



Institute of
Business Administration
Karachi

SSC-217: Introduction to Political Science

The Science of Political Science

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Goals:

- Is Political Science a Science – why?
- What is the Scientific method?
- Qualitative and Quantitative approaches

Reading: Grigsby Ch 2

Why is Political Science a Science?



The Political Science Journey

- Traditionalists
- Behaviorists
- Post-behaviorists

- **What is the scientific method:** systematic method of gathering evidence related to an idea about how the world works, usually results in a prediction

The science of social science, some questions

Social science v natural science

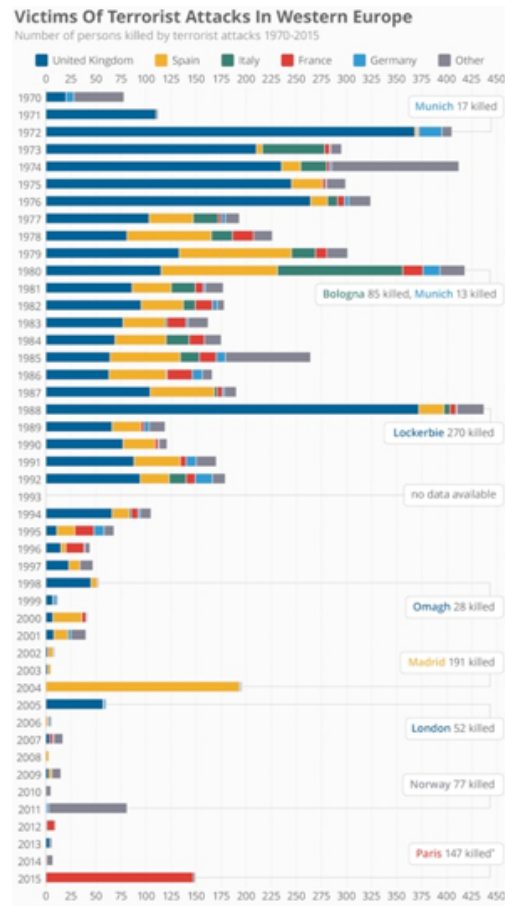
- Scientists should be objective, meaning they should be unbiased
- Therefore, political scientists should be scientists, and not political pundits

How do we use the scientific method?

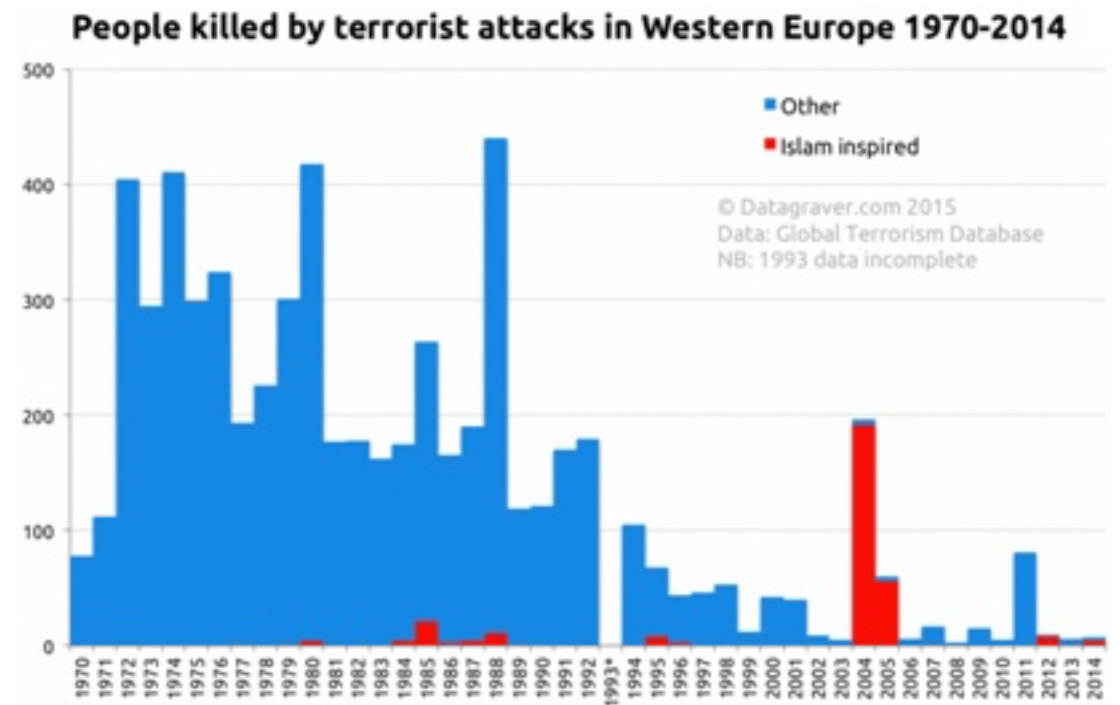
What is the effect of poverty on terrorism?

What is the relationship between Islam and terrorism?

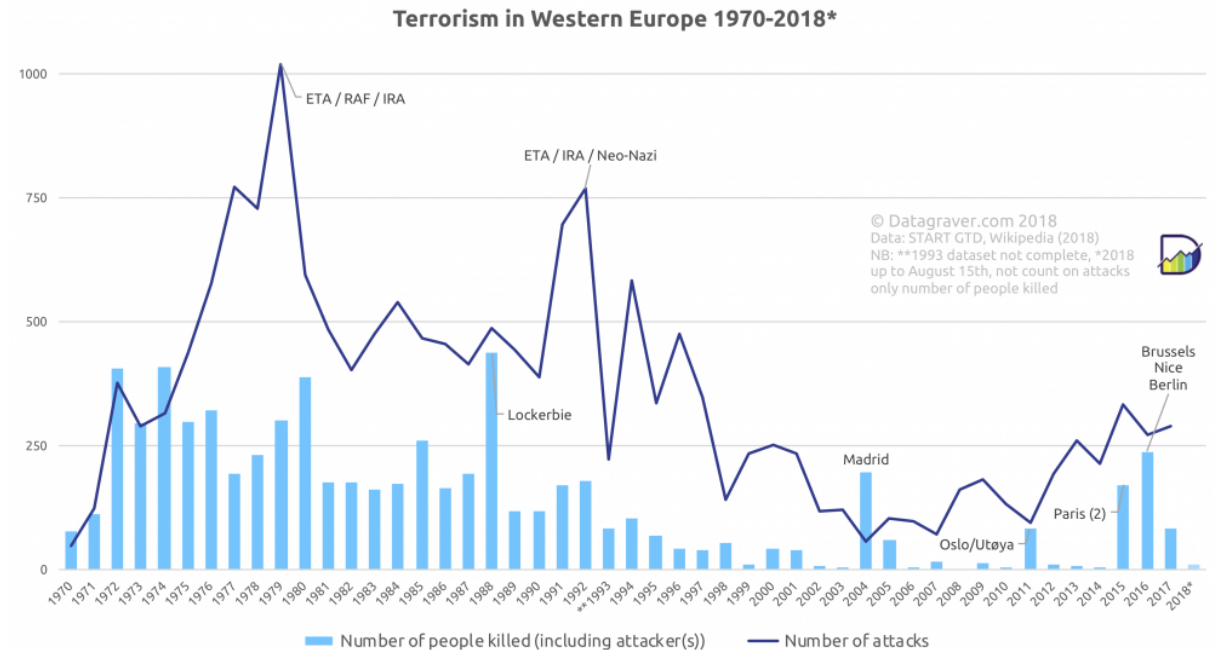
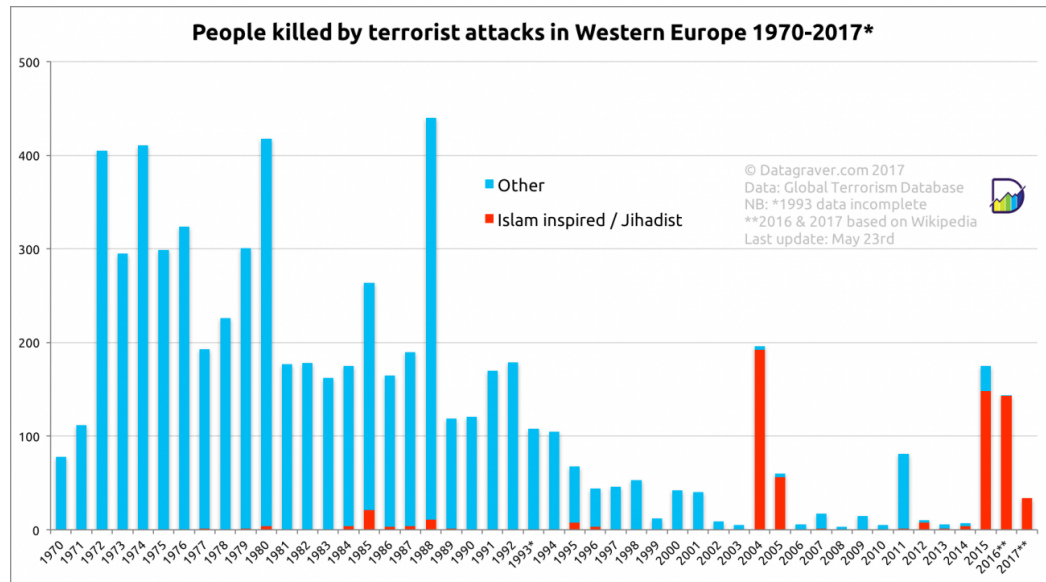
Victims of terrorism in Europe



Terrorism and Islam

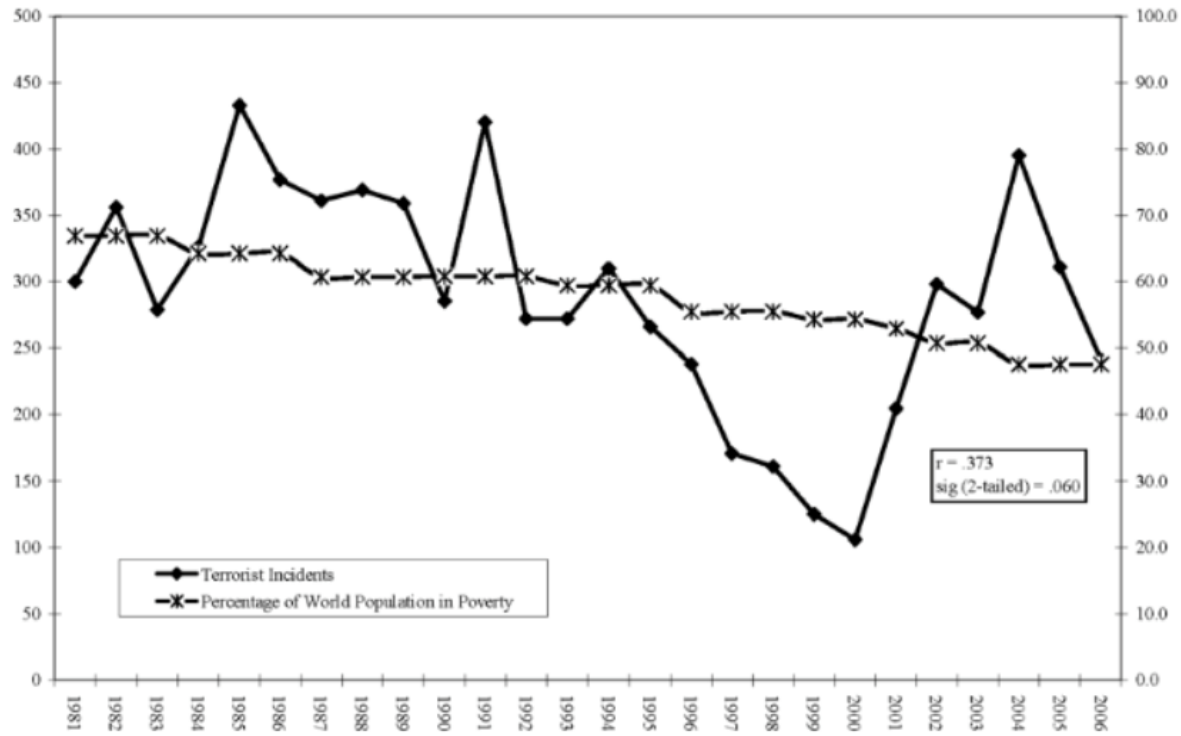


https://www.econlib.org/archives/2016/04/two_terror_grap.html



<https://www.datagraver.com/case/people-killed-by-terrorism-per-year-in-western-europe-1970-2015>

Terrorism and poverty trend



Source: <https://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/online-articles/reexamining-terrorism-poverty-nexus>

- Can social scientists be objective?

What about human rights? Democracy? Terrorism?
Peace?

- Social experiments are much harder, ethical practices need to be enforced

Experiments with individual capacity to commit torture?
(Milgram experiment 1961/Stanford prison experiment)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kzd6Ew3TraA>

Social **SCIENCE**

What is Science?

“A body of knowledge and the process by which that knowledge is collected”

The scientific method (positivist):

- Phenomenon (Observation)
- Theory: **Causal explanation**
- Hypothesis: Specific prediction/operational definition
- Methods: Measurement/Experiment
- Data/Results: test hypotheses
- Discussion : implications for theory

- What is a theory:

Logically consistent statements that explain a phenomenon of interest

Example: Wars happen because of a lack of information, indivisibility or inability to commit (Fearon 1994)

Example: Democracies do not fight each other because they have better diplomatic communication channels

Building a theory: falsification

- To be a scientific theory, it must be possible to prove the theory wrong- the theory is only right till the time we find that proof-
- This makes theories testable
- All good theories are falsifiable

Methods:

- Research design (how you test the theory)

Qualitative

who, what, how when why

(interviews/ethnographies/ archives)

Quantitative: (quantitative analysis of new or existing data)

by how much?

- Collect data to test hypotheses

(Empirical evidence is information acquired by observation or experimentation)

Qualitative versus Quantitative Methods

Qualitative: subjectivity- insider view since human behavior can not be converted into variables. More interested in descriptions.

Quantitative : We want to measure things. Interested in causation. Use statistics (averages, percentages, correlations etc.)

Note that there is a lot of middle ground- we can mix them

Examples of methods:

- Case study
- Surveys
- Experiments
- Statistical analysis

Should Political Science be a Science?

Should Political Science be a Science?

- Similar units? Patterns?
- Predictability?
- Is Science the best way to understand humans?
- Who dominates in the field?
- What happens when Science is in contradiction with other belief systems?