

POLS 429: International Terrorism
Lecture 2 (01.15.20): What is Terrorism?

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Overview

- 1 Trends in Terrorism
- 2 The Threat
- 3 History
- 4 Defining Terrorism
- 5 Extra Material

The Threat of Terrorism

IS TERRORISM REALLY THAT MUCH OF A THREAT?

- 2012: 15 incidents in US (2 ended with casualties).
- 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 of Terrorism

SOME COMPARISONS:

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 of Terrorism

GLOBAL DEATHS FROM CONFLICT:

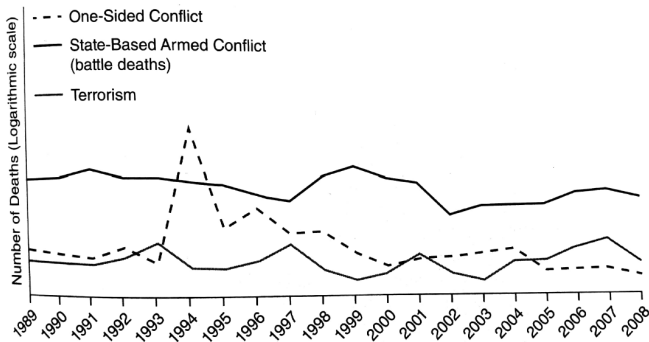


Figure 1.1 Global Trends in Conflict Deaths, 1989–2008

Source: Human Security Report Project 2012; GTD.

The Threat of Terrorism

ATTACKS TARGETING THE US:

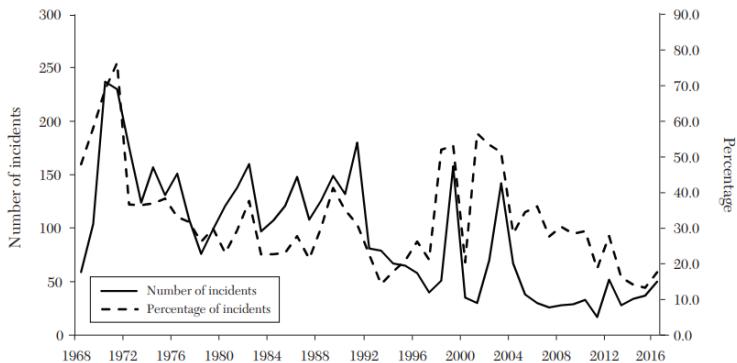


Figure 4. Number and Percentage of Transnational Attacks against US Interests per Year

So, Why?

- If the data is that clear, why should we care about it?
- Why do we need to study it?
- Globally - it kills, many people (and injures even more)
- Not just western phenomenon [▶ Regions](#)
- [▶ Israel](#)
- [▶ Pakistan](#)
- When its close to you, you care...
- [▶ NY](#) [▶ Boston](#)

So, Why?

GLOBAL ATTACKS INCREASE:

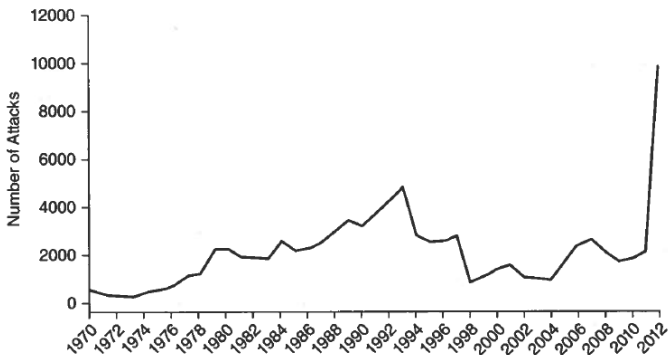


Figure 1.2 Global Trends in Terrorist Attacks, 1970–2012

Source: GTD

So, Why?

GLOBAL ATTACKS BECOME MORE DEADLY:

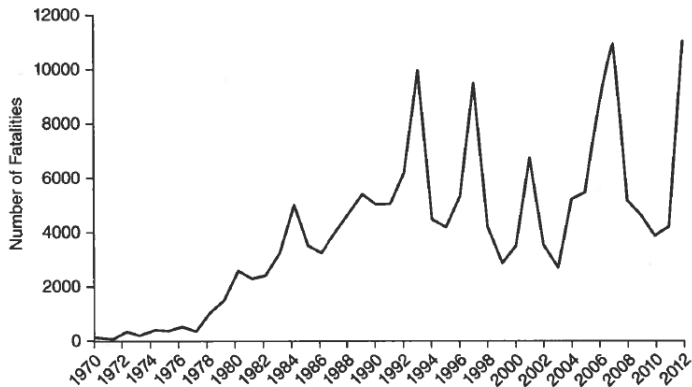


Figure 1.3 Fatalities from Terrorist Attacks, 1970–2012

Source: GTD

So, Why?

TERRORISM EFFECTS ARE SUBSTANTIAL

September 11, 2001:

- Loss of life: Over 3000 dead.
- Financial costs.
- Government defense policies.
- Military Invasion to Afghanistan

So, Why?

GENERAL PUBLIC CARES ABOUT TERRORISM

- 2007 *Pew Global* (47 countries) - respondents in 16 countries describe it as a very big problem.
- Again, not just a western concern - **Pew** survey polled Morocco, Lebanon, Pakistan, Peru, Japan and more.
- More recent data: [▶ Poll2018](#)

Terrorism: A blitz through History

BRIEF DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT

- 1 Sicarri (63-73 AD).
- 2 Assassins (11th-15th centuries).
- 3 French Revolution - Robespierre "Reign of Terror".
- 4 Anarchists (mid-late 19th century).
- 5 Revolutionary groups (post-1945).
- 6 State sponsored (1980's).
- 7 "New Terrorism" (1990's-2000's).

How to define terrorism

Let's begin with examples:

- *"The difference between the revolutionary and the terrorist lies in the reason for which each fights. For whoever stands by a just cause and fights for the freedom and liberation of his land from the invaders..."*
- *"The idea that one person's 'terrorist' is another's 'freedom fighter' cannot be sanctioned. Freedom fighters or revolutionaries don't blow up buses containing non-combatants..."*

How to define terrorism

OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT/INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

- Outcomes: UN, African Union
- Objectives/Motive: US DOJ/FBI, US DoD
- Victims: US State Dept.
- Saudi Arabia's Penal Law (2014)

The common element:

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

Recommended readings

If you are interested in more research on the topic:

- 1 Boaz Ganor, "Defining Terrorism: Is One Man's Terrorist another Man's Freedom Fighter?" *Police Practice and Research*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (2002), pp. 287-304.
- 2 Bruce Hoffman, "Defining Terrorism," in *Inside Terrorism*, 3rd edition (Columbia University Press), pp. 1-43.
- 3 John Mueller, "Is there still a Terrorist Threat?: the Myth of Omnipresent Enemy", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 5 (2006), pp. 2-8.
- 4 Paul Wilkinson, "Can A State Be Terrorist?" *International Affairs*, Vol. 57, No. 3 (Summer 1981), pp. 467-472.



Figure: NYC, New York: September 11, 2001.



Figure: Boston, MA: April 11, 2013.

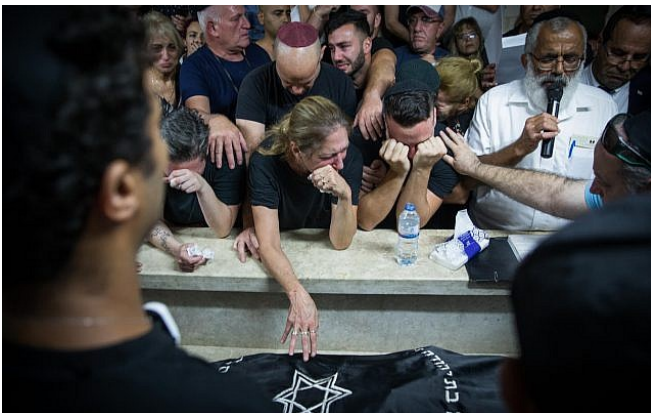


Figure: Israel



Figure: December 2017, Pakistan

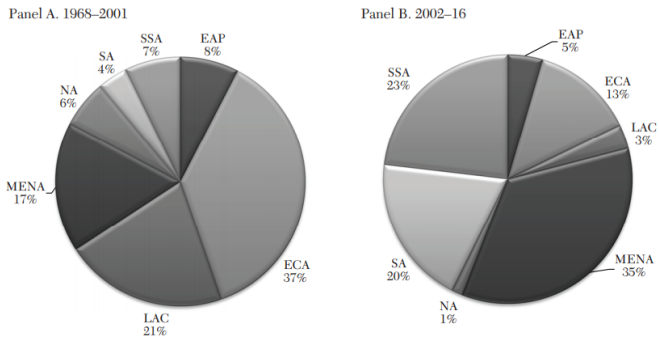


Figure 7. Distribution of Transnational Incidents by Regions

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