

POLS 429: International Terrorism
Lecture 6 (01.27.20):
Explaining Terrorism - The Strategic Approach

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Overview

- 1 Quick review
- 2 Explaining Terrorism
- 3 The Strategic Approach
- 4 Assumptions
- 5 Extra Material

Review

WHAT WE COVERED LAST MEETING?

- Data - increase in collection, main databases.
- Limitations of existing data.
- Data on individuals and terrorism: challenges.
- The need to enhance collaboration between scholars and the IC.

Questions??

Theoretical Approaches: Introduction

TERRORISM: A STUDY GUIDE

- What are the causes of terrorism?
- Multiple theoretical explanations.
- Each approach → two lectures (textbook chapters 2-7).
- Part 1: Introduction, logic and assumptions.
- Part 2: Main implications, critique and limitations.

The Strategic Approach

DEFINITIONS

- Descriptions:
 - 1 The strategic approach.
 - 2 The rational choice approach.
 - 3 The rationalist or instrumental model.
- Every interaction between actors is a "game".
- Method: formal models to explore interactions.

[▶ GameTree](#)

The Strategic Approach

WHY DO WE USE IT?

- Prevalent in most studies (explicitly or implicitly).
- **Parsimony:**
 - Simple assumptions.
 - Simple version of terrorist - target relationship.
- Parsimony → observable implications.
- Greater generalization of insight.

The Strategic Approach

MAIN FEATURES

- Fundamentals - rational choice, expected utility.
- Limitations - *bounded rationality*.
- Updating preferences/views.
- Strategic evaluation of situation.
- Terrorism as a tool (tactic) to accomplish political goals.

The Strategic Approach

THE GOALS OF TERRORISM

Kydd and Walter (2006):

- ① Regime change.
 - ② Territorial change.
 - ③ Policy change.
 - ④ Social control.
 - ⑤ Status-quo maintenance.
- Variation is large and groups usually have multiple goals.

► Examples

Core Assumptions

WHY DISCUSS ASSUMPTIONS?

- Assumptions - the 'building block' of the explanation.
- The implications of assumptions.

The strategic approach

- Simple - more appealing for researchers and practitioners.
- An imprecise representation of a (complex) reality.
- Formal models - assign value for each action. [▶ GameTree](#)
- Policymakers - clearer policy options with their expected chances of success.

The Strategic Approach - Assumptions

1) Outcomes result from strategic interactions

- Actions are a function of interactions among multiple actors.
- Actors also contemplate rivals (or supporters) preferences.
- Terrorism - best method to achieve a political goal, considering others' preferences.

2) Agnosticism about preferences

- Preferences guide actors' behavior.
- No judgment of morality, ethics, "soundness" of preferences.
- Rational suicide terrorists??? (Pape 2005)

The Strategic Approach - Assumptions

3) *Preferences are ordered*

- Objectives are ordered from most to least preferred.
- A sub-optimal choice is possible.

4) *Preferences are transitive*

- $A > B > C \rightarrow A > C$

5) *Preferences are stable over time*

- Objectives remain stable even when situation changes.
- Rational updating? change means in order to accomplishing the same goal.

The Strategic Approach - Assumptions

6) *Unitary actor assumption*

- Groups viewed as a single entity.
- Lone-wolf operative versus a group?
- Media reports of terror groups. [▶ Examples](#)
- Scholars recognize the internal features but do not view it as significant for the organization's operation.
- Makes analysis much simpler.

Recommended readings

More studies on the topic of strategic approach to terrorism:

- ① Kydd, Andrew H., and Barbara F. Walter. "The strategies of terrorism." *International security* 31, no. 1 (2006): 49-80.
- ② Fromkin, David. "The strategy of terrorism." *Foreign Affairs*, 53, no. 4 (1975): 683-698.
- ③ Feinstein, Jonathan S., and Edward H. Kaplan. "Analysis of a strategic terror organization." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 54, no. 2 (2010): 281-302.

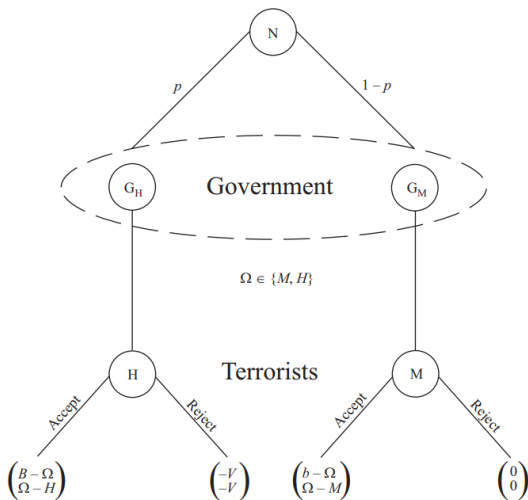


Figure: Formal Model: Game Tree

Table 1. Foreign Terrorist Organizations and Their Goals

Name	Ultimate Goals	RC	TC	PC	SC	SQM
Abu Nidal Organization	Destroy Israel; establish Palestinian state	X	X			
Abu Sayyaf Group	Secede from Philippines		X			
Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade	Destroy Israel; establish Palestinian state	X	X			
Ansar al-Islam	Evict United States from Iraq; establish Islamic state	X			X	
Armed Islamic Group	Establish Islamic state in Algeria	X				
Asbat al-Ansar	Establish Islamic state in Lebanon	X				
Aum Shinrikyo	Seize power in Japan; hasten the Apocalypse	X				
Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA)	Secede from Spain		X			
Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army	Establish Communist state in Philippines	X				
Continuity Irish Republican Army	Evict Britain from Northern Ireland; unite with Eire		X			
Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya (Islamic Group)	Establish Islamic state in Egypt	X				
Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement)	Destroy Israel; establish Palestinian Islamic state	X	X			
Harakat ul-Mujahidin	Evict India from Kashmir; unite with Pakistan		X			
Hezbollah (Party of God)	Originally: evict Israel from Lebanon; now: destroy Israel and establish Palestinian Islamic state	X	X			
Islamic Jihad Group	Establish Islamic state in Uzbekistan; reduce U.S. influence	X			X	
Name	Ultimate Goals	RC	TC	PC	SC	
Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine	Destroy Israel; establish Palestinian state		X	X		
Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine—General Command	Destroy Israel; establish Palestinian state		X	X		
Al-Qaida	Establish Islamic states in Middle East; destroy Israel; reduce U.S. influence		X	X	X	
Al-Qaida in Iraq (Zarqawi group)	Evict United States from Iraq; establish Islamic state		X		X	
Real Irish Republican Army	Evict Britain from Northern Ireland; unite with Eire			X		
Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia	Establish Marxist state in Colombia	X				
Revolutionary Nuclei (formerly Revolutionary People's Struggle)	Establish Marxist state in Greece	X				
Revolutionary Organization 7 November	Establish Marxist state in Greece		X			
Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front	Establish Marxist state in Turkey		X			

Figure: Terrorism Goals

The New York Times

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



Figure: Terrorism in Newspapers