimensions are among the most important decision criteria in each case. The rivalry types that we have described here determine the relative importance of these two types of political dimensions. By understanding the rivalry, we can understand which dimensions are paramount, and thereby better predict the organization's path and subsequent decisions.

Implications for Counterterrorism

Our findings demonstrate the key dimensions on which terrorist leaders make their decisions and their dominant decision pattern. Knowing this, states that are targeted by terrorist groups can act strategically, in order to force terrorist leaders into particular decisions and not other, less desirable decisions. Since we find that terrorist leaders are averse to risks on their critical dimensions, increasing the expected risk on this dimension might "push" the organization into a certain behavioral pattern, or policy decision, which is more suitable or acceptable from the state's point of view.

In general, we identify two types of counterterrorist strategies that can affect the critical political dimensions of leaders of terrorist organizations. A friction strategy focuses on sowing internal discord within the organization. This strategy forces the leader to concentrate on internal, rather than external enemies. Friction tactics are most useful when dealing with an organization whose leader's dominant political dimension is located at the intra-group level, such as Hamas.

In contrast, when facing a leader whose key political dimension is at the public-political level, a coalition strategy is more effective. This is meant to encourage divisions between competing organizations, political rivals, or potential supporters. Coalition tactics reduce the leader's standing in the public eye, and might involve establishment of relations with competing organizations, support for rivals in elections, or preventing the group from gaining or wielding any political power. The usefulness of our study is that uncovering the dominant pattern of decision-making of leaders of the organization allows us to "personalize" counterterrorism, creating strategies that are tailored to the decision style of the leader being analyzed.

Conclusion

Defeating terrorism requires a greater understanding of how leaders of terrorist organizations make decisions. The Applied Decision Analysis procedure discussed in this paper offers a unique and flexible means for understanding how decision-makers, including leaders of terrorist organizations, make decisions. In our project, we use this tool in order to answer the following questions:

1. How do leaders of terrorist organizations make decisions?
2. What factors influence their decisions?
3. What decision rule(s) do they use?
4. What is their "decision code?"
5. How can we counter their acts?

By carefully "reverse engineering" 23 individual choices, we were able to determine the dominant decision pattern of the leadership of three major terrorist groups: Al-Qaeda, Hamas, and Hizballah.

Our analyses indicate that decision-making by terrorist leaders is systematic, and reveals sensitivity on the part of leaders to political challenges. However, the leaders vary in the types of challengers that they fear. Hizballah's Hassan Nasrallah, for example, is particularly sensitive to inter-group rivalries, fearing challenges from other organizations in his quest to politically control Lebanon. By contrast, Hamas leaders Khaled Mashal (who has recently resigned from the leadership position) and Ismail Haniya have worried more about deterring intra-group challenges (to each other) and maintaining organizational cohesion. Finally, the late Al-Qaeda leader, Osama bin Laden, as the leader of arguably the world's most feared terrorist group, was worried about challenges to his standing from both within and outside of the organization.

Identifying this variation across leaders, in terms of how they make decisions, suggests counter-terror tactics that are unique to the group being targeted. ADA is a powerful tool that will allow researchers to understand the terrorist mind more fully, which is a necessary condition for

combating terrorism. The ADA procedure is useful for understanding terrorist decisions, but is also extremely simple to implement, requiring only some knowledge about the decision maker. Given an input of this knowledge, the procedure returns additional information that can be used in analysis of future decisions. These results continually sharpen the analyst's knowledge, allowing for more accurate understanding and prediction.

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[3] Ibid.

[4] See also Margaret G. Hermann and Azamat Sakiev. 2011. "Leadership, terrorism, and the use of violence." *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict* 4: 126-134.

[5] Robert Pape. 2003. "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism." *American Political Science Review* 97: 1-19.

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[7] Herbert Simon. 1955. "A Behavioral Model of Rational Choice." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 69: 99-118; Alex Mintz, Nehemia Geva, Steven Redd and Amy Carnes. 1997. "The Effect of Dynamic and Static Choice Sets on Political Decision-making: An Analysis Using the Decision Board Platform." *American Political Science Review* 91: 533-66; and James D. Morrow. 1997. "A Rational Choice Approach to International Conflict." In *Decision-making on War and Peace: The Cognitive-Rational Debate*, (eds.) A. Mintz and N. Geva, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.

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[10] For example, see Nasra Hassan. 2001. "An Arsenal of Believers." *The New Yorker* (19 November 2001), p. 36-41. (S. Brock Blomberg, Gregory D. Hess and Akila Weerapana. 2004. "Economic Conditions and Terrorism." *European Journal of Political Economy* 20: 463-478; Konstantinos Drakos and Andreas Gofas. 2006 "In Search of the Average Transnational Terrorist Attack Venue." *Defence and Peace Economics* 17: 73-93; and Claude Berrebi. n.d. "Evidence About the Link Between Education, Poverty and Terrorism Among Palestinians." Working Paper Available at http://www.irs.princeton.edu/pubs/working_papers.html.

[11] For example, see Gary S. Becker. 1968. "Crime and Punishment: An Economic Approach." *The Journal of Political Economy* 76: 169-217; Isaac Ehrlich. 1973. "Participation in Illegitimate Activities: A Theoretical and Empirical Investigation." *Journal of Political Economy* 81: 521-565; and Daniel S. Hamermesh and Neal M. Soss. 1974. "An Economic Theory of Suicide." *Journal of Political Economy* 82: 83-98.

[12] Ronald Wintrobe 2002; Mark Harrison 2005

[13] Bueno de Mesquita 2005

[14] Nasra Hassan 2001; Alan Krueger and Jitka Malečková. 2003. "Education, Poverty and Terrorism: Is There a Causal Connection?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 17: 119-144.; and Alexander Lee. 2011. "Who Becomes a Terrorist?: Poverty, Education, and the Origins of Political Violence." *World Politics* 63: 203-245.

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[19] Post et al, 2009

[20] See also Mia M. Bloom. 2009. “Chasing Butterflies and Rainbows: A Critique of Kruglanski et al.’s ‘Fully Committed: Suicide Bombers’ Motivation and the Quest for Personal Significance.” *Political Psychology* 30: 387-395; and Fathali Moghaddam. 2009. “The New Global American Dilemma and Terrorism.” *Political Psychology* 30: 373-380.

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[22] Jeff Victoroff (2005), p. 22.

[23] Alex Mintz and David Brulé. 2009. “Methodological Issues in Studying Suicide Terrorism.” *Political Psychology* 30: 365-371.

[24] Mintz, Alex. 2004. “How Do Leaders Make Decisions? A Poliheuristic Perspective.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48: 3-13 (p. 3).

[25] Alex Mintz and Nehemia Geva. 1997. “The Poliheuristic Theory of Foreign Policy Decision-making.” Pp. 81-101 in N. Geva and A. Mintz, eds. *Decision-making on War and Peace: The Cognitive-Rational Debate*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Pub; Alex Mintz, Nehemia Geva, Steven Redd and Amy Carnes. 1997. “The Effect of Dynamic and Static Choice Sets on Political Decision-making: An Analysis Using the Decision Board Platform.” *American Political Science Review* 91: 533-66; and Mintz, 2004.

[26] See Alex Mintz. 1993. “The Decision to Attack Iraq: A Noncompensatory Theory of Decision-making.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 37: 595-618; and Alex Mintz. 1995. “The ‘Noncompensatory Principle’ of Coalition Formation.” *Journal of Theoretical Politics*. 7.

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[29] *Ibid*

[30] James A. Piazza. 2008. "A Supply-Side View of Suicide Terrorism: A Cross-National Study." *Journal of Politics* 70: 28-39.

[31] Martha Crenshaw. 2009. "Intimations of Mortality or Production Lines? The Puzzles of 'Suicide Terrorism.'" *Political Psychology* 30: 359-364.

[32] Mia M. Bloom. 2004. "Palestinian Suicide Bombing: Public Support, Market Share and Outbidding." *Political Science Quarterly* 119: 61-88.

[33] David J. Brulé. 2005. "Explaining and Forecasting Foreign Policy Decisions: A Poliheuristic Analysis of the Iran Hostage Rescue Decision." *International Studies Perspectives* 6: 99-113; and Brandon J. Kinne. 2005. "Decision-making in Autocratic Regimes: A Poliheuristic Perspective." *International Studies Perspectives* 6: 114-128.

[34] Alex Mintz et al. 2006.

[35] These five characteristics can largely define any decision rule: whether the search was holistic or non-holistic (i.e., how much information was used); whether the decision maker acquired information about each alternative sequentially or about implications along dimensions, looking at each criterion successively; whether the search was order-sensitivity; whether implications were combined in an additive or multiplicative manners (i.e., whether or not a high score on one dimension can compensate for a low score on another); and finally, whether the decision makers chose the alternative with the highest overall utility or the alternative that was "good enough."

[36] M. Bloom, 2004.

II. Resources

Terrorism in North America (Canada, United States, Mexico), 1970 – 2010: a Research Note

by **Richard J. Chasdi**

Introduction

The shooting on September 5, 2012 at Parti Quebecois headquarters in Montreal that police now describe as a full blown assassination attempt against this party's "premier-designate" Pauline Marois, resulted in the death and injury of two persons. Montreal police believe the suspect, Richard Blain, was spurred to action by the underlying prospect of increased French influence in Quebec.[1] That event, reminiscent of the shooting of U.S. Representative Gabrielle Giffords (D-Arizona) and others in Tucson in 2011, compels us to re-examine the issue of terrorism trends in Canada from a comparative analysis perspective that takes into account "long-haul" terrorism trends in Canada, the United States, and Mexico between 1970 and 2010 as well as a select number of more contemporary events.

A rigorous comparative analysis of terrorism trends within and between those countries is clearly beyond the scope of this brief Research Note. Its purpose is to present a basic first pass comparison of trends that might serve to illuminate relationships between variables for future research, and improve data compilation and coding procedures to produce richer and more multifaceted research.[2] The reasons this research direction is important are threefold: first, the emergent reality that terrorist assault "attributes" in each country continue to evolve and may have links to not only to endogenous variables but also to "systems factors" such as 9/11, and the "global war on terrorism" in response. Second, there are newer developments such as the increasingly powerful set of modalities between common criminal activity and terrorism (e.g., so-called "organized crime," "gang activity") within certain countries.[3] Third, there is continued interest in the role that "structural factors" such as "political regime-type" (e.g., "western style liberal democracy," "authoritarian democracy," "authoritarian") and non-state actors might play to influence the structural shape of terrorist assault patterns.[4]

At the same time, such comparative analysis would reflect good research design as it makes it possible to isolate and identify "contextual factors" at work in each country as there is control for region (i.e., North America), and political regime type because all three countries under consideration are examples of Western-style liberal democracy. Furthermore, each is an example of a "federalist system" where, as Thomas Patterson tells us, there exists a condition within the political framework of "shared sovereignty" between national government at the federal level and states or provinces at the regional level.[5]

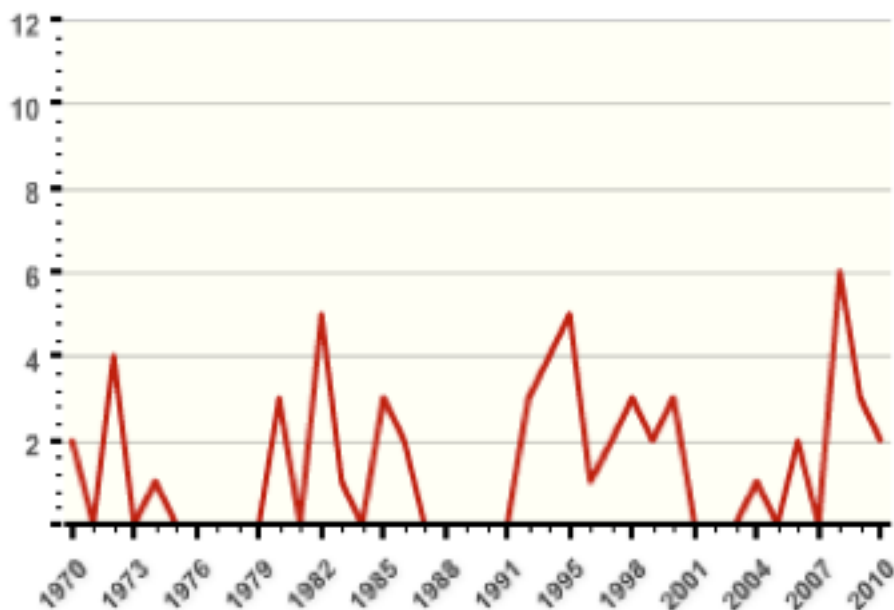
The data used for this presentation of terrorism trends in Canada, the United States, and Mexico are compiled from data produced by the *National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and*

Responses to Terrorism (START) at the University of Maryland, with supplementary qualitative summaries of counter-terrorist actions and trends from “Country Reports on Terrorism 2011” issued by the U.S. Department of State in 2012.[6] The framework for discussion involves a presentation of basic findings for each country, some impressionistic observations about possible trends and relationships in the data to explore in the future, and comments about coding and data compilation to enhance comparative analysis of terrorism trends across North America.

Canada

In the case of Canada, the “Global Terrorism Database (GTD) from START provides a broader perspective of terrorism trends for a forty year period with a breakdown of terrorist “incidents” by year. From the start, it is clear the pattern for terrorist event frequency in Canada is “cyclical” in nature, itself reflective of a condition that Eric Im, Jon Cauley, and Todd Sandler describe as the constant interplay between terrorist tactics and innovation, counter-terror response, and the terrorist tactic innovation that follows.[7] Peak years include 2008 with 6 events, 1995 with 5 events, 1982 with 5 events, and 1972 with 4 events. There were several years where no terrorist events in Canada were chronicled; those years include 1971, 1973, 1975-1979, 1981, 1984, 1987-1991, 2001-2003, 2005, 2007.

One recent summary of Canadian counter-terrorist efforts is supplied by the United States Department, “Country Reports on Terrorism”; it reports that Canada continues to work in effective and sustained ways with the United States in jurisprudential and interdiction/ “disruption” spheres. At a functional level, Canadian “judicial” and “disruption” counter-terrorist activities involved the detention of a Canadian with an Iraqi background, a close relative of an Al-Qaeda senior official, two Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) activists, a member of the so-called “Toronto18,” and an Al-Shabab recruit who was detained in Lester Pearson Airport in Toronto.[8]



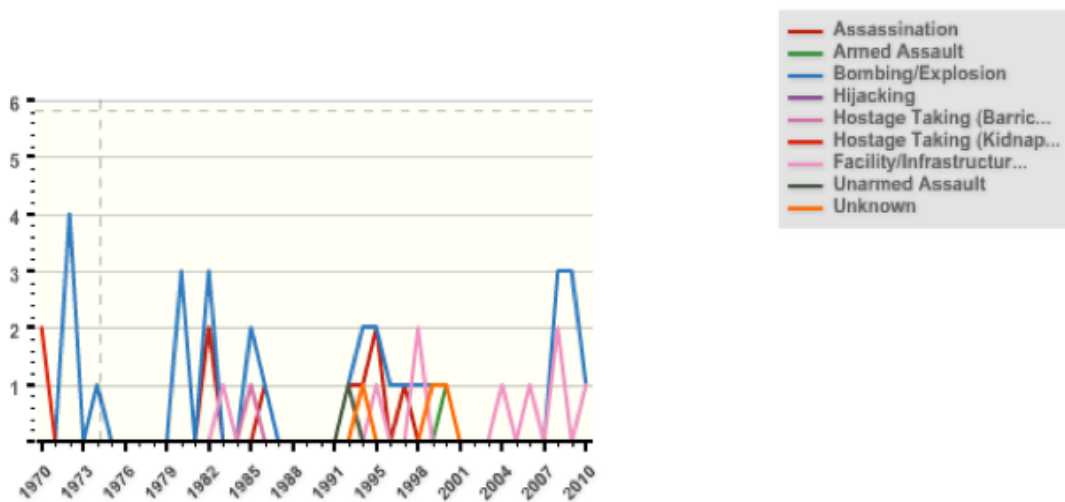
“GTD Search Results” – “Incidents Over Time” “Country: (Canada)”

The relatively small n-set ($n=58$) for data on Canada from GTD makes it possible to review incidents for certain “peak” years. For terrorist incidents chronicled in 2008, clusters of similarities in locale were noticeable. Indeed, four of the six terrorist assaults in 2008 happened in Dawson Creek, Canada, a “city” of some 10,944 people found in the province of British Columbia’s north-eastern region, some 760 miles from Victoria and close to the border with Alberta.[9] Those terrorist assaults (which might be better termed ‘acts of sabotage’) were carried out against “utilities” and involved the detonation of devices by “unknown” persons with no deaths or injuries reported. The three other incidents include an Animal Liberation Front (ALF) assault against a “business” (i.e. civilian) target in the “town” of Aldergrove, British Columbia, and two terrorist assaults with small numbers of injuries carried out by “unknown” perpetrators against civilian targets in larger “urban” locales, namely in Calgary and in Edmonton, Alberta.

In comparison, terrorist assaults chronicled for 1995 appear to be more evenly dispersed across “urban-rural” distinctions and geographical region of the country, with two attacks by “unknown” assailants against civilian targets in Toronto, one assault in Ottawa against a “government” target, one anti-abortion related attack with one injury in Ancaster, Ontario carried out by the “Army of God,” and one attack in Beaconsfield, Quebec, against a government target that resulted in one death.[10] In turn, the START data chronicles five terrorist assaults in Canada in 1982 where all recorded acts are attributed to three groups, namely “Action Directe” (1 act) “Justice Commandos for the Armenian Genocide” (1act), the “Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia” (3 acts). Moreover, those terrorist assaults happened in two large “urban” areas: Toronto (3 acts) and Ottawa (2 acts). In 1972, “Black September” conducted two terrorist assaults against “government” targets, one in Montreal and the other in Ottawa,

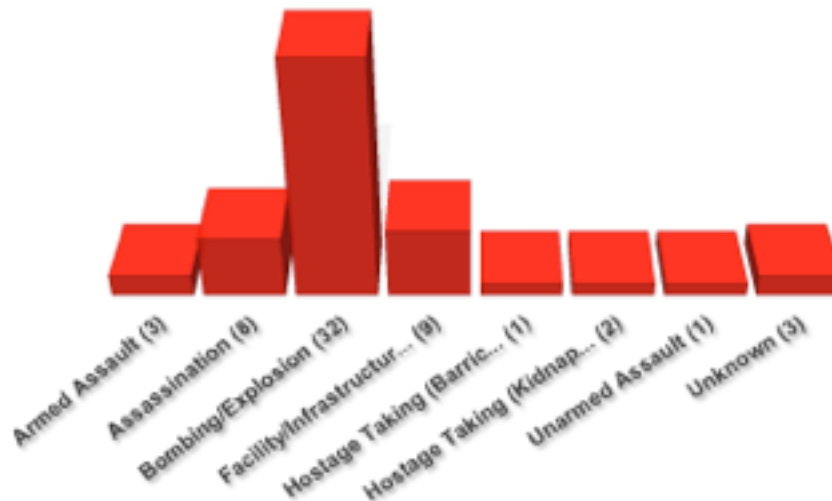
while the “Young Cuba” organization carried out one terrorist assault in Ottawa against a civilian target. In addition, there is one chronicled terrorist assault against a government target in Ottawa by “unknown” assailants in 1972.

Specific techniques to carry out attacks seem to cluster in specific time intervals. For example, the use of detonations was most frequently noted in several time intervals. A preference for attacks against “facility/infrastructure” seems to have peaked in 1998 and 2008. For example, terrorist assaults that utilized “bombing/explosion” tactics were recorded most frequently in 1972 (4 acts), 1980 (3 acts) and 1982 (3 acts), with two detonation acts 1985. There were three detonation acts in 2008. In the case of “assassination,” peak” years are 1982 (2 acts), 1995 (2 acts), while, by contrast, 2008 was the “peak” year for acts of “armed assault” (2 acts). In turn, one “hostage taking barricade” terrorist assault happened in 1985. In comparison, the “peak” year for “hostage taking kidnapping” assaults was 1970 with 2 acts which is consistent with the FLQ campaign (1963-1970) passing into eclipse. Attacks against “facility/infrastructure” peaked in 1998 and 2008 with two incidents in each year, while there was one chronicled “unarmed assault” in 1985. One finding that seems significant is there were no aircraft skyjackings recorded for this forty year interval in Canada.



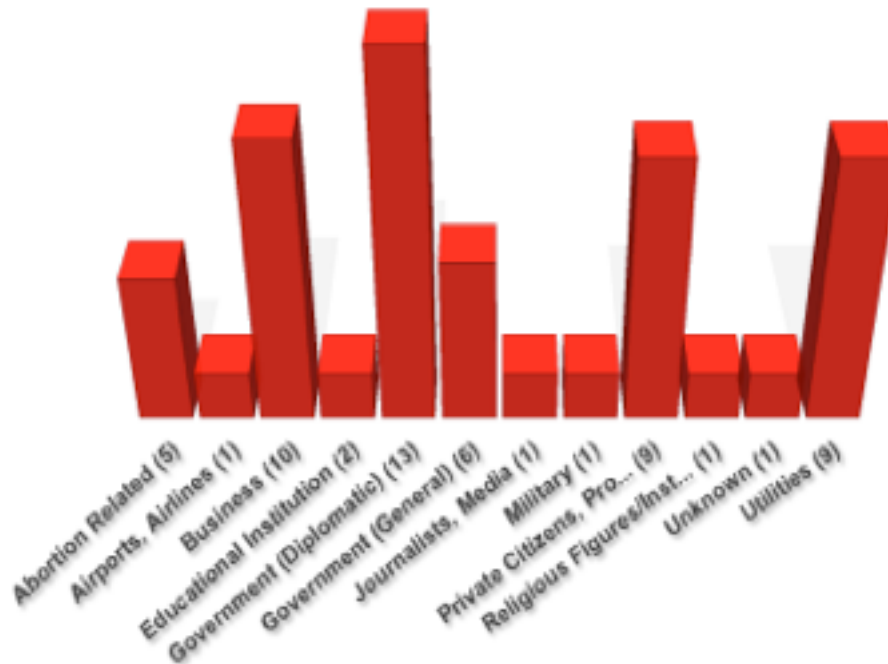
“GTD Search Results” – “Attack Type” “Line Chart” “Country: (Canada)”

In the case of “Attack Type,” data from the “the Global Terrorism Database” inform us that for the forty year period under consideration, “bombing/explosion” (32 events) were the most predominant technique used to conduct terrorist assaults. While the GTD attack type “facility/infrastructure” is a peculiar misnomer (because “facility/infrastructure” is a target-type, rather than a technique, that “attack-type”), it ranked second with 9 events. “Assassination,” which itself is a rather soft designation for “attack type” as it is not mutually exclusive with regards to other “attack type” categories offered, ranks third with 8 events. At the other end of the spectrum, two (2) “hostage taking kidnappings” are reported, while one (1) “hostage taking barricade” incident and one (1) “unarmed assault” are chronicled.



“GTD Search Results” - “Attack Type” “Bar Chart” “Country: (Canada)”

In the case of a breakdown of target-type for the Canadian terrorism experience, data from the GTD illustrate that terrorist assaults against “government (diplomatic)” targets (13 acts) were the single most predominant choice of target over the past forty years. Assaults against “business” targets ranked second with 10 incidents, while what GTD calls “private citizens,” and attacks against “utilities,” both ranked third with 9 attacks each. Conversely, terrorist assaults against “religious figures/institutions,” (1 act) “journalists, media,” (1 act) and “airports, airlines” ranked lowest in terms of relative frequency of events. [11]The lack of distinction between quintessential terrorist attacks targeting explicitly civilians on the one hand and other forms of political violence (e.g. assassinations where the victims is also the intended target – contrary to terrorism where the de-individuated murder of the victim serves to generate a message for the ultimate target) is one of the weaknesses of this type of data gathering. Nevertheless, it offers us a first take on violent politics in any given country.

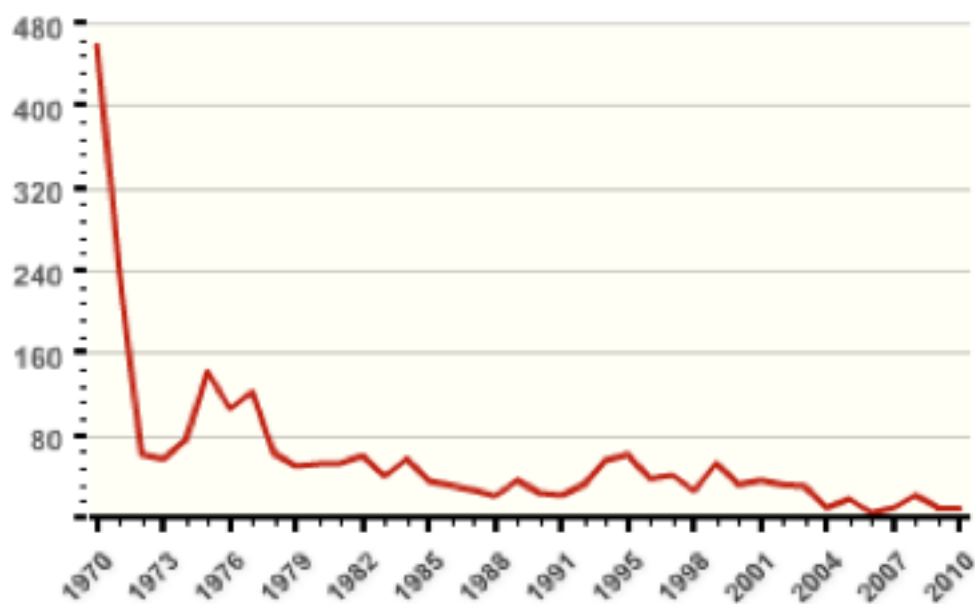


“GTD Search Results” – “Target Type” “Bar Chart” Country: (Canada)”

United States of America

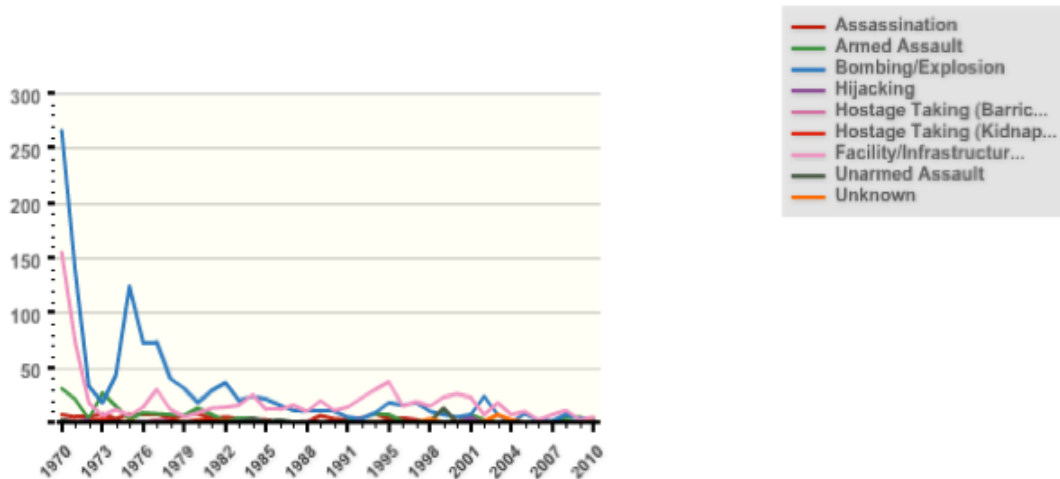
In the case of the United States, the terrorist assault patterns found for that “long-haul” forty year interval are different in several ways from those illuminated by the START data analysis for Canada. First, the range of terrorist events is substantial and appears to span from nine events (2009) to nearly 480 events (1970). Even though patterns are noticeably different in many respects, such as much larger relative frequency rates by year for example, the patterns established for that forty year “time line” *after 1975 and through 2010* appear to have a similar “cyclical” shape of “peaks” and “troughs” that is also the hallmark of the Canadian case and what Im, Cauley, and Sandler describe. [12]From the start, what is noticeable is a perceptible drop in the rate of terrorist assaults from 1970 through 1973. It would be useful to have data before 1970 to determine the overall structural shape of trends for what appears to be a previous cycle. While an authoritative interpretation of those empirical results is not available, it is probably no exaggeration to say the structural shift away from the political instability and social unrest that marked the late 1960’s are reflected in those results. Terrorist groups that were active in the political fray in that early period chronicled by START include, but are not limited to, the “Weather Underground,/Weathermen,” “Armed Revolutionary Independence Movement (MIRA),” Jewish Defense League (JDL), “Students for a Democratic Society (SDS),” “the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Movement,” the “Black Panthers,” and the “Black Liberation Army.”

The peak year for terrorist assaults carried out in the United States for this forty year time interval is 1970, followed by much smaller “peaks” in 1975, and 1977. Corresponding “trough” years include 1972 and 1973 for that early period, while after 1975 “trough” years include 2006, 2004, 2010, 1998, and 1991.



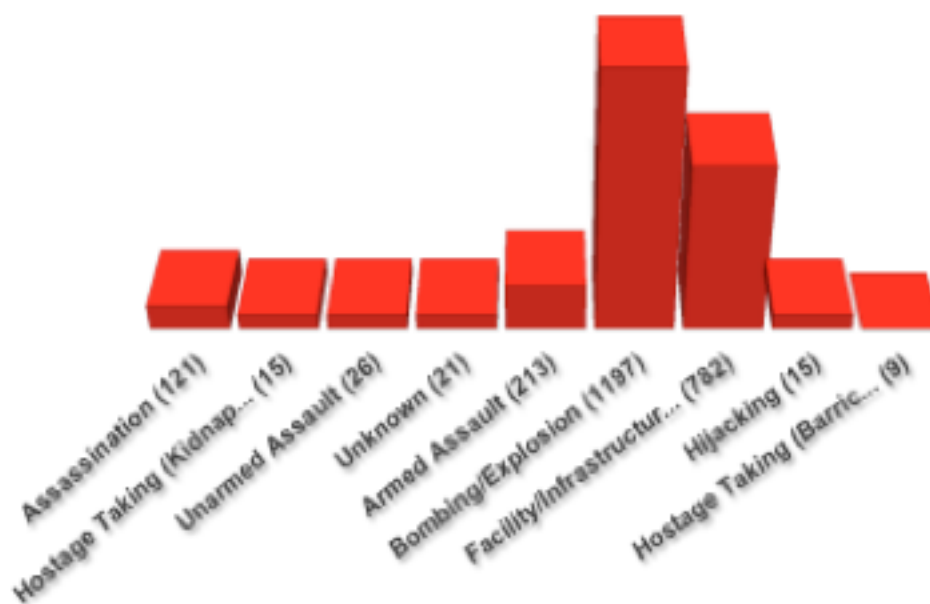
“GTD Search Results” -“Incidents Over Time” “Country: (United States)”

In the case of terrorist assault “attack type,” the START data inform us that as in the case of Canada, acts with “bombing /explosion” methods were the most common type of U.S. attack chronicled for much of the 1970’s. One underlying research issue is whether or not this might be an example of Benjamin Starr and Harvey Most’s “contagion effect” across borders.[13] It would be useful to have or code disaggregated data for event by distance to the border in an ordinal level scale to delve into that question. What seems significant is that from 1970 through about 1972, terrorist assaults that revolved around detonations were predominant and again between 1974 through 1983, when that trend seems to pass into eclipse in favor of “facility/infrastructure” assaults by around 1989. Nonetheless, in 2002, detonation attacks in the U.S. slightly outpaced “facility/infrastructure” terrorist assaults.



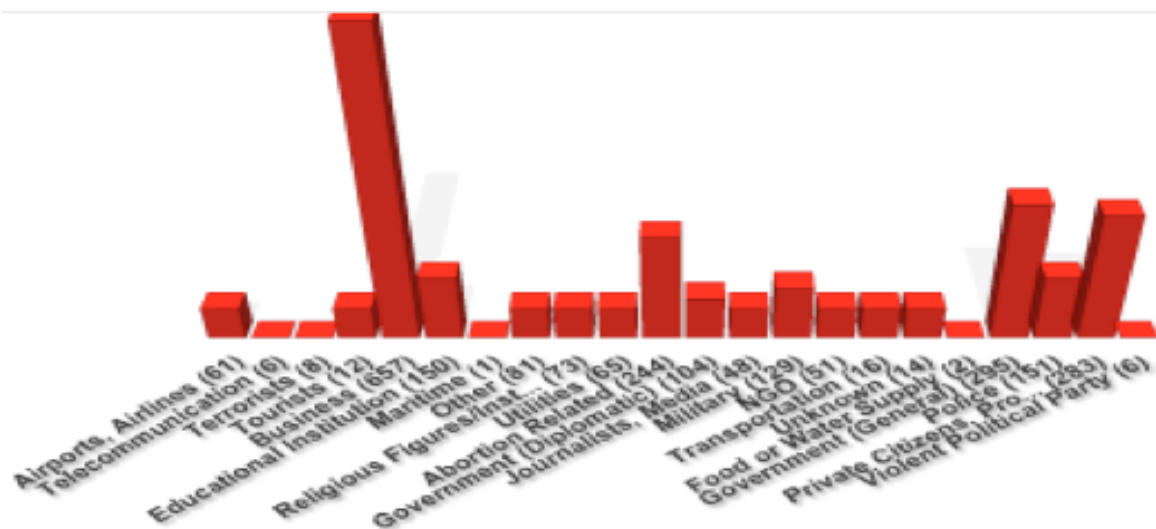
“GTD Search Results” - “Attack Type” “Line Chart” “Country: (United States)”

In turn, when U.S. terrorist assault data for the 1970-2010 time period are broken down based on relative frequency of “attack type,” the START data results reveal that the overwhelming number of terrorist attacks during this time revolved around “bombing/explosions” with 1,197 acts. In comparison, “facility/infrastructure” assaults comprised 782 acts or 65% of the total number of “bombing explosions” incidents recorded. Conversely, those data results reveal that the least frequent terrorist “attack type” employed during that period was “hostage taking-barricade” with only 9 events, followed by “hostage taking-kidnappings” with 15 chronicled acts.



“GTD Search Results” – “Attack Type” “Bar Chart” “Country: (United States)”

When a relative frequency of “target-type” is produced using the START data for the United States, it is clear that an overwhelming number of terrorist assaults carried out in the U.S. were directed against “business”, with 657 acts. By contrast, the 295 chronicled incidents carried out against “government (general)” targets placed a distant second, while attacks against “private citizens, property” ranked third with 283 events. At the other extreme, there was one “maritime” terrorist assault chronicled in the START data followed by only 2 attacks against “food or water supply.” What START calls “abortion related” assaults accounted for a full 244 assaults, while 104 terrorist incidents involved “government/diplomatic” targets.[14] Given the fact that the START database is US-based (expanding on the original private detective firm Pinkerton’s database, except for 1993, the year for which Pinkerton data went missing), recording for the United States is more dense than for its northern and southern neighbour which makes comparisons problematic.

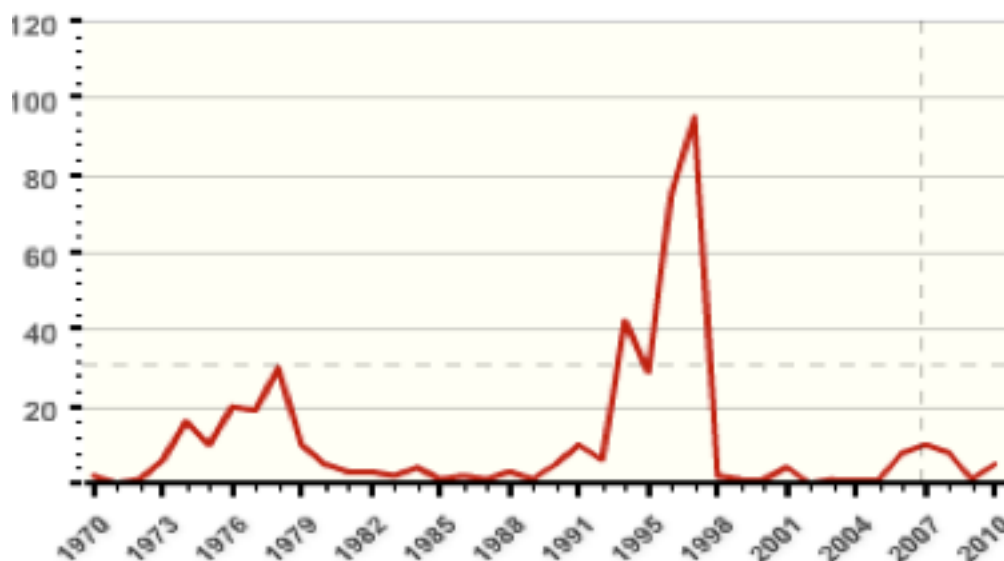


“GTD Search Results” – “Target Type” “Bar Chart” “Country: (United States)”

Mexico

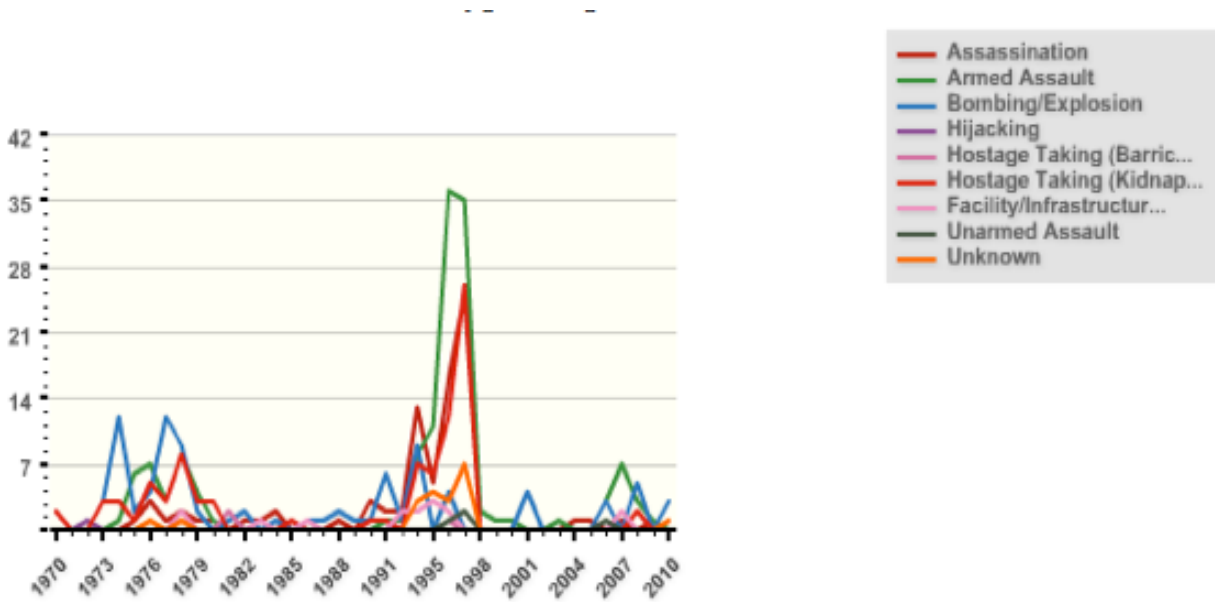
In the case of terrorist assaults carried out in Mexico for the forty year period between 1970-2010, the START data results illuminate patterns that showcase “peaks” and “troughs” and most notably, a significant spike in terrorist events starting around 1992, a trend that culminates with 95 incidents five years later. The range of terrorist assault incidents by year spans from 1 terrorist event in 1972 to 95 terrorist incidents. In 1997, terrorist assaults were conducted by groups that include, but are not limited to, “the Zapatista National Army,” “the Popular Revolutionary Party,” “Institutional Revolutionary Party,” “Popular Revolutionary Party,” and the “Justice Army for the Defenseless Peoples.”[15] Other “peak” years include 1994 with 42 events, and 1978 with 38 events. By contrast, “trough years” include, but are not limited to, 1972 (1 act), 1970 (2 acts), and 1973 (6 acts). In 2012, the U.S. Department of State was unequivocal in its assertion that, “no known international terrorist organization had an operational presence in

Mexico and no terrorist group targeted U.S. citizens in or from Mexican territory.”[16] The terror inflicted by Mexican drug cartels on the public, the government and each other’s members, did not count in the calculation of the State Department that still makes an increasingly unrealistic distinction between criminal and political violence directed against civilians.



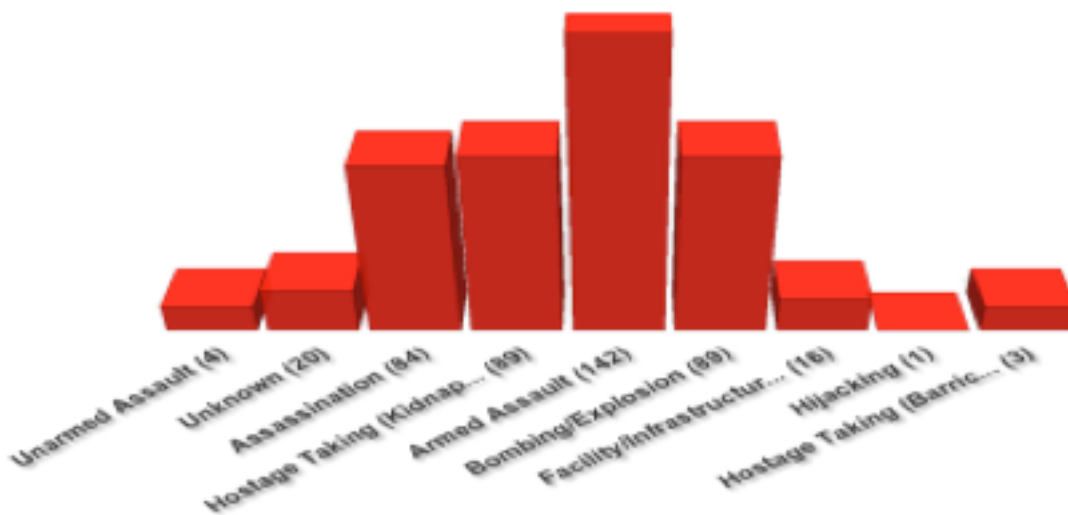
“GTD Search Results” - “Incidents Over Time” “Country: (Mexico)”

When the data for Mexico are broken down in the START analysis to reflect “attack type” over time passage, it appears that “bombing/explosions” incidents were predominant in parts of the 1970’s, 1991, 2001, 2008, and 2010, in contrast to “armed assaults” that seem predominant for certain years in the 1990’s, and 2007. At the same time, “hostage taking-kidnapping” was commonplace to note for certain years in the 1990’s. It also appears that “assassination” was also used frequently to carry out terrorist assaults and patterns for “assassination” in Mexico closely parallel the pattern for “hostage taking-kidnapping” in Mexico. By contrast, as with the cases of the United States (5) and Canada (0), “hijackings” were extremely infrequent events. [17] In Monterey, Mexico, one “hijacking” in 1972 was chronicled in the START data.[18] What seems significant here is a lack of experience with hijackings for all three countries under consideration in ways that resonate with terrorism and counter-terrorist “substitution” dynamics that Im, Cauley, and Sandler isolate and identify, and those are at least consistent with the 9/11 “attack-type” experience.



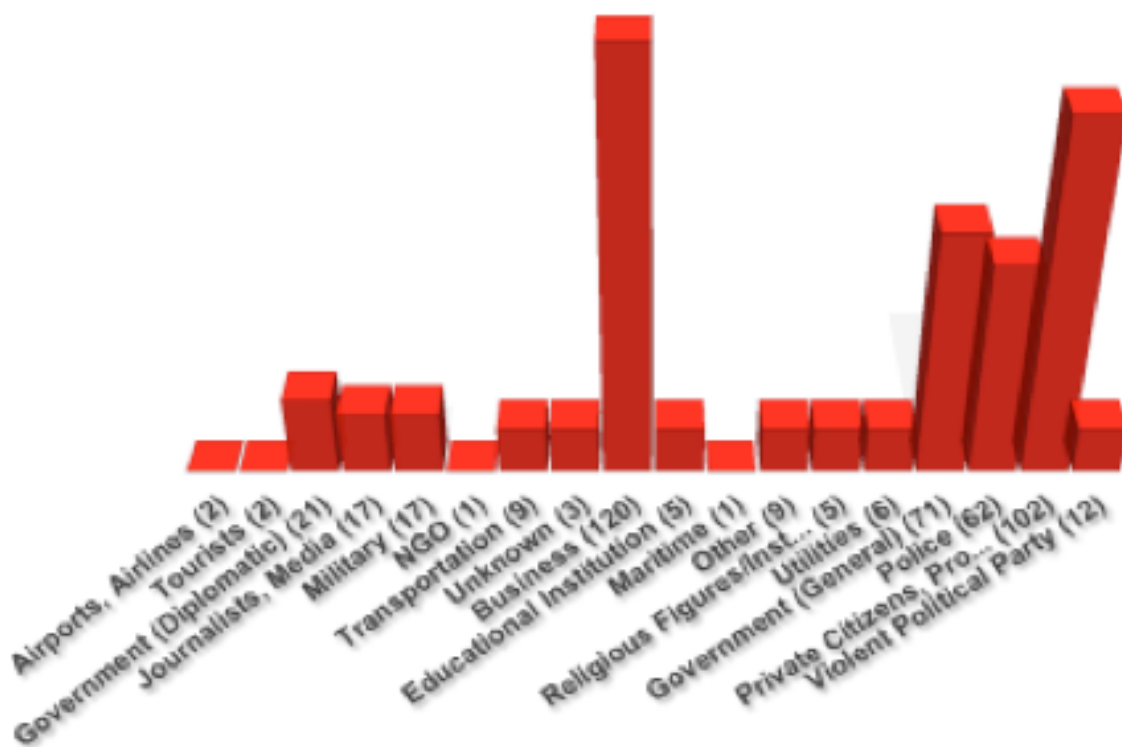
“GTD Search Results” – “Attack Type” “Line Chart” “Country: (Mexico)”

When the relative frequencies of “attack type” are analyzed and presented by START, it is found that “armed assaults” were the most common place to note in the Mexican terrorism experience with 142 acts, followed by “bombing/explosion” incidents with 89 acts and “hostage taking-kidnapping” acts with 89 acts. Terrorist incidents that involved “assassination” ranked closely behind with 84 acts over that forty year period. In contrast, there was one (1) hijacking event and three (3) “hostage taking-barricade” situations chronicled.



“GTD Search Results” – “Attack Type” “Bar Chart” “Country: (Mexico)”

In the case of a breakdown of target-type for terrorism in Mexico, the START data reveal that the highest number of Mexican terrorist assaults were directed against “business”, with 120 acts, followed closely behind by terrorist assaults against “ private citizens/property” with 102 acts. Terrorist assaults conducted against “police” ranked third with 62 incidents. At the other extreme, as in the case of the the United States, there was only one (1) “maritime” incident chronicled, and only two terrorist assaults against “tourists” recorded in the START database.[19] To continue, there were only five (5) Mexican terrorist assaults undertaken against “religious figures/institutions” and nine (9) attacks aimed at “transportation” chronicled for the forty year interval covered.



“GTD Search Results”- “Target Type” “Bar Chart” “Country: (Mexico)”

Conclusion

Nowadays, it seems prudent to develop a framework of analysis of the similarities and differences in terrorism trends across the three nation-states that comprise North America. This rather impressionistic, first pass at a review of terrorist assault trends provides a tantalizing glimmer what more full blown empirical studies might reveal. Terrorism trends may be influenced by certain exogenous variables that are “systemic” or “structural” in nature such as the “global war on terrorism” and country specific endogenous factors that all work with interactive effects across levels. Having said that, the GTD analysis essentially relies on the use of aggregated data and that severely limits the utility of the analysis as presented. Aside of

improvement in certain coding procedures that all too frequently miss the mark in terms of mutually exclusive categories imperative for meaningful analysis, what is needed is disaggregated data that measures changes in frequency rates and terrorist assault “attributes” by region of the country, proximity to borders, and “urban/rural distinctions.” That is important as authorities such as Siri Aas Rustad and Helga Malmin Binningsbo essentially describe the link between political instability and social unrest and geographic conditions such as heavily forested locales as well as urban areas that drive “sanctuary effects” and help illuminate more effective counterterror measures.[20]

At a theoretical level, analysis based on disaggregated data can illuminate whether or not what Starr and Most call “cross border” and “contagion” effect exist through analysis of terrorist group comparison and terrorist act similarities near borders. In addition, such empirical work could provide insight into whether or not empirical evidence supports or refutes Im, Cauley, and Sandler’s “substitution” thesis that account for underlying change in terrorism-counter-terrorist action-reaction dynamics. In essence, disaggregation of data compels us “to think smaller” in one sense, but a comparison across three countries, that views North America as an integrated operational environmental, compels us “to think larger” about the sources and origins of terrorist assaults and campaigns.[21] After all, 9/11 did not emanate from Canada or Mexico, but that is not to say that new operations might not make use of the set of political, social, and economic interconnections between these three countries. As such, the finding that all three countries have little experience with “maritime” incidents (other than those linked to drug trafficking) might be important. Eleven years after 9/11, a more reasoned “multifaceted approach” to data on acts of violence is called for. The case for a more holistic monitoring effort is getting stronger but bureaucratic compartmentalisation is often standing in the way. To cross such boundaries, academia should integrate databases combining political and criminal violent actor data as well as those based on monitoring official and unofficial government uses of force and some of the more muscular activities of private security firms.

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Notes:

[1] Ian Austen. 2012. “2 Shot at Election Party in Quebec: Assassination Try Suspected.” *New York Times*, 6 September, A-11.

[2] Harvey Starr and Benjamin Most. 1976. “The Substance and Study of Borders in International Relations Research.” *International Studies Quarterly* 20 (4): 581-620; Harvey Starr and Benjamin Most. 1983. “Contagion and Border Effects on Contemporary African Conflict.” *Comparative Political Studies* 16(1): 92-117. This conceptualization presupposes and derives from a grant proposal for a comparative study of the U.S. and Canada submitted to the Canadian Studies Grant Programs written by Dr. Frederic S. Pearson and Dr. Richard J. Chasdi in 1996 entitled, “Terrorism in North America: An Empirical Cross Country Comparison of Canadian and American Terrorist Group-Type and Group Behavior.”

[3] Cf. the work of Louise I. Shelley.

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- [4] Richard J. Chasdi. 2010. *Counterterror Offensives for the Ghost War World: The Rudiments of Counterterrorism Policy*, Lanham, MD; Lexington Books,
- [5] Thomas E. Patterson. 2000. *We the People: A Concise Introduction to American Politics*. Boston: McGraw Hill, 57-85, A-65.
- [6] Those “Global Terrorism Database (GTD)” reports produced by START were sorted out by searches for “country” and subsequently by “attack-type” and “target-type,” for those specific countries. National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism START. 2011. Global Terrorism Database (<http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd>); United States Department of State 2012 “Country Reports on Terrorism 2011” (<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/195768.pdf>).
- [7] Eric Iksoon Im, Jon Cauley, and Todd Sandler. 1987. “Cycles and Substitutions in Terrorist Activities: A Spectral Approach.” *Kyklos* 40: 238-255; Walter Enders, Gerald Parise, and Todd Sandler. 1992. “A Time Series Analysis of Transnational Terrorism: Trends and Cycles.” *Defense Economics* 3: 305-320; Richard J. Chasdi. 2002. *Tapestry of Terror: A Portrait of Middle East Terrorism, 1994-1999*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 53-54.
- [8] U.S. Department of State. 2012. “Country Reports on Terrorism 2011” – Canada, 153-156; Cf. the work of Jeffrey Ian Ross.
- [9] START’s database for Canada is N= 58. “Dawson Creek Tourism BC- Official Site” (www.hellobc.com/dawson-creek.aspx); “Dawson Creek, British Columbia” (www.city-data.com/canada/Dawson-Creek.html); *GTD Global Terrorism Database* “Search Results”- Canada. Indeed, two out of three terrorist assaults chronicled for 2009 happened in Dawson Creek and in nearby Pouce Coupe.
- [10] GTD Global Terrorism Database “Search Results” - Canada
- [11] Plainly, both of those categories, “private citizens” and “utilities” are subsets of broader “civilian” targets as are other GTD target categories such as “journalists, media,” “educational institution,” and “business.”
- [12] Im, Cauley, and Sandler 1987, 238-255; Enders, Parise, and Sandler 1992, 305-320; GTD Database “Search Results” – United States. In the case of START’s United States database, N= 2347.
- [13] Starr and Most 1976, 581-620; Starr and Most 1983, 92-117. – For a documentation of contagion effects from Canada to the United States and beyond in the case of so-called parachute hijackings, following the 12 November 1971 hijacking of an Air Canada DC-9 en route from Calgary to Toronto, see Alex P. Schmid and Janny de Graaf. *Violence as Communication. Insurgent Terrorism and the Western News Media*. London: Sage, 1982, pp.133-136. Schmid & De Graaf documented 26 copycat parachute hijackings in a six year period - 21 of them in the first year after this new technique of extortion was invented. In each case the hijacker(s), after collecting ransom money, tried or intended to escape by parachuting in mid-flight from the hijacked plane.
- [14] *Ibid.*
- [15] GTD Database “Search Results” – Mexico. In the case of START’s Mexico database, N=444.
- [16] U.S. Department of State 2012. “Country Reports on Terrorism 2011” – Mexico, 162-163.
- [17] Indeed, “hijackings” were extremely rare terrorist assault occurrences– a hand count of GTD Database “Search Results” - United States included: – (1) a “left-wing militant” event# 19700314004 “Date: 1970-03-14”; (2) a “JDL” event# 197009270001 “Date: 1970-09-27”; (3) a “Black Panthers” event# 19720602002 “Date: 1972-06-02”; (4) a “Blank Panthers” event# 197207310001 “Date: 1972-07-31”; (5) a Croatian Freedom Fighters event# 1976091100005 “Date: 1976-09-10.”
- [18] GTD Database “Search Results – Mexico - “Unknown” event# 197211080002 “Date: 1972-11-08.”
- [19] In the START data, there are no “maritime” terrorist assaults chronicled for Canada.
- [20] Siri Aas Rustad and Helga Malmin Binningsbo. 2012. “A price worth fighting for? Natural resources and conflict recurrence.” *Journal of Peace Research*, 49 531-546 (<http://jpr.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/49/4/531>).
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[21] Etzioni, Amitai. 2004. *From Empire to Community: A New Approach to International Relations*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd; Follett, Mary Parker 1918. *The New State Group Organization the Solution of Popular Governance*. New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 250.

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III. Book Reviews

Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn (Eds.). *Poetry of the Taliban*.

London: Hurst, 2012. ISBN 1849041113. £14.99

Reviewed by Richard Phelps

For all the attention that the Taliban and other Islamist movements have attracted, a core element of their output has been repeatedly overlooked: poetry. Islamist websites across the spectrum are replete with poetry and the reasons for its neglect are obvious: poetry does not enjoy a status in European or North American culture comparable with its role in Asian societies and poetry in Arabic, Persian, Pashtu and Dari is significantly more challenging than prose writing for non-natives to understand. Into this vacuum comes the third work to be published by Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn, which offers an illuminating insight into priorities and concerns of the Afghan Taliban movement through a review of its published poetry. Sampled from the Taliban's own website, the book will be of interest to scholars of the Taliban and comparative literature, and it is hoped that it will open the door for further studies of Islamist poetry.

The publication of this collection generated significant media attention, particularly since it coincided with the publication of *Heroes*, a collection of poems composed by serving members of the British armed forces. However such 'controversy' appears populist and contrived. The poetry in this collection had already been published online; this volume simply makes it accessible to a Western readership through translation. Furthermore, although the book 'gives a voice' to the Taliban, concerns that it may depict a sympathetic or skewed picture of the movement are unfounded. On the contrary, many of the poems reflect a side to the Taliban that few will find attractive, as one poet writes "*We will eradicate all the Christians, this is our undertaking;/ We depend on God, not on tools and equipment*" (p.140).

In this way, much of the picture of the Afghan Taliban that emerges from its poetry is unsurprising. The poets see themselves foremost as Afghan patriots, seek to free their country from foreign occupation and are deeply rooted in the simple piety of Afghan rural life. They also project a romanticised image of Afghanistan's countryside and of Afghan life. When one Taliban poet writes "*I don't know who has plotted against our freedom*" (p.178) readers may wonder which freedom he is referring to. The frequency of references to villages being burned and women being seized from their families arguably reflect the poets' anxieties and sense of humiliation more than the prevalence of such practices.

The self-awareness displayed by the Taliban poets is remarkable. One writes "*we love these dusty and muddy houses;/ We love the dusty deserts of this country*" (p. 182), and this self-awareness is particularly manifested in the poets' fondness for the Taliban's austere rural lifestyle. Another poet writes "*People say that Afghans have an uncouth appearance;/ Don't strike us down for this fault, for our characters./ We are simple*", whilst another writes "*I acknowledge we may not be gentlemen,/ But, we didn't run away from the foreigners*". Such

hostility towards foreigners is also recurrent theme, as another poet writes “*I am an Afghan living in the valleys./ I don’t like anybody else’s places*” (p. 178).

Elsewhere, the poets’ self-awareness takes a political angle, as one Talib regrets the American destruction of the Taliban’s Islamic Emirate following the 9/11 attacks as follows: “*They turned my wishes to dust. It’s a pity that we are wandering as vagrants,/ We did this all to ourselves*” (p. 185). Nowhere is the contrast between the Taliban’s rural simplicity and NATO’s technological superiority seen more than in the description of NATO jets by one poet as “*steel birds*” (p. 205).

Afghanistan’s history of resistance to foreign intervention is legendary. Still, the poets’ frequent recall of the British campaigns of the nineteenth century will surprise many readers. One poet writes of NATO today “*They’ve come to take revenge of the murders of Macnaghten and Brydon*” (p.204) – invoking names that will not be familiar even to most British readers, but whose legacies are clearly well-remembered in Afghanistan.

For literary critics, the book offers an intriguing insight into the poetic conventions of the Afghan Taliban. Certain conventions may surprise, for example references to being drunk or smoking hashish. On the other hand, the poets’ recurrent romantic sensibility (“*Every flower is smiling/ Every blossom laughs*” (p.61)) will likely strike as unsophisticated. For readers interested in the Afghan Taliban, repetition of the poems’ motifs emphasises the movement’s concerns and self-perception. Though the poems do not fundamentally change how the Taliban is understood, the paucity of references to Mullah Omar, Americans, or even “the Taliban” is still noteworthy. Likewise, for all that many perceive the Afghan Taliban to be a reactionary movement (“*O time! Don’t eliminate our culture/ Don’t destroy our traditions*” (p. 123)), the poets’ repeated description of their agenda as being “revolutionary” is particularly striking: “*Cruel man! Don’t spread your dollars around,/ I have a revolutionary religion*” (p. 141).

About the Reviewer: Richard Phelps is an Adjunct Fellow at the Quilliam Foundation (London). He focuses on the history and development of Islamist dissent in the Arabic world.

Richard Jackson, Eamon Murphy & Scott Poynting (Eds.) *Contemporary State Terrorism: Theory and Practice*.

New York: Routledge, 2010.. 242 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-49801-2. US \$ 138,00 (hardcover); US \$ 43,77 (paperback)

Reviewed by Oluwaseun Bamidele

Contemporary State Terrorism: Theory and Practice, sheds, in a dozen chapters, light on the debates surrounding how terrorism generally, and state terrorism specifically, ought to be defined (pp. 12-15). It argues that while both non-state and state terrorism are highly contested terms, there is now sufficient agreement among scholars on key constitutive elements. What distinguishes state terrorism from other forms of state repression is its instrumentality; it involves the illegal targeting of individuals that the state has normally an obligation to protect in order to instill fear in a target audience beyond the direct victims. The editors also discuss in their introduction, the difficulties associated with identifying when state representatives are acting or not acting on behalf of the state (p. 20).

A chapter by David Mickler argues that the Sudanese state has been guilty of committing terrorism against its own citizens in Dafur since 2003. Mickler finds that the Sudanese state is clearly guilty of acts of state terrorism by deliberately targeting and killing, raping and maiming innocent civilians and destroying their crops, livestock, homes, villages, and wells as part of its strategy both to dissuade support or potential recruitment for the rebels and to effect 'ethnic cleansing'. He further argues that a strong Chinese interest in preserving its key economic relationship with the state, in conjunction with Sudan's valuable cooperation in US-led counter-terrorism operations, has hampered international intervention to protect vulnerable civilians against the oppression undertaken by their own state (pp. 28 - 44). Military-led state terrorism in Pakistan is the subject of a chapter by Eamon Murphy and Aazar Tamana. They refer to acts ranging from widespread mass murder to the use of sexual assaults as a weapons of terror. Their chapter also discusses how state terrorism has been used against many groups and individuals within Pakistani society: regional separatist groups, political rivals of the military and its political allies, human rights activists and lawyers, minority religions and religious sects, and women of Pakistan. The role of the Pakistani military in sponsoring terrorism in the disputed Indian state of Kashmir is also discussed.

Sandra Nasr, in a chapter titled 'Israel's *other* terrorism challenge', claims that Israel has resorted to the use of state terrorism by deliberately targeting innocent civilians in response to suicide attacks and other forms of terrorism by Palestinians against Israeli civilian and military targets. She holds that physical and psychological intimidation at checkpoints, arbitrary closures and curfews, harsh mobility restrictions, home demolitions, random detentions and the denial of a whole range of basic human rights contrive to keep Palestinians in a constant state of anxiety and trepidation – in her view, amounting to state terrorism. Eamon Murphy discusses the role of terrorism in the violent communal riots between Hindus and Muslims that rocked the Western Indian state of Gujarat during 2002. Hindu mobs, ostensibly encouraged by the state's ruling Hindu nationalist party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its chief minister, brutally

assaulted, raped, and killed defenseless Muslim men, women, and children. The Gujarat riots are portrayed as a classic example of politically motivated terrorism, in that the primary motivation of the BJP's leaders in encouraging the riots was to send a clear, political message to the Hindu voters of Gujarat that the BJP was the only political party that would protect Hindus from the perceived threat posed by the state's Muslims.

Another author, Joan Wardrop, looking at southern Africa, submits that postcolonial Zimbabwe is frozen in a condition of continuous state terror, nourished by a postcolonial elite determined to maintain its position and power. Wardrop shows that the present difficulties in Zimbabwe do not stand isolated from the past; rather, they can only be understood in the context of Rhodesia's violent history in which terror from above has been naturalized as political technique and cultural practice. The author also discusses examples of memories recuperated and reshaped into public narratives through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in post-Apartheid South Africa. It demonstrates the power of memory and narrative when exercised in public spaces for healing the terrorized - a power which has not yet been felt but is sorely needed in Zimbabwe.

Victoria Mason examines the Kuwaiti campaign of terror against its Palestinian community following the 1991 liberation of Kuwait from Iraqi occupation. Although many Palestinians in Kuwait opposed the Iraqi occupation, Kuwait argued that its Palestinian community had collaborated with the Iraqis. As a result, brutal attacks against Palestinians were undertaken by Kuwaiti vigilantes. To make matters worse, once sovereign rule returned to Kuwait, a systematic campaign of state terror was instituted. While this campaign was driven to a certain extent by revenge, Mason's chapter demonstrates that it was also driven by more sinister motives. Due to the size and influence of the Palestinian community in Kuwait by the 1980s, they were increasingly seen as a potential demographic threat. The chapter explores how the actions taken against Palestinians following liberation were part of a more systematic process aimed at terrorizing the entire Palestinian civilian population in order to force them to leave Kuwait.

Kristian Lasslett discusses how from 1988 to 1990, the Papua New Guinea security apparatus and Bougainville Copper Limited, propped up by the Australian state, undertook a campaign of terror against local communities in the North Solomons province of Papua New Guinea. The campaign was directed against militant landowners of the New Panguna Landowners Association, who, frustrated by the socio-economic consequences of mining in their region, engaged in a campaign of industrial sabotage against the lucrative Panguna copper and gold mines. The goal of terrorism was to coerce civilian communities to support landowner factions loyal to the government and the mining company.

A chapter by Sam Raphael examines the systematic use of terrorism by elements of the Colombian establishment and, indirectly, the US government during the civil war in Colombia

He argues that the vast majority of terrorist acts were conducted by right-wing paramilitary groups closely linked to the state. The author examines the nature and extent of collusion between state security forces and paramilitary groups, particularly in the post-9/11 era. Overall, the chapter charts the extensive use of terrorism by the state in Colombia, and the support the government received from the United States.

Karine Hamilton examines the response of the Israeli government after the Lebanese group Hezbollah launched a series of rockets against northern Israeli towns and simultaneously

attacked two Israeli army vehicles patrolling the Lebanese border. The Israeli government policy of deterrence involved the use of massive military retaliation in order to prevent future attacks from enemy forces and included, according to the author, the deliberate bombing of civilian targets in order to dissuade Lebanese civilians, especially the Shia population, from supporting Hezbollah.

In a concluding chapter by Richard Jackson, key findings are summarized. Jackson, a leading representative of the Critical Terrorism Studies school, reflects upon how the case studies contribute theoretically to our understanding of the aims, nature, causes, modalities, and consequences of state terrorism under different conditions. He also explores some of the salient questions raised by the case studies which require further research, thereby sketching out a future research agenda. The volume ends with a brief reflection on some dangers and challenges for the ongoing study of state terrorism. Jackson warns that one should "...avoid the temptation to engage in polemics and politically biased analyses, especially the kind which view all state violence as inherently terroristic or which single out particular cases for unrelenting condemnation" (p.238).

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John Updike. Terrorist.

New York: Knopf, 2006. 320 pp. ISBN: 0307264653; US \$ 24.95

Reviewed by Amien Kacou.

Note: This book review takes a research article format, which is a nontraditional approach; it offers a thesis, based on an extended, footnoted philosophical study.

Introduction

John Updike's 2006 novel *Terrorist* depicts the emergence of an elusive "homegrown" terrorist plot brewing in an imaginary, decaying post-industrial city, ironically named New Prospect, somewhere in New Jersey[1]—thus almost literally in the shadow of 9/11 in both time and place (except this time targeting the Lincoln Tunnel during rush hour),[2] as if some key facet of that event had been somehow overlooked.

The elliptical plot focuses primarily on the experience of a very lonely but extremely devout eighteen-year old Muslim-American named Ahmad; but it also orbits around the relationships between other characters, all of whom are related to Ahmad within a few degrees of separation—from his immediate social environment all the way to the Secretary of Homeland Security (who seems extremely bewildered by the motives of Islamist terrorists and feels tragically-impotent in the thankless job of facing the shadowy nuisance they present).

While some reviewers have criticized the plot and character structure of this novel for being too reliant on "unbelievable coincidence"[3] (an opinion I share to some extent—especially when it comes to Updike's execution of the denouement), I think the narrative loop which binds all the characters together could be interpreted usefully (irrespective of the author's specific intent) as a reflection of how the experience of (and the responsibility for) terrorism cannot be captured by the perspective of either perpetrators or victims alone (exclusively), but instead distributes itself, like a spectrum of different wavelengths, across both groups, as well as bystanders.

My related thesis is that Updike suggests, first of all (intentionally or not), that what we overlooked about 9/11 is that there may be an intimate bond of meaning (or meaninglessness), perhaps even an uncomfortable empathy, between Islamist terrorists and their American victims or enemies: and the feeling they share is a feeling of dissatisfaction with the meaningless promises of secular modernity and materialism (symbolized quite notably by the setting itself—the decaying post-industrial city of New Prospect).

What is even more important: I think Updike also suggests, second of all, that a key, universal philosophical lesson emerges from the difference in how this novel's main characters cope with their feelings of modern meaninglessness.

That lesson is a lesson about "evil" (especially this "new kind of evil," as President Bush described the Jihadi terrorist threat a few days after 9/11);[4] it is that we should resist the essentialist illusion (or the temptation to think) that we can ever pin down (or control or prevent)

all evil “once and for all”—and that we should gracefully or at least ironically accept the anxiety of having to engage with it in what I would describe as a Sisyphean *Jihad*.

In fact, resisting the temptation to deny the tragically elusive nature of terrorism might be a necessary step in coping with it intelligently—as opposed to allowing ourselves to remain, like the Secretary of Homeland Security in this story, impotently bewildered by it, thereby running the risk of either overreacting or becoming blind to our (past, present or future) share of responsibility in (facing) it.

In order to show how that lesson emerges from the text, I divide my analysis in two steps (a long one and a short one). First, I present Ahmad, whose mission it is to bring the plot to completion with his ultimate act of self-sacrifice, as a product of his psychological predispositions, family background and larger social environment—without denying his crucial part of responsibility, especially when he decides (a little bit unbelievably) not to go forward with his plan for “martyrdom.” Second, I present Jack Levy, his school guidance counselor, who helps disrupt the plot, as Ahmad’s Sisyphean alter ego.

Completing the Plot: Ahmad as Ultimate Actor

Ahmad’s experience is shaped first and foremost by the longing and somewhat shameful shadow of his unknown Egyptian father, Omar, whose absence Ahmad compensates for by imagining him at length, and by protecting that imagination from the recurring theme of his cowardice—he who supposedly “fled” the challenge of life in the United States and abandoned his family when Ahmad was still an infant. (In reality—perhaps not so coincidentally—many scholars have identified an abstract form of humiliation at the ideological core of Jihadi suicide terrorism.)[5] In any case, Ahmad acts upon those dreams of his father by strengthening his hopelessly-tenuous link to Omar’s supposed identity. First, he commits very intensely to Islam—which, considering that there is no evidence that Omar was ever an observant Muslim, perhaps hints at Ahmad’s predisposition toward stereotypes (that is: his need to reduce not just others but himself to categorical biases). Second, Ahmad also seriously contemplates changing his last name from his mother’s (Mulloy) to his father’s (Ashmawy)—which perhaps further shows his longing, not just for his father but symbolically, for separateness (as if adopting his imagined father’s identity and separating from the larger society could somehow be more authentic).

Ironically, Ahmad may well have inherited or learned this countercultural disposition from his Irish-American mother, Terry, who, besides being a loving and laudably hard-working single mother, really fits a set of stereotypes (even caricatures) of what a modern “liberal” woman is supposed to be. She is a sexually-liberated would-be artist with a self-indulgently countercultural perspective; she has a correspondingly shallow attraction to (or “naïve” tolerance for) other cultures, as in the apparent exoticism that attracted her to Ahmad’s father in the first place[6] (or as in her apparent tolerance for Ahmad’s developing an intolerant worldview); and, most importantly, she subscribes to a philosophy of education according to which her son is better off left alone to realize his own “potential,” without square parental influences (a potential pretext for abdicating the responsibility of guiding her child).

The problem is that, by her own account, her son Ahmad seemed early in life just the kind of child who actually craved a parent's intimate guidance, or a foundation he could trust, instead of some abstractly defined freedom. As she recalls, for example, he was an obedient infant, far too easily led. (Perhaps interestingly, recent but very limited studies of Palestinian would-be "martyrs" have in fact suggested that they tend to display "intermediate" ego strength—meaning that they may have a tendency to lack a certain kind of self-drive.)[7]

No wonder, then, that, once he becomes a teenager, Ahmad is quick to go out into the world in search of what he fantasizes his father's guidance might have been like. And there in the world, at a small local cultural center, he finds Shaikh Rashid, an Islamic religious counselor who, in a sense, had been waiting for him all along.

Ahmad reveres (though—perhaps paradoxically—he also slightly distrusts) the subtly aging, vaguely awkward Yemeni cleric, who, without any paternal affection, closely nurtures his student's ideology for several years (all the while concealing his vague contempt for the boy's Americanness), only ultimately to prepare him for recruitment in a terrorist plot engineered by his associate, Charlie Chehab—a very conversant but sometimes offensively-cynical Lebanese-American big brother figure who sleekly gains Ahmad's trust by "teaching him the ropes" on his new truck-driving job after high school. (We later learn, a bit unbelievably, that Charlie worked for CIA counterintelligence—notwithstanding that the CIA has officially no mandate to operate on U.S. soil).

In any case, Shaikh Rashid's authority seems to emerge directly from the absence and shortcomings of Ahmad's parents: that is, by introducing Ahmad to Islam, he controls the channel through which Ahmad compensates (with pride) for his father's absence (and cowardice)—as well as for his mother's lack of involvement in his life (or lack of focus, discipline and ultimate commitment in her own).

Shaikh Rashid's Islam is not the ordinary, community-centered Islam, which Ahmad derides at one point as a "lazy matter of ethnic identity." It is an intolerant ideology that teaches Ahmad that modernity and secularism are evil; that non-Muslims are devils who must burn in hell and be destroyed without pity; and that good Muslims must reject deep social attachments and prepare instead—*eagerly*—for the ultimate purity of paradise.

To understand the impact of that indoctrination on Ahmad, it is crucial to reflect upon the meaning of that old, recurring concept of "evil," which, remarkably, both President Bush and Shaikh Rashid seemed equally eager to evoke (albeit inversely).

Updike was well-aware of its elusiveness; he knew that evil could be defined in *essentially* different ways—say, as excess (as opposed to moderation), perhaps as expressed in some Freudian destruction instinct (or in a will to nothingness), or as "not to know." [8]

Before him, Lance Morrow had tried similarly to make sense of how evil could be both elusive and brutal, by defining it as "Bad elevated to the status of the inexplicable," and by pointing out its tendency to display a "perverse logic" (that is, a self-fulfilling prophecy) of either demonization or, more basically, dehumanization by abstraction (that is, the tendency to reduce people to abstract categories, hindering empathy to the point of caricature). [9] His point could perhaps be read ironically: evil as excessive categorizing which cannot be sufficiently

categorized in turn. But, more to the point, this account of the perverse logic of evil should perhaps evoke what Arthur Miller—discussing the infamous Salem Witch trials—described as a “breathtaking circularity.”[10]

Also, Irving Howe likened the inadequacy of language in the face of evil to the impossibility of making up for losses that can only be mourned (or, as lawyers might put it, the rationale for injunctive relief); nonetheless, he insisted that such inadequacy should not be cause for stopping to think about evil—and thus leave to complete silence (or worse: indifference) the “holy dread” (another Freudian term) that it triggers.[11]

This notion of dread is also central to Fred Alford’s understanding of “evil acts” as attempts to evacuate dread through (that is, or by inflicting it upon) others. In particular, he theorizes that a basic, inchoate dread of “nothingness” may cause paranoia, which in turn may cause an urge for relief through violence.[12] In the alternative, Alford suggests that the experience can be managed (though not quite eliminated) by rechanneling it into a concrete realm for fantasies (such as a field of art).[13] At the same time, it seems self-destructive evil may quickly follow once the boundary between fantasy and reality collapses.

Roy Baumeister provides an even more comprehensive theory in which he identifies four root causes of evil: material gain (less relevant here); threatened egotism (a short-sighted and excessive need for self-confidence); idealism (a need for utopia), and—more rarely—sadistic pleasure (a combination of empathy with antipathy without guilt—also less relevant here).[14] All these causes may contribute to one another, but the combination of egotism with idealism seems uniquely resilient—as both of these factors are better endowed with what, according to Baumeister, most facilitates evil acts: that is, the kind of categorical biases (or systematic thinking) that enable a “myth of pure evil” to emerge—a myth according to which, for instance, perpetrators do harm for its own sake, and victims are purely innocent.[15]

In sum, this myth of pure evil (which may entail a corresponding myth of pure good), once applied, easily acquires a “breathtaking circularity” as it imposes a “pure,” ultimate order of categories to end the terrifyingly elusive (or paranoid) experience of the dread of nothingness.

Not surprisingly, religion is a fertile ground for that myth. In fact, it is interesting to note that, as Ahmad often repeats, Islam (even in its mainstream) seems to have a particular sensitivity to what Howe (borrowing from T.S. Eliot) called the “natural sin of language”[16] (broadly construed to include words and images)—that is, its representational imperfection, especially in depicting God, or even the prophet Muhammad (as the Danish cartoon controversy may have demonstrated in real life).[17]

This might help explain why, as Baumeister observes, the usual effect of religiosity is to make wars more brutal, not less.[18] However, arguably, the combination of literalized metaphor and breathtaking circularity is more a defining trait of ideologies (and especially of religious ideologies) than it is necessarily of religions—and there is a difference. This is the case not just because, as Ahmad puts it, religions can be experienced lazily as matters of ethnic identity but also, because, as Charles Kimball insists, theology can remain moderate without relinquishing its interest in “ultimate” goals and values.[19]

To highlight the distinction, Kimball identifies five major interrelated “warning signs of human corruption of religion.”[20] These include first and foremost a tendency toward absolute truth claims, which amounts to a lack of interpretational relativism—or to a rigid literalisation of metaphors when speaking of a God who is supposed to be ineffable, or to a confusion of the missionary impulse with a duty to impose a point of view (instead of a duty to bear witness), or to a failure to perceive religious truth as an ongoing process. The warning signs also include blind obedience, the desire to establish an “ideal” time (or utopia), the belief that certain ends can justify any means, and the penchant for declarations of holy war.[21]

The overlaps between Kimball, Baumeister and the other thinkers mentioned above should be clear—especially with respect to the observation that idealism, or ideology, entails absolute truth claims in the service of a utopia which must be defended at all costs.

Now: there is no doubt that Ahmad’s extreme Islamic indoctrination displays most of these warning signs. But I think it is important, not just to identify their manifestations but also, to trace them back (again) to the interplay between the character’s psychology, his background and his environment.

Ahmad’s psychological disposition toward (perhaps his need for) obedience and stereotypes, combined with his mother’s indifference to that need (or her virtual absence from his life), increased his longing for his father (hence his desire to simulate that father’s guidance through Islam). This in turn made him more vulnerable (as a child) to the perverse ideological influence of Shaikh Rashid (as if by a form of “opportunistic infection”).

As the interplay between these factors escalates, Ahmad becomes trapped in a circular mindset forcing him to constantly balance between, on the one hand, deep social paranoia (as he imagines himself surrounded by devils) and, on the other hand, deep loneliness, except for the intimate company of his ineffable God (whose presence is mostly soothing but sometimes exhilarating and potentially annihilating).

“Hell is other people,” said Jean-Paul Sartre. Ahmad’s theologically-framed paranoia is expressed at both the beginning and the end of the novel: he fears or resents the “devils” (that is: the impure unbelievers) who are trying to “take away” his God. These devils include, notably: his school peers (boys, who seek vain material power, and girls—temptresses—who flaunt their carnal assets), the adults at his school (who perform their ambivalent duty with a disgusting inauthenticity), and, above all, the U.S. government (represented here by the not-so-distant character of the Secretary of Homeland Security.)

And yet, while Ahmad fears or resents the “devils,” what he loves in Islam is still not its community (the *Ummah*); it is rather his near intimacy with the purity of God. It is through that unique (perhaps imagined) relationship that he can find pleasure (or relief, rather) in his ideology—like so many would-be “martyrs” who are reported to display “joy and elation” shortly before their act.[22] This is also how he can truly become angry at his own occasional sense of ambivalence.

However, quite beyond other people, it is Ahmad’s fear of—or his disgust with—materialism that animates him. His anti-modern, anti-secular mindset culminates in a metaphysical antipathy:

no longer merely disillusioned with the local promise of urban decay, Ahmad now contemplates the universal promise of cosmic decay—the deterministic corruption of entropic time.

And he interprets these demonic and metaphysical abstractions quite literally (as he does the Qur'an—well beyond even his mentor's own inclinations). Their weight accumulates steadily over time until it reaches a pinnacle, just as he becomes ready to step into adulthood. At that point, he has become what we could describe as a nihilistic idealist. (In fact, the description of suicide terrorists as nihilists has been explored by several authors).[23] He deeply wishes he could reject once and for all the imperfections of the secular world. (Unsurprisingly, this is the mirror image of the nihilistic materialists he thinks he sees all around him.) This acquired disposition means (to *very* roughly synthesize Friedrich Nietzsche's notions of passive and active nihilism)[24] that Ahmad can either or both desire to vanish or affirm his existence (to others) in an ultimate act—to paraphrase Kimball: an absolute or unconditional act of war and justice against the devils, for which he desires the immediate reward of paradise (his utopia). And he decides to make the ultimate statement of ideological devotion by committing to violent *Jihad*—his shortcut to paradise. At this point, Ahmad finally surpasses his mentor Shaikh Rashid, the “mad scientist” who, in the end, stands in awe and terror of his Frankenstein— before abandoning him (although apparently not completely without guilt, surprisingly) to his mission (which, it turns out, has already been compromised).

I assume that Updike himself would not be ambivalent or relativistic when it comes to this level of religious nihilism—if only because, for instance, contrary to the ancestral approach to religion that he seems elsewhere to praise (an approach that accepts only “Fate's blows” as “shortcuts to a blissful afterlife”),[25] Ahmad's approach tries to take an absolute and definitive step toward controlling Fate.

But clearly (from a religious and philosophical perspective, although perhaps not from a political one),[26] Ahmad's decision displays what I find to be the common fallacy of theologically-inspired suicide terrorism: it is the pretense that an ineffable God could somehow be spoken for “once and for all.” This is obviously illogical and arrogant (and, surely, arrogance is anything but an expression of faith).

Nevertheless, fortunately, Ahmad is not completely blind to these inherent contradictions; he does not buy completely into Shaikh Rashid's ideology. After all, it was his desire for intimate social guidance (not metaphysics) that drove him to Islam in the first place. And, thus, fortunately, that desire leaves him vulnerable to experiences of pity, guilt, respect and even love for “devils” such as his mother, Terry (whom he still, intermittently, calls an immoral, trashy whore), and, especially, Joryleen, his African-American high school crush (for whom he is nonetheless slow to recognize the nature of his feelings). Joryleen, unlike him, is “popular;” and yet she goes out of her way to take interest in lonely Ahmad, and even seems to challenge his ideological commitments, in their substance as well as their general appeal. (Ironically, out of love for another character, she *does* become a “whore”—a prostitute.)

Most important of all: Ahmad remains vulnerable to the positive influence of Jack Levy—his visibly aging, defensively-cynical, secular Jewish school counselor, who (besides Shaikh Rashid's incompetence) becomes crucial in disrupting the plot.

Disrupting the Plot: Jack Levy as Alter Ego

Jack Levy is the second main character in this novel—the second point of focus of its elliptical plot, bringing with him into play a second set of characters, whose relationships allow the plot to deviate from where Ahmad’s circular ideology could have taken it. In particular, Jack seems to help break Charlie Chehab’s scheme by (at first negligently, then deliberately) leaking crucial information about his student to his sister-in-law, Hermione (who—unbelievable coincidence again—happens to work as an assistant to the Secretary of Homeland Security).

Nonetheless, Jack’s heroism does not emerge from the fact that he tips off the authorities about Ahmad so much as it does from *both* the personal relationship he persists in building with the would-be terrorist in spite of everything else *and* the alternative philosophical model he represents.

Regarding the latter in particular, as mentioned in the introduction above, Jack is in a certain sense Ahmad’s alter ego. Both characters share many “metaphysical frustrations”[27]—frustrations with the inauthenticity of the American education system, or with the nihilistic materialism of modern American life, or even with the “absurdity” of secular life in general. More fundamentally still, they share a basic sense that people “stink”—except that, tellingly, Ahmad’s comes from ideology, and Jack’s comes from decades of experience.

However, crucially, they cope with their frustrations very differently. For example, when Ahmad contemplates formally changing his last name from his mother’s Mulloy to his father’s Ashmawy, Jack instead changes his first name informally from Jacob to Jack (as if embracing his society’s inauthenticity were preferable to trying to eliminate it).

More generally, Jack, being a somewhat cynical atheist, makes a point of embracing life not as a religious or ideological tool, or even as a gift, but rather as a Sisyphean burden—“Sisyphean” as in Sisyphus, the Greek mythological hero reintroduced by Albert Camus to depict life as an indefinite, pointless rock-rolling, which must be accepted out of pride or revolt. Except that, in Jack’s case, we find more irony than ordinary pride (in contrast with Ahmad’s apparent quest to compensate for the shame he feels for his father). And, I think, it is really in this kind of Sisyphean or quasi-Sisyphean irony, this indefinite struggle with meaning in the modern world, that Updike presents us with an alternative to the temptations of ideologies.

Jack is deeply flawed in many ways: he struggles with mixed feelings of kindness, pity and antipathy for his obese, TV-obsessed wife (who seems to be yet another representation of materialistic excess); and he goes so far as to have an affair with Ahmad’s mother, Terry. And yet, somehow, it is in this willingness to continue that internal struggle that he demonstrates the most authentic form of commitment or faith. That faith reflects perseverance, not final sacrifice; it is full of uncertainty and anxiety, not conviction and bliss. It allows Jack to persevere (despite his initial lame attempts at paternal guidance for Ahmad) in dissuading the boy from his destructive path—and therein lies the second ground of his heroism.

Jack is successful not so much by trying to take ultimate control of his fate but rather by tying his fate to Ahmad’s—by literally stalking Ahmad all the way to his truck bomb and beyond. His success is temporary and uncertain. In the end, he offers no permanent solution to Ahmad, to terrorism, or to the elusive problem of evil. But, by accepting yet limiting his own impurities, he

becomes capable of displaying pure heroism—whereas Ahmad almost commits “evil” by mistaking purity for heroism. And this is the philosophical lesson I think we can draw from *Terrorist*.

Conclusion

In the end, even though, with Jack Levy next to him in his truck bomb, Ahmad chooses not to go forward with his plan, it remains unclear whether he still presents a threat, or is instead ready to begin abandoning his intolerant ideology. But, ultimately, this indecision seems consistent with the larger theme of the elusiveness of the terrorist threat—and of the concept of “evil” in general. If the key lesson that emerges from this novel is that, in order to be “good,” people should not need to commit ultimate acts of ideological commitment, a related lesson might be that we should give up the pretense that we could ever exactly pin down the potential threat. Or, more broadly, if we are more likely to do evil when we fail to temper our urge for absolute truth claims, then it is crucial that we adopt an ongoing, indefinite (that is, Sisyphean) engagement with thoughts of good and evil.

Therefore, philosophically-speaking at least, the “evil” in the suicide terrorist’s ultimate act needs not be reduced to its horrible consequences because it is already present in its purist, extremist ideological premises. In fact, as theists, Islamist terrorists should feel unease at the striking resemblance that their ultimate shortcut to paradise bears to one of the poet Charles Baudelaire’s most transgressive lines—when, in his *The Flowers of Evil*, he asks rhetorically: “what does an eternity of damnation matter to someone who has found in one second the infinity of pleasure?”[28] Likewise, we could ask rhetorically what difference there really is between Baudelaire’s hedonistic extremism and Ahmad’s more ideological (or supposedly theological) extremism: his desire to reach the infinite joy of heaven in one single act.

About the Reviewer: Amien Kacou is an Attorney living in Baltimore, MD, USA. He is a recent graduate of the Global Security Studies program at Johns Hopkins University. This review is based on a paper originally presented at Johns Hopkins University’s Second Annual MLA Colloquium.

Notes

[1] Charles McGrath, “In ‘Terrorist,’ a Cautious Novelist Takes on a New Fear,” *New York Times*, 31 March 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/31/books/31updi.html> (accessed 10 March 2012).

[2] In fact, as a target, the Lincoln Tunnel is quite comparable with the World Trade Center towers: a quick Google search reveals that it carries 120,000 vehicles per day (that is, 5,000 per hour).

[3] Michiko Kakutani, “John Updike’s ‘Terrorist’ Imagines a Homegrown Threat to Homeland Security,” *New York Times*, 6 June 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/06/books/06kaku.html> (accessed 10 March 2012).

[4] Todd S. Purdum, “After the Attacks: the White House; Bush Warns of a Wrathful, Shadowy and Inventive War,” *New York Times*, 17 September 2001, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/17/us/after-attacks-white-house-bush-warns-wrathful-shadowy-inventive-war.html> (accessed 10 March 2012).

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- [5] Assad Moghadam, "Suicide Terrorism, Occupation, and the Globalization of Martyrdom: A Critique of Dying to Win," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29 (2006): 722; see also Dominique Moisi, *The Geopolitics of Emotion: How Cultures of Fear, Humiliation and Hope are Reshaping the World*. New York, NY: Double Day, 2009.
- [6] Considering how much Updike makes of his characters' ethnic identities and stereotypes, it is tempting to identify in the failed mixed marriage of Ahmad's parents the origin of his longing for purity.
- [7] Ariel Merari, Ilan Diamant, Arie Bibi, Yoav Broshi and Giora Zakin, "Personality Characteristics of 'Self Martyrs'/'Suicide Bombers' and Organizers of Suicide Attacks," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 22 (2010): 93.
- [8] John Updike, "Elusive Evil: An Idea Whose Time Keeps Coming," *The New Yorker*, July 22, 1996.
- [9] Lance Morrow, "Evil," *Time*, June 10, 1991.
- [10] Arthur Miller, "Why I wrote 'The Crucible:' An Artist's Answer to Politics," *The New Yorker*, October 21, 1996.
- [11] Irving Howe, "Writing and the Holocaust," *The New Republic*," October 27, 1996.
- [12] C. Fred Alford, "A Psychoanalytic Study of Evil," *American Imago* 56, no.1 (1999): 27-52.
- [13] Ibid.
- [14] Roy Baumeister, *Evil: Inside Human Violence and Cruelty*. New York, NY: Freeman & Company, 1999, 375-378.
- [15] Ibid., 185.
- [16] Howe, "Writing and the Holocaust."
- [17] Patricia Cohen, "Danish Cartoon Controversy," *New York Times*, 12 August 2009, http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/subjects/d/danish_cartoon_controversy/index.html (accessed 10 March 2012).
- [18] Roy Baumeister, op. cit., 174.
- [19] Charles Kimball, *When Religion Becomes Evil*. New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2002, 42.
- [20] Ibid., 6.
- [21] Ibid., 48, 65, 68, 71, 104, 126, 156.
- [22] See Ariel Glucklich, *Dying for Heaven: Holy Pleasure and Suicide Bombers — Why the Best Qualities of Religion Are Also Its Most Dangerous*. New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2009, 16-17.
- [23] See, e.g., Paul Berman, *Terror and liberalism*. New York, N.Y.: W. W. Norton and Company, 2003.
- [24] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale. New York: Random House, 1967, 17-18.
- [25] John Updike, "Elusive Evil."
- [26] Again: this study explores the philosophical rationale for suicide terrorism, *not* its political or strategic rationale. For the latter, see, e.g., Robert Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*. New York, N.Y.: Random House, 2005; Assaf Moghadam, *The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al Qaeda, Salafi Jihad, and the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks*. Baltimore, M.D.: Johns Hopkins University press, 2008.
- [27] Ibid.
- [28] Charles Baudelaire, *Paris Spleen*. New York, NY: New Directions, 1970, 12.
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IV. News from TRI's National Networks of PhD Theses Writers

Update by Alex P. Schmid

The Terrorism Research Initiative (TRI) is in the process of setting up additional national networks of PhD thesis writers. These are run by the PhD students themselves with the help of country-based, TRI-affiliated researchers who are often themselves post-graduate students working on their thesis or who have recently completed a doctorate. Admission is open to all bona fide academic and professional researchers of post-graduate level working on (countering) terrorism, political violence and armed conflict.

So far seven national networks have come into existence in

- **The United Kingdom.** Country coordinator: Gordon Clubb; E-mail: <G.Clubb@leeds.ac.uk>);
- **The Netherlands and Flanders (Belgium).** Country coordinator: Rene Frissen; E-mail: <r.frissen@forum.nl>);
- **Russia.** Country coordinator: Yulia Netesova; E-mail: <julianetesova@gmail.com>);
- **The United States.** Country coordinator: Jason Rineheart; E-mail: <jrineheart@gmail.com>);
- **Canada.** Country coordinator: Nick Deshpande; E-mail: <nick.deshpande@gmail.com>);
- **South Africa.** Country coordinator: Petra Harvest; E-mail: <petra.harvest@absamail.co.za>);
- **Australia:** Country coordinator: Levi-Jay West; E-mail: <lwest@csu.edu.au>).

Should you be a post-graduate researcher from the UK, the Netherlands (and Flanders), the USA, Russia, Canada, South Africa or Australia and wishing to join your national TRI network, you should contact the country coordinator directly. In all other cases, contact TRI's Director, Alex P. Schmid (E-mail: <apschmid@terrorismanalysts.com>) who will then explore with you and other members of the TRI network in your country how best to set up a national network.

The benefits of being a member of a national TRI networks include (but are not confined to):

- Enhanced awareness as to who is working on which topic at other national universities and in think tanks and foundations;
 - Bi- and multi-lateral exchange of information between members of the network;
 - Opportunity to engage in collaborative projects;
 - Organisation of workshops, seminars and conferences;
 - Developing joint grant proposals;
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- Providing collegial support to each other in the research- and writing-phase of the thesis preparation;
- Advice from TRI's national and international network of subject matter experts.

As this September 2012 issue of our journal is finalized, two reports were received from the country coordinators:

The Netherlands/Flanders (Belgium): After leading a lingering existence for some time, the Dutch-Flemish Network of Terrorism and Radicalization researchers has been revived and fused with the TRI network. Our cross-border network will host its next meeting in early October, 2012. In addition to a discussion with members about the possible form and function of the Dutch-Flemish network, this session will, on the substantive side, focus on the subject of secrecy. Prof. Dr. Bob Hoogenboom has been invited to give a lecture on the sociology of secrecy. While studying terrorism, security and related topics, one encounters the limits of transparency of institutions and authorities even in democracies. This is due to operational concerns and fears of endangering national safety and security. The same restraint can be seen with a number of civil society organizations or sometimes less civil groups of individuals engaging in radical, extremist or violent activities. During our first meeting we want to share experiences and discuss the ethical limits of, and resulting consequences for, our academic research. The meeting will take place on 4 October, 2012, from 15:00 – 18:00, at the Centre for Terrorism and Counterterrorism at Campus Den Haag. For more information or applications for membership in our network, please contact TRI's country coordinator Renee Frissen at r.t.l.frissen@cdh.leidenuniv.nl.

The United Kingdom: TRI's UK network, the Terrorism and Political Violence Association (TAPVA), held its inaugural meeting in May 2012 at the University of Leeds. The workshop 'Terrorism Theory, Radicalisation and Counter-Narratives' drew presenters from across the UK, demonstrating the broad membership of TAPVA in terms of geographical spread and interdisciplinarity. The keynote speakers included Prof. Caroline Kennedy-Pipe and Rich Davis of ARTIS. Since May, TAPVA has been awarded funding from the University of Leeds and BISA for its next project: a survey of the research interests of non-university partners and the impact that university research has on the stakeholder community. The network has been expanded to include affiliations with two organisations: the Foreign Policy Centre and the Institute for Strategic Dialogue. Further details will be given when our website www.tapva.com, is launched in October. – Gordon Clubb.

V. Notes from the Editor

Call for Peer Reviewers

The Editorial Board of Perspectives on Terrorism is looking to expand its database of peer reviewers for article submissions. All those interested in participating in this important peer review process should send their CV (or a brief bio summary) along with contact information and a short list of 3-5 topics of particular interest and expertise to the editors: Alex P. Schmid (apschmid@terrorismanalysts.com) and James J. Forest (jjfforest@gmail.com). As with many other scholarly journals, each year an issue of Perspectives on Terrorism will publish a list of appreciation recognizing all peer reviewers who have contributed to that year's issues. In addition to furthering the journal's success, participation in the peer review process also provides useful insights on emerging research in the field. Typically, a reviewer will be asked to evaluate only one article per year, and we are committed to ensuring that peer reviewers will not be asked to review more than two articles per year.

About Perspectives on Terrorism

PT seeks to provide a platform for established scholars as well as academics and professionals entering the field of Terrorism, Political Violence and Conflict Studies. It invites them to:

- present their perspectives on the prevention of, and response to, terrorism and related forms of violent conflict;
- submit to the journal accounts of evidence-based, empirical scientific research and analyses;
- use the journal as a forum for debate and commentary on issues related to the above.

Perspectives on Terrorism (PT) could be characterized as ‘nontraditional’ in that it dispenses with some of the traditional rigidities associated with commercial print journals. Topical articles can be published at short notice and reach, through the Internet, a much larger audience than fee-based subscription journals. Our on-line journal also offers contributors a higher degree of flexibility in terms of content, style and length of articles - but without compromising professional scholarly standards.

The journal is peer-reviewed by members of the Editorial Board as well as outside experts. While aiming to be policy-relevant, PT is not supporting any partisan policies regarding (counter-) terrorism and conflict-waging. Impartiality, objectivity and accuracy are guiding principles we expect contributors to adhere to.

Editorial Team of Perspectives on Terrorism:

Alex P. Schmid, Editor-in-Chief

James J.F. Forest, Co- Editor

Joseph J. Easson, Associate Editor

Tim Pippard, Assistant Editor

Eric Price, Editorial Assistant

Legal Note: *Perspectives on Terrorism* (PT) hosts articles that reflect a diversity of opinions. The views expressed therein, and the empirical evidence cited in their support, remain the sole responsibility of the contributing authors; they do not necessarily reflect positions and views of the journal’s Editorial Team and Editorial Board or PT’s parent organization, the *Terrorism Research Initiative*.