

# POLS 318: Theories of IR

## Lecture 24 (11.10.2020): International Terrorism: Motivations

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# Overview

- 1 Quick review
- 2 Introduction
- 3 Defining Terrorism
- 4 Causes of Terrorism
- 5 Extra Material

# Review

## WHAT WE COVERED LAST MEETING?

- Motivations for territorial disputes.
- Political price of territorial wars (Israel).
- An evolutionary approach to territory.
- Rational and beyond - attachment to homeland.
- Historical ownership (China).
- Spatial proximity and support for solutions.
- Tangible and intangible values (west bank, Israeli public).

Questions?? Email me!

# The threat

## Is terrorism that much of a threat?

- 2017-2018: 7 incidents.
- 2012: 15 incidents.
- 2010: 14 incidents.
- 2007: 7 incidents.

*"If Al Qaeda operators are as determined and inventive as assumed, they should be here by now. If they are not yet here, they must not be trying very hard or must be far less dedicated, diabolical, and competent than the common image would suggest." (Mueller, 2006).*

# The threat

**TABLE 1.1** How Dangerous Is Terrorism?

<i>Cause of Death</i>	<i>Times more likely to kill an American compared to a terrorist attack</i>
Heart disease	35,079
Cancer	33,842
Alcohol-related death	4,706
Car accident	1,048
Risky sexual behavior	452
Fall	353
Starvation	187
Drowning	87
Railway accident	13
Accidental suffocation in bed	12
Lethal force by a law enforcement officer	8
Accidental electrocution	8
Hot weather	6

# The threat

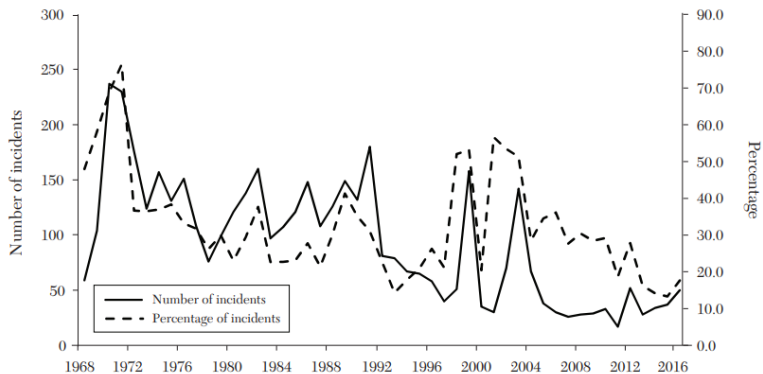


Figure 4. Number and Percentage of Transnational Attacks against US Interests per Year

# The threat

## Why do we care?

- Terrorism kills, and attacks increase. ► Number ► Fatalities
- Prevalent across the globe. ► Global
- Tragic events. ► VictimsGlobal
- The public cares.

### Americans' Views of Critical Threats to U.S. Vital Interests

I am going to read you a list of possible threats to the vital interests of the United States in the next 10 years. For each one, please tell me if you see this as a critical threat, an important but not critical threat, or not an important threat at all.

	Critical threat	Important, not critical	Not important
	%	%	%
Development of nuclear weapons by North Korea	82	14	3
Cyberterrorism, the use of computers to cause disruption or fear in society	81	16	3
International terrorism	75	22	2
The economic power of China	40	45	14
Large numbers of immigrants entering the United States	39	31	29
The conflict between Israel and the Palestinians	36	48	14

GALLUP, FEB. 1-10, 2018

# The definition puzzle

## What is Terrorism?

- Why do we need a definition?
- " ...whoever stands by a just cause and fights for the freedom and liberation of his land from the invaders..."
- Official organizations: UN, DOD, DOJ.
- Saudi Arabia Penal Law (2014).

## Common element:

*The adoption of irregular means in order to accomplish political outcome.*



# The definition puzzle

## Challenges

- High value on legitimacy.
- Legitimacy → subjective and inconsistent.
- Complicates analysis and comparison of cases.

# The definition puzzle

## Scholars

- ① Existence of violence.
- ② Perpetrators: nonstate actors.
- ③ Targets: noncombatants.
- ④ Psychological effects.
- ⑤ Explicit political objective.

### Scholarly definition (Chenoweth and Moore, 2018)

The intentional use or threat of using force by a non-state actor to evoke fear in a population to affect a political outcome.

# The definition puzzle

## The public

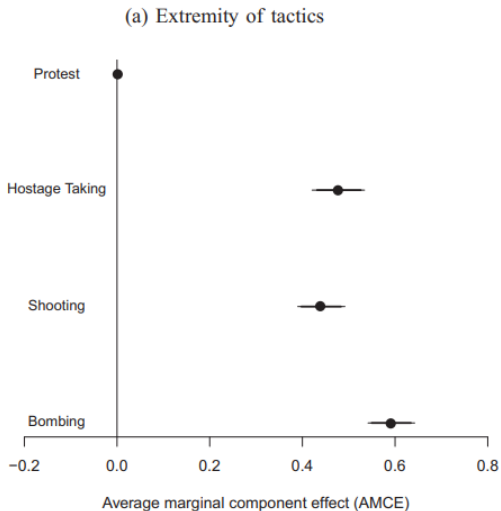
- Why does it matter?
- Affects on policy.

## Public view (Huff and Kertzer 2019)

- Objective: "facts on the ground" (immediate).
- Subjective: "Why and who" (indirect and delayed).
- Test: conjoint experiment.

# The definition puzzle

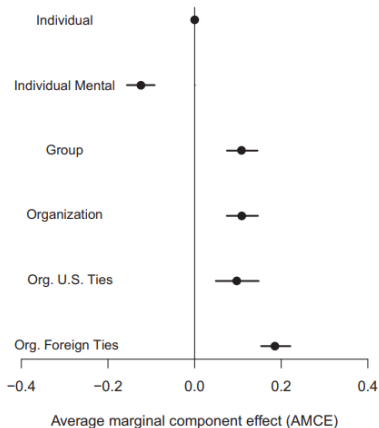
## METHOD/TACTIC



# The definition puzzle

## ACTOR/PERPETRATOR

**FIGURE 4 The Political Purposiveness of the Perpetrator**



# The definition puzzle

## MOTIVATION

FIGURE 5 Social Categorization Effects

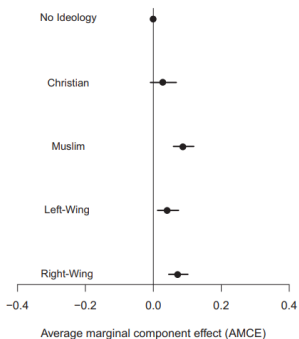
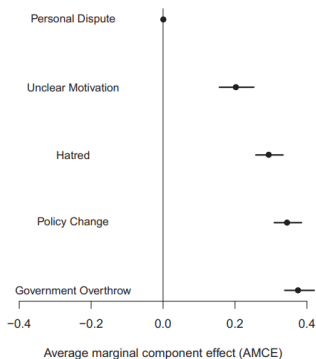


FIGURE 6 Motive Attribution Effects



# Causes of Terrorism

## Strategic approach

- Rational choice approach.
- The instrumental model.
- Interactions as games of political goals.
- Main benefit → Parsimony.

## Strategic terrorism

- A calculated choice based on specific objectives.
- Accomplish certain goals with minimum costs.
- Terrorism as rational choice.

# Causes of Terrorism

## Strategic approach - Assumptions

- Actions directed at others - outcomes based on strategic interactions.
- Rational choice - preferences.
- Unitary actor. ▶ UnitaryActor



# Causes of Terrorism

## Strategic approach: Implications

- **(1) Evaluate adversaries responses.**
  - Expected responses to different attacks (Bin Laden - 2004).
- **(2) Coercive effectiveness** - using costly signals.
  - Force rival to accept concessions.
- **(3) Substitution** - methods, perpetrators, location.
  - Learning from success and failures.
  - Using women as perpetrators: Algerian war (1954-1960).
  - Attacks shift from west.

## Substitution in methods



# Causes of Terrorism

## Strategic approach: Criticism

- **(1) Not monolithic.**
  - Organization challenges and problems.
  - Internal conflicts.
- **(2) Terrorism is ineffective.**
  - Population backlash and government support.
- **(3) No learning from failures.**
  - Persist in attacks despite lack of success.

# Causes of Terrorism

## Organizational approach

- A social perspective on terrorism.
- Focus on the inner-working on organizations.
- Interactions with other groups.

## Main objective

- Organization survival.
- Terrorism as a tactical innovation.

# Causes of Terrorism

## Organizational approach - Assumptions

- **(1) Organization survival** - prime objective.
- Not political or strategic goal.
- **(2) Not a unitary actor.**
- Fragmented organizations with multiple disagreements over objectives, methods (the Weather Underground - 1969).
- **(3) Internal conflicts.**
- Constant instability.
- Leaders concerns from internal collapse/challenges.

# Causes of Terrorism

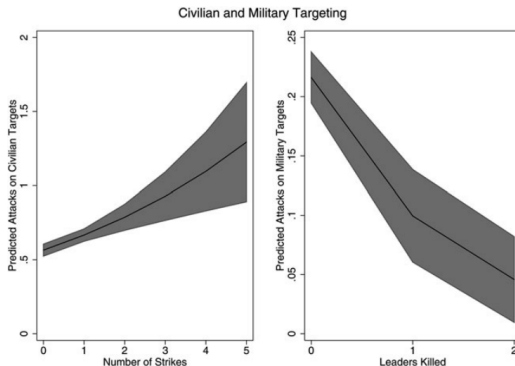
## Organizational approach - Implications

- **(1) Dense environment - more attacks.**
- Competition, "outbidding" and survival.
- **(2) Target rivals and competitors.**
- Fight over resources (recruits, influence, support).
- **(3) Sustain ineffective tactics**
- "Calling card", transaction costs.
- **(4) Social recruitment.**
- Social benefits of group, not political goals.

# Causes of Terrorism

## Organizational approach - Implications

- (5) Leadership crisis and increase in violence.
- Targeted killings (leaders decapitation).



# Causes of Terrorism

## Organizational approach - Criticism

- **(1) Limited empirical evidence.**
  - Not much evidence for "outbidding" and competition.
- **(2) Indeterminate outcomes.**
  - Competition → more attacks.
  - Cooperation → more violence.
  - How can we falsify the theory?



# Causes of Terrorism

## Ideological approach

- An individual level view.
- Defining ideology.
- How a belief system regulates and motivates behavior so that some become terrorists.

## Ideologies

- Secular - Marxism extremists, supremacist extremism, National separatist.
- Religious - Islam, Christian, Jewish.

# Causes of Terrorism

## Ideological - Assumptions

- **(1) Preferences matter.**
  - What belief systems justify violence.
- **(2) Unit of analysis.**
  - Individual or group beliefs.
- **(3) Beliefs and radicalization.**
  - Cosmic and collective struggle, human sacrifice.
  - Satisfy supernatural authority.

# Causes of Terrorism

## Ideological - Implications

- **(1) Extreme belief motivate violence.**
- The audience for secular/religious groups.
- **(2) Strategic counterproductive behavior.**
- Ideology as motivation, not utility (rational).
- **(3) Violence as a goal.**
- Use violence for the sake of violence (Lebanon).

# Causes of Terrorism

## Ideological - Criticism

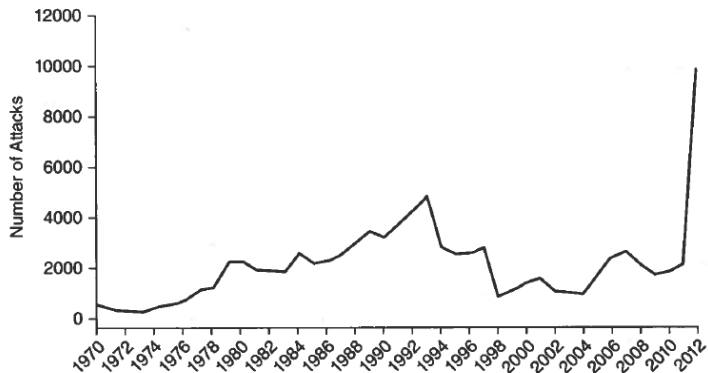
- **(1) Correlation is not causation.**
  - Ideology as a cause?
- **(2) Unobserved.**
  - Can we observe and classify ideologies?
- **(3) Motivation or post-hoc.**
  - Ideology as driver or justification after the fact?
- **(4) Policy solutions are immoral.**
  - Profiling individuals, moral norms.

# Recommended readings

More studies on the causes of terrorism:

- ① Polo, Sara. (2020). "The quality of terrorist violence: Explaining the logic of terrorist target choice." *Journal of peace research* 57, 2, 235-250.
- ② D'Orazio, Vito, and Idean Salehyan. (2018). "Who is a terrorist? Ethnicity, group affiliation, and understandings of political violence." *International interactions* 44, 6, 1017-1039.
- ③ Bacon, Tricia. (2018). "Is the Enemy of My Enemy My Friend? How Terrorist Groups Select Partners." *Security Studies* 27, 3, 345-378.

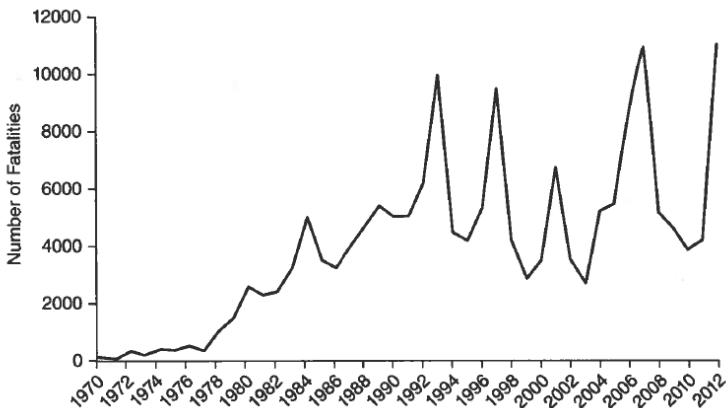
# Attacks increase over time



**Figure 1.2** Global Trends in Terrorist Attacks, 1970–2012

Source: GTD

# More victims of terrorism

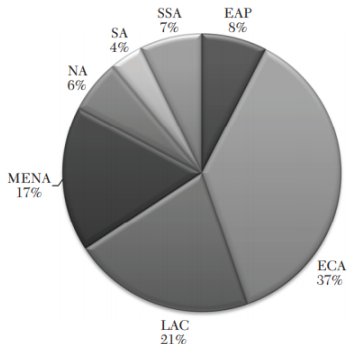


**Figure 1.3** Fatalities from Terrorist Attacks, 1970–2012

Source: GTD

# Global terrorism threats

Panel A. 1968–2001



Panel B. 2002–16

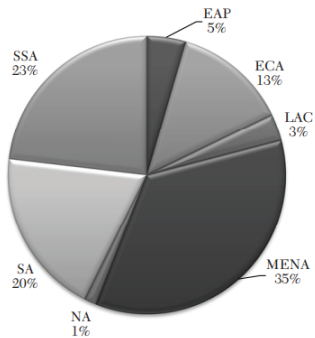
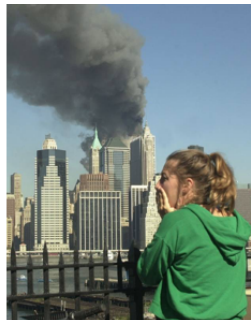


Figure 7. Distribution of Transnational Incidents by Regions



# Victims all over the world



# How terror groups are portrayed

The New York Times

## *ISIS, Eyeing Europe, Could Launch Attacks This Year, U.N. Warns*

