

POLS 429: International Terrorism

Lecture 12 (02.10.2020): Explaining Terrorism

The Ideological Approach

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Overview

- 1 Quick review
- 2 Explaining Terrorism
- 3 Secular Ideology
- 4 Religious Ideology
- 5 Extra Material

Review

WHAT WE COVERED LAST MEETING?

- Implications: idiosyncratic factors, large variation.
- Merari (2010): Systematic findings to distinguish suicide and other terrorists.
- Policy implications: political and social opportunities, "hearts and minds" program, CVE approaches.
- Critiques: overgeneralize personality, selection bias and profiling policy.

Questions??

The Ideological Approach

INTRODUCTION

- Focus on particular belief systems that motivate, incite and rationalize violence.
- Ideology: challenge of definition.
- "Recruit" ideology to support a politically driven argument.
- All terror groups have an extreme ideology.

The Ideological Approach

ORIGINS

- The constructivist school of thought: particular beliefs, ideas and identities explain behavior.
- Two main camps:
 - ① Constitutive: the origins of ideas and identities, and how they motivate human behavior.
 - ② Regulative: how ideas and norms shape and constrain behavior.
- How ideology motivates, regulates and constraints the behavior of actors in a way that only some become terrorists.

Ideologies of Terror Groups

SECULAR IDEOLOGIES

- Most prevalent ideologies of terrorism over the last 150 years: Marxism and counter-reactionary ideologies.
- The decline of colonialism → nationalist-separatist ideology.

Anarchist Extremism

- Popular during the latter stages of the 19th and early 20th century.
- Removal of all forms of government and re-organize society.
- Joined by ideology of populism. [▶ Anarchist](#)
- Example - Nardonaya Volya ("People's Will", Russia 1879).

Ideologies of Terror Groups

Marxist Extremism

- Marxism: workers, capitalists (elites) and who controls the means of production.
- Prevalent during Mid-20th century: USSR.
- Marxism is not synonymous with violence; it raises many legitimate social issues.
- Violence → interpretation by groups calling for armed struggle to dismantle the current societal structure.
- Red Brigades (Italy); Red Army Faction (Germany).

▶ MarxismRAF

Ideologies of Terror Groups

Maoist Extremism

- A permanent political, social and economic revolution, led by the peasants.
- Terror groups in East Asia (CPN-M, Nepal; CPI-M, Maoist).
- Selective violence: target elite and official figures that represent corrupt regime.
- CIP-Maoist: 40% targets are official vs. 29% private civilians.
- Why selective?

Ideologies of Terror Groups

Fasism, Racial-Ethnic Supremacist Extremism

- Fasism: military citizenry ruled by a powerful authoritarian leader and autarkic economy.
- Glorify violence as purifying and focus on youth, masculinity and racial supremacy.
- *Racial-Ethnic supremacy*: belief in natural hierarchy within society.
- Some racial and ethnic groups are superior and should rule others (KKK, Afrikaner Resistance Movement).
- Right-wing groups → more violent (Bologna, Italy 1980).

Ideologies of Terror Groups

Nationalist-Separatist Extremism

- Post-colonial ideology: the right for self-determination.
- Primary concern - the territory they wish to capture or liberate to exercise self-determination.
- Violence intended to redeem oppressed people from the inferiority complex due to external control.
- Examples: ETA (Spain) ▶ Spain; PFLP (Palestine).
- Combine terrorism with other guerrilla methods.

Ideologies of Terror Groups

RELIGIOUS IDEOLOGIES

- A commitment to a faith-based doctrine that requires violence.
- Religion → a moral belief in the need to eliminate outsiders to secure sacred duties.
- Revival of religious ideology of terror:
 - ① Islamic revolution (Iran, 1979) - empowered view of Islam.
 - ② End of cold war (1980's) - reduce support for Marxist groups.
 - ③ Globalization (1990's) - spread of liberal values as direct challenge to fundamentalist religious groups.

Ideologies of Terror Groups

SUNNI EXTREMISM - ORIGINS

- Sayyid Qutb - Muslim brotherhood (Egypt, 1950).
- His treatise ("Milestones"): risks Muslim communities face from the corrupt and evil system of secular ideas, norms and values.
- The only alternative is Sharia law.
- How western powers manipulate Islamic believers.
- **Jihad** - based on Qutbism, a struggle (internal or against external forces).

Ideologies of Terror Groups

SUNNI MUSLIM GROUPS

- 2nd generation Muslim Brotherhood: Algeria, Egypt IJ, Palestinian IJ, Hamas.
- Neo-Wahhabism: radical strand calling for strict use of 7th century Sharia Law.
- **Al Qaeda**: Egyptian militants and Afghans fighting the Soviets (early 1980's).
- Bin-Laden and Zawahiri leverage extreme ideology against the west, and recruit Muslim volunteers.
- **Hamas**: Islamic ideology to justify struggle with Israel.

Ideologies of Terror Groups

Fundamentalist Christian Extremism

- US groups view certain races as more worthy than others, based on Christian beliefs.
- Example - *The Turner Diaries* (1978) fought to overthrow US government and exterminate all non-white, Jews and gay people.
- Timothy McVeigh (Oklahoma City, April 1995) was a loose follower of *Christian Identity*. [▶ OklahomaCity1995](#)

Ideologies of Terror Groups

Zionist/Jewish Extremism

- Kahanism/Kach Movement (Meir Kahana) - a radical doctrine that described all Arabs as enemies.
- Advanced a view of turning Israel to a theocracy that spreads over the entire historical Biblical Jewish homeland.
- February 1994: Baruch Goldstein, a Kach follower, massacred 29 Palestinian worshippers inside the Cave of the Patriarch in Hebron.
- November 1995: Yigal Amir assassinated PM Rabin.
- Inspired by radical Kach ideas and viewed Rabin as a traitor for signing the *Oslo accords*.

Recommended readings

More studies on the topic of ideological approach to terrorism:

- ① Justin Conrad and Daniel Milton, "Unpacking the Connection Between Terror and Islam," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 36, Issue 4 (2013), pp. 215-336.
- ② Stuart J. Kaufman, "Narratives and Symbols in Violent Mobilization: The Palestinian-Israeli Case," *Security Studies*, Vol. 18 (2009), pp. 400-434.
- ③ Jessica Stern, *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003).

Kropotkin - The Spirit of Revolt (1880)

"And yet all know it is impossible to make things over, to remodel anything at because everything is interrelated; everything would have to be remade at once. And how can society be remodeled when it is divided into two openly hostile camps? To satisfy the discontent would be only to create new malcontents...Such periods demand revolution... "

RAF Communique (1971)

"...the urban guerrilla can only what he is there: the only revolutionary method of intervention available to what are on the whole weak revolutionary forces...the urban guerrilla is the logical consequence of the negotiation of parliamentary democracy long since perpetrated by its very own representatives; the only and inevitable response to emergency laws and the rule of the hand grenade; the readiness to fight with those same means the system has chosen to use in trying to eliminate it opponents..."





Figure: Oklahoma City - April 1995