

POLS 429: International Terrorism

Lecture 4 (01.22.20): The Study of Terrorism

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Spring 2020

Overview

- 1 Quick review
- 2 Studying Terrorism
- 3 Research Avenues
- 4 Methods
- 5 Extra Material

Introduction

WHAT WE COVERED LAST MEETING?

- Defining terrorism, and the central implications.
- How scholars view terrorism?
- Public distinct definition of terrorism.
- The controversy of the terrorism concept: terrorist = rebel = insurgent

Questions??

The State of Terrorism Research

AN EVER GROWING RESEARCH AREA

- Scholar results - approximately 1.5 million
- Academic journals.
- Research centers - START (University of Maryland), CPOST (University of Chicago).
- More work since 2001, multiple methodological approaches.
- More? Check the link → [ResourcesLink](#)

Origins of Research

- Social science disciplines in the late 1960's.
- Historical approach: case analyses.
- Conceptual focus (1980's):
 - 1 Definition.
 - 2 Causes.
 - 3 Tactics, Identity of perpetrators.
- Challenges: lack of data; rigorous theory.

"In general, propositions about terrorism lack logical comparability, specification of the relationship of variables to each other, and a rank-ordering of variables in terms of explanatory power"
(Crenshaw, 1981)

How to study terrorism

A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

- Crenshaw's *Levels of causation*:
 - 1 Terror organization as a rational actor
 - 2 The effect of environmental factors
 - 3 Psychological effects and participation
- **Rational actors** → a deliberate choice.
- Strategic choices: based on others' behavior.
- An example: US government antiterrorism policies against skyjacking (1961-79) and the role of metal detectors.
- Counter-example: Narodnaya Volya and assassinating the Czar for the goal of liberalization.

How to study terrorism

- **The environment/setting**
- Unpack the environmental factors:
 - ① Preconditions - fundamental conditions.
 - ② Precipitants - specific events that precede terrorism.
- Another classification:
 - ① Permissive/Enabling factors - the opportunity for terrorism.
 - ② Motivating situations.
- How does the environment/situation matters to development of terrorism?

How to study terrorism

- **The Individual**

- Basic puzzle - what draws a person to participate in terrorism?
- The setting is not unique to terrorists, and it impacts large number of people.
- Two overarching views:
 - ① Personality.
 - ② Individual perceptions/attitudes.

Terrorism (Crenshaw, 1981): [▶ Quote](#)

Terrorism research & challenges

DATA COLLECTION AND STUDIES OF TERRORISM

- Data: collection began around 1968.
- Analysis of patterns (scientific study).
- Terrorism cycles: regular-spaced peaks and troughs based on methods used and government responses [▶ Cycles](#)
- Method complexity impacts cycle duration - more complex modes (like skyjacking) are longer. Why?
- Government responses lead terror groups to shift their targets.

Terrorism research & challenges

TERROR TARGETS OVER THE YEARS

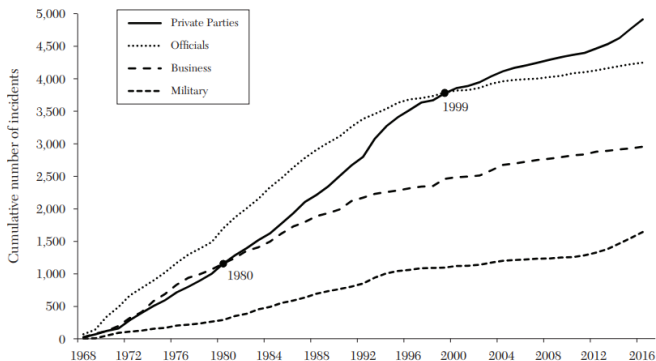


Figure 11. Cumulative Number of Transnational Terrorist Attacks by Target Type

Most attacks since 1990's target people, Why?

Terrorism research & challenges

ECONOMIC EFFECTS

- Direct:
 - 1 Damages to structures, destroyed goods.
 - 2 Lives lost and injuries sustained.
 - 3 Lost wages, cleanup.
- Indirect:
 - 1 Enhance security costs.
 - 2 Higher insurance premiums.
 - 3 Loss of future commerce.
- Macro and micro-economic effects

General economic patterns:

- Rich, diversified countries can sustain terrorism.
- Weak 'host' states suffer from loss of FDI.

Terrorism research & challenges

GOVERNMENT COUNTER-TERRORISM

- The Unintended consequences of 'successful' policies.
- Improve analysis by focusing on 'net value' of countermeasures.
- The challenge of counterfactual scenarios.
- The failures of international organizations - UN resolutions and conventions have no effect on terrorists' actions.
- Use of force - retaliatory raids as a countermeasure (the **Backlash** effect).

Evolving methodology

More data → more diverse methodological tools.

- Early work (qualitative): case studies.
- Problem with generalizing conclusions.
- Time Series Cross Sectional data (quantitative) - explore patterns over time and space.
- Tools to estimate theoretical questions: linear or nonlinear models.
 - 1 Intergroup competition and terrorism (Chenoweth 2010)
 - 2 Participation and transnational terrorism (Li 2005)

Evolving methodology

OTHER METHODS

- Game theory
 - Effective tool to capture strategic rational interactions.
▶ [GameTree](#)
 - Government investment in different policies.
 - Terror groups recruiting.
 - Hostages ▶ [NoDeal](#)
 - Really? Is it effective? ▶ [Hostages](#)
- Networks analysis
 - Cooperation between groups.
 - How can governments reduce the threats?

What Data? ▶ [GTD](#)

Terrorism (1981)

"Terrorism per se is not usually a reflection of mass discontent or deep cleavages in society. More often it represents the disaffection of a fragment of the elite, who may take it upon themselves to act on the behalf of a majority unaware of its plight, unwilling to take action to remedy grievances, or unable to express dissent"

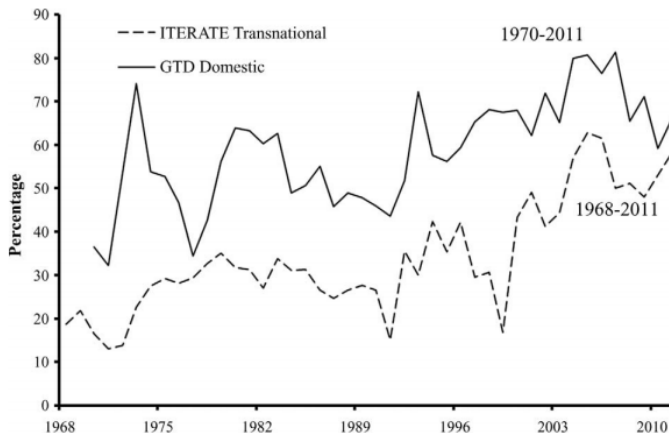


Figure: Terrorism Cycles 1968-2011

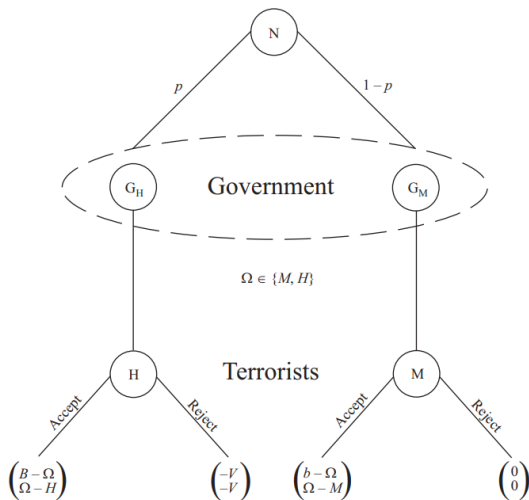


Figure: Terrorism Game Tree





Figure: July 1976

