

Lecture 1: Defining Terrorism

MAKE SURE TO LOG IN AND TURN ON PANOPTO RECORDING

Hi class and welcome to my first of eight lectures on terrorism in this module. *This* lecture is going to help establish some of the critical *foundations* that the *rest* of my lectures are going to be built upon. Specifically, we're going to start this section of the module off by talking about controversies about how to *define* terrorism.

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Terrorism: Scope and Definition

Alright, now, so what exactly is *terrorism*? This might seem like a pretty simple question with a straightforward answer, but, as with every aspect of terrorism, things are rarely as clear cut as they appear to be at first. Indeed, like *so many* of the critical concepts in international relations, terrorism has no universally accepted definition.

I think it is fairly easy to understand the reason for this, given the life-changing connotations of having the labels “terrorism” or “terrorist” attached to you. In fact, it's probably pretty hard to think of a *more* emotionally- and morally-loaded set of words in the current political environment.

For example, one definition of terrorism describes it as “the deliberate, systematic murder, maiming, and menacing of the innocent to inspire fear in order to gain political ends.... Terrorism... is intrinsically *evil*, necessarily *evil*, and wholly *evil*.”

With definitions like this in mind, it's important to recognize that, if you can make the terrorist label *stick* to your enemies, then you have won a *major* political victory because many people will want to have nothing to do with your enemies or their political positions anymore.

This is in part why authoritarian and totalitarian governments often call the groups that are resisting their rule “terrorists.” For example, the German government during the Second World War labelled the French Resistance and the Polish Underground terrorists at the time but, since most people today consider resisting Nazi occupation to be a morally correct cause, they would probably *disagree* with this decision to call these groups terrorists.

More recently, the governments of many nation-states have used the label “terrorist” to delegitimize their opponents.

For example, the Chinese government has called Uighur separatists in its (Shin Jang) region terrorists.

The Indian government calls the non-state groups in Kashmir that are fighting for independence from India terrorists.

Likewise, the Israeli government has long argued that the armed Palestinian groups it is fighting against are not only terrorists but just as bad as al-Qaida, with former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon calling Yasser Arafat, a former leader of the Palestinian government, “our Bin Laden.”

Taking this into account, there’s a strong *political* incentive to adopt a definition of terrorism that can be used selectively to *tar* people and groups you *hate*, while *protecting* people and groups you *like* from the fallout associated with this nasty label.

As a result, the political battles over how to define terrorism are, in their own way, almost as intense as the struggle against terrorism itself.

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Even in the *academic* world, attempts to reach a consensus on a definition of terrorism have failed miserably. For example, one of the most exhaustive and authoritative studies of modern terrorism required

more than a *hundred* pages to examine and compare various definitions and it *still* didn't reach a definitive consensus.

To highlight one fairly well-known and quite simple academic definition of terrorism, a scholar by the name of Thomas Schelling defined it as “the use of terror, violence, and intimidation to achieve an end.”

While seemingly simple and clear, the obvious *problem* with this definition is that it is *far too broad* since it would seem to include an incredibly diverse array of phenomena that go far beyond things like hijacking airplanes or exploding a suicide vest on a public bus.

Events like the bombing of civilian populations in cities by both sides in the Second World War, the invasion of Germany by Allied troops and the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki during that same war, the arrest and torture of political prisoners, and the execution of criminals (or, perhaps even the *imprisonment* of criminals) would all qualify as *terrorism* according to this definition.

It is, therefore, really important for us to try to figure out the key *elements* or *constituent parts* that could be included in a *workable* definition of terrorism that is not *blatantly biased* for or against certain actors in domestic or international politics, or *so narrow* that it leaves out several actors that might reasonably be considered terrorists, or *so broad* that it is no longer useful for describing a distinct political phenomenon.

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Elements of Terrorism Common to Many Definitions

So, what are the basic *elements* that are common to many definitions of terrorism?

Terrorism is Violent and Political

Well, first off, most scholars agree that terrorism always has a *violent* and *political* dimension to it in the sense that it involves committing

violent acts in order to motivate *political* change. For instance, while a *mugger* might use deadly force, this is usually done for *personal* gain – to *acquire money* for him or herself, not to advance a political agenda. On the other hand, at its core, terrorism is about using violence to pursue *political goals*.

So, for example, al-Qaida has used violence in an attempt to motivate a number of political changes, such as expelling the US Armed Forces from the Persian Gulf; severing US-Israeli relations; and severing relations between the United States and several “apostate” governments, which means severing the US government’s support for Muslim governments that Al-Qaida considers heretical, like the Saudi monarchy and the military regime that has long ruled over Egypt.

Similarly, the African National Congress, which was considered a terrorist group during the Apartheid Era in South Africa, which lasted until 1994, used violence in an attempt to motivate the Apartheid government to relinquish its hold on political power, end discrimination toward the black citizens of South Africa, and allow for free elections in South Africa so that the country’s black citizens could vote and run for office.

Finally, in 1983, Hezbollah used violence, including two suicidal truck bomb attacks, in order to motivate the American and French governments to pull their military forces out of Lebanon.

Again, what unites all of these examples is the fact that violence was used to try to achieve some sort of *identifiable political goal*.

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Terrorism is Committed by Non-state Actors

In addition, although many other uses of violence are inherently political, including, of course, wars between states, terrorism can be distinguished by its *non-state* character. In other words, according to many definitions of terrorism, terrorism can only be committed by *non-*

state actors, like individuals and armed groups, like al-Qaida, the Provisional Irish Republican Army, and the Tamil Tigers.

Now, as I just mentioned, governments certainly use force for political purposes too. For example, when governments use force *internationally*, it is often labelled an *act of war*; when they use force *domestically*, it can be called various things, including law enforcement, state terror, oppression, or civil war.

But, it's important to recognize what *this* aspect of the definition is saying, which is that, although governments can potentially *terrorize* people when they use violence and force, they can't, *according to this element of the definition*, be considered *terrorists*.

Some scholars support this idea because they feel that lumping uses of force by *governments* in with "terrorism" just muddies and confuses things. In other words, terrorism is only a *meaningful* term if it can be reliably *distinguished* from *other* forms of political violence.

For example, one scholar argued that "definitions (of terrorism) that do not refer *specifically* and *exclusively* to insurgent organizations (which are non-state actors) broaden the meaning of terrorism to *unmanageable* and *useless* levels." Scholars who think this way have also argued that we already have pretty well-developed concepts for studying and labeling the uses of force by governments, and so they ask, "why not just stick with what works?"

Following this logic, we can argue that terrorism differs from conventional warfare pursued by the armed forces of nation-states in that, as a "weapon of the weak," terrorism is embraced by nonstate actors who have no realistic possibility of prevailing against their opponents in a conventional armed contest.

This is because the nonstate actors that tend to use violence to pursue political goals tend to lack enough people, money, or weapons to engage

in open conflict and must, consequently, rely on a form of combat that inflicts relatively small amounts of death and destruction to try to achieve significant political change by producing widespread feelings of fear.

Now, while including this element in a definition of terrorism is very helpful from an academic perspective, since it narrows and clarifies the concept, it is problematic from a real-world political perspective since it protects states and their armed forces, no matter how badly they behave, from the pejorative term “terrorism” and automatically affords the use of violence by nonstate actors with less legitimacy than that afforded to states and their militaries.

As a result, definitions of terrorism that include this element are, in effect, pro-state, which means they are also pro-status quo since they allow the non-state actors that are trying to achieve political changes to be tarred with this morally nasty label.

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Terrorism Targets Noncombatants

Next up, many definitions of terrorism argue that acts of violence can only be considered terrorism if they deliberately target noncombatants.

Many scholars prefer to use the term noncombatants rather than innocents in their definitions of terrorism because it is relatively easy to determine whether the people who are hurt or killed in a violent act were members of an armed force, carrying weapons or other equipment that would allow them to take part in combat, travelling in a vehicle designed for combat, or working in a military base or other facility under the control of an armed force and to, therefore, determine whether they are likely to be combatants or noncombatants.

On the other hand, determining whether someone is innocent requires a much more complicated assessment of their political and moral beliefs

and perhaps even the life they've lived up to the day they were attacked, to figure out whether they were truly a "good" or "bad" person.

And, even if these assessments could be made, they would be highly subjective and based on the assessor's own beliefs about how others should believe and behave and whether *certain* beliefs and forms of behaviour are more important for determining whether someone is "good" or "bad" than others are.

For instance, most of us probably have had grandparents who held beliefs about certain minority groups, personal identities, or sexual orientations that are *less* progressive and enlightened than our own beliefs that we hold right now in the present day. But should this one aspect of our grandparents' beliefs render them "bad" or "non-innocent"? In turn, if they were to be killed by a truck bomb, would it be fair to declare that they were *NOT* the victim of a terrorist attack since they were *NOT* morally innocent?

Likewise, it is probably impossible to reach a consensus on whether an ordinary person who simply *voted* for a politician or political party who did something while in office that motivated a terrorist attack should or should not be considered *innocent* and entirely non-responsible for their governments' actions.

This is why most scholars shy away from using the term "innocents" in their definitions of terrorism.

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With this said, however, even the inclusion of the term "noncombatants" in definitions of terrorism has proven controversial. For example, after the truck bomb attacks by Hezbollah took place in Lebanon in 1983, U.S. President Ronald Reagan called them terrorist attacks because, even though the American victims were 241 members of the United States Marine Corps, he determined that they were "noncombatants".

As you might expect, the President's claim was questioned at the time by people who were skeptical of the notion that members of the U.S. military could be classified as "noncombatants". In response, Reagan argued that the dead Marines were noncombatants because they were taking part in a peacekeeping mission, rather than a traditional combat mission like an invasion of another country, and were killed while they were asleep in their barracks and, therefore, not holding weapons and not capable of defending themselves at the moment they were attacked and killed by the truck bomb.

Furthermore, if terrorism is restricted only to noncombatants, then we would need to exclude at least one of the attacks committed on September 11, 2001, since one of these attacks was directed against The Pentagon, which is the headquarters of the U.S. armed forces. Most of the victims in this attack were members of the U.S. Army and Navy and, therefore, fairly easy to classify as combatants.

It is actually possible to argue that all three of the attacks that took place that day could be excluded from being called "terrorism" because even the World Trade Centre had "combatants" working inside, such as members of the U.S. Government's Federal Bureau of Investigation, which had an office in one of the towers.

It is interesting that just a few years after the September 11th attacks, the U.S. State Department clearly struggled with this element of the definition of terrorism when it noted in its official document outlining its own definition that: "For purposes of this definition, the term non combatant is interpreted to include, in addition to civilians, military personnel who at the time of the incident are unarmed and/or not on duty... We also consider as acts of terrorism attacks on military installations or on armed military personnel when a state of hostilities does not exist at the site."

So, this means that a surprise attack by a non-state actor against a U.S. military base that had not been attacked recently could be considered a terrorist attack even if all of the victims are American troops.

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Now, I should point out that not every *academic* definition of terrorism states that terrorism can *only* be inflicted against noncombatants. In fact, an academic survey of 250 definitions of terrorism found that *most* of the definitions did not make explicit reference to noncombatants, which holds open the possibility that even politically-motivated acts of violence committed by a nonstate actor against *combatants* could be considered terrorism.

And, if we accept that even attacks against *combatants* can be considered terrorism, like the members of a state's military or the police forces of oppressive and suppressive authoritarian regimes, then we open up the possibility that we might *sympathize* with or even *endorse* certain terrorist acts if they are inflicted against people we consider "bad" because of how they have behaved or because of the organizations they belong to.

So, therefore, while most or all of us might abhor the terrorist attacks of groups like al-Qaida and the Islamic State, we might simultaneously endorse the terrorist attacks committed by groups like the Kosovar Liberation Army against the Milošević regime in Serbia during the late 1990s.

The Kosovar Liberation Army targeted Serbian military personnel and police through attacks that were designed to have a wider psychological impact on Serbs in general by "[denting] the self-confidence and prestige of the Serbian Military," and "[breaking] the myth of their invincibility." And since one of the main goals of the Kosovar Liberation Army was to try to win independence for Kosovo, a political goal that most members of NATO and the EU support, this group, again, *might* not seem morally bad to you.

Likewise, many of us might find it hard to object to the use of terrorist violence inflicted by a range of groups in Syria during the last few years against soldiers and police that have remained loyal to the authoritarian Assad regime.

And finally, to return to an earlier example, I suspect that most of us would find it difficult to criticize the acts of politically-motivated violence committed by the French Resistance and other nonstate actors that targeted members of the German military and SS during the Second World War.

I raise all of these examples to simply draw attention to the fact that using the particular *targets* of violent attacks to determine whether these attacks were *acts of terrorism* remains one of the most controversial aspects of the debate over how to define terrorism.

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Terrorism Tends to be Directed against Random Targets

Finally, many scholars argue that, although terrorism tends to target noncombatants, it usually *doesn't have specific targets*. Rather, the *fear* created by terrorist attacks is usually targeted at society *in general* or at least a large segment of society, like all the members of a particular ethnic group.

As one scholar put it, “A pure terrorist act results in *everyone* recoiling in horror, with the words ‘*it could have been me*’ etched on their mind.”

In other words, it is the *seemingly indiscriminate* nature of terrorist attacks that produces widespread fear in the country or area of the world that a terrorist is operating in.

So, most of the time, when a suicide bomber blows up a bus and kills a dozen people, the bomber and his backers don't care *which* specific people are killed. The terrorist did not try to kill those people on the

basis of who they were as *individuals*; rather, he tried to kill them because their deaths would create fear in the *rest* of society or least among everyone who might consider riding a bus or driving next to a bus as they go about their daily lives.

For example, when Palestinian terrorists murdered a Jewish man named Leon Klinghoffer in his wheelchair and threw his body overboard during the *Achille Lauro* cruise ship hostage crisis in 1985, this act was intended to make millions of *other* Jewish people fear that the same sort of thing might *someday* happen to *them* or their friends or family members.

Likewise, the use of civilian airliners as weapons during the September 11th attacks convinced hundreds of millions of people around the world that they too might someday find themselves on a plane that has been *hijacked* by terrorists who plan to use it to kill not only them and their fellow passengers but hundreds or thousands of other people. As a result, airline ticket sales declines significantly in the months following these attacks as people acted on their fears to avoid this possibility.

As one scholar put it, “terrorists choose their targets to appear to be random, so *everyone* feels at risk... when getting on a plane, entering a federal building, or strolling a market square.”

In other words, the *physical* targets of terrorist violence are usually *random* and the randomness is what creates fear since it motivates *everyone* to worry about whether *they* might be the next victim.

Think of it this way: if a terrorist group were only trying to kill a *very specific* group of people like, for example, members of the Irish Senate, then those of us who *are not part of that group* should have little to fear.

So, taking all of these elements into account, we can arrive at a definition of terrorism that describes it as “the use of random violence by nonstate actors against noncombatants for political purposes.”

This is certainly not a perfect definition or one that every scholar, politician, or ordinary citizen would necessarily agree with but, to refer back to a goal I mentioned earlier in today's class, I think it is a fairly useful definition because it is not blatantly biased for or against certain actors in domestic or international politics, or so narrow that it leaves out several actors that might reasonably be considered terrorists, or so broad that it is no longer useful for describing a distinct political phenomenon.

TAKE A BREAK FOR FIVE MINUTES

Lecture 2: The Causes of Terrorism

Hi class, and welcome to our second lecture on terrorism, which is going to focus on the possible *causes* or *motivations* behind terrorism.

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Terrorism is Strategic

Alright, now, one of the most common *misconceptions* about terrorism is that it is “*senseless* violence” inflicted by “*crazy* people” for no apparent reason. Indeed, *some* scholars and political leaders suggest that the root cause of terrorism is the unique *psychological makeup* of the individuals who choose to participate in terrorist activities. For instance, some psychologists and psychiatrists have argued that *personality disorders* or *mental illness* might explain at least some terrorist activity.

If this is *correct*, then it might be reasonable to describe the harm that terrorists inflict as “senseless” since the perpetrators may not have had complete control over their behaviour.

However, among academics who study terrorism, there is a strong consensus that the *vast majority* of terrorist attacks and campaigns are not merely *rational* but “strategic,” which means the people who carry out terrorist attacks tend to have an identifiable *goal* or *objective* in mind and have *consciously chosen* to use violence to try to *achieve* that objective.

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Tactical Objectives Pursued by Terrorists

Now, one of the main reasons why a lot of people find it hard to believe that individual terrorists or groups of terrorists are motivated by the pursuit of a tangible objectives is that, while these objectives serve as the *strategic* and *ultimate* objective of a terrorist attack or campaign of terror, terrorists also pursue *tactical* objectives, which are objectives that they seek to achieve *in order to* help them achieve their strategic objectives.

These *tactical* objectives can, of course include *injuring and killing people* through the use of guns, explosives, or other weapons during an attack.

Successfully achieving this first kind of tactical objective can help a terrorist achieve *other* tactical objectives, like *obtaining publicity for their cause* from the news media and social media since, following the old journalistic saying “if it bleeds, it leads.” Indeed, learning about people who have been hurt or killed, especially in spectacular or surprising ways, is inherently interesting and, therefore, likely to bring attention to the people responsible for doing this.

This, in turn, could provide them with opportunities to issue statements about their strategic objectives that will receive more attention from governments and ordinary people than it likely would in the absence of these harmful attacks.

Hurting and killing people can also help a terrorist group *acquire greater popular support* and *money* and *new recruits* since people are more likely to want to assist, let alone *join*, a terrorist group if it appears to be *active* by carrying out spectacular and harmful attacks.

In addition, carrying out harmful attacks is likely to help a terrorist *provoke fear* among many members of a group or several groups, such as people of Jewish decent or Americans or the citizens of any Western country, who feel that *they* could become the victim of a similar attack in the future.

Moreover, carrying out harmful attacks is *also* likely to provoke the members of the groups who were targeted by the attack or their government to mount some sort of *reprisal*, which could take the form of repressive measures, like counter-attacks, harsh new laws, or mass arrests of people suspected of being members of the terrorist group or supporters of the group.

The violence and harm caused by these *reprisal* measures could, in turn, help *delegitimize* the people and governments who launched them to the point where they appear *less reasonable and harder to support* in the eyes of a much broader population, like the citizens of a particular country or the citizens of a particular region of the world or members of a particular religious faith or even the global population in general.

So, for example, one of the tactical goals pursued by *Palestinian* terrorist groups, like Hamas and the Al Aksa Martyrs brigade is to provoke the Israeli government to order its military and police forces to adopt repressive, violent measures against innocent, uncommitted Arabs, such as launching airstrikes that can produce civilian casualties, bulldozing civilian homes, and requiring civilian Arabs to pass through checkpoints to travel even short distances, where they could be interrogated about who they are and why they are out and about, in the hope that these measures will lead *uncommitted* Arabs to *dislike* the Israeli government more than the currently do and *increase their support* for the terrorist groups and their strategic objectives.

At the same time, provoking reprisals can help undermine support provided by *foreign* governments for a particular group of people or their government. This is another reason why Palestinian terrorist groups try to provoke the Israeli government to launch harsh reprisal attacks. When this occurs, it often convinces other governments, particularly in Europe and moderate Arab states, like Egypt and Jordan, to decrease their level of diplomatic support for Israel, which, all else being equal, should at least *slightly* increase the chance that the Palestinian terrorist groups will be able to achieve one of their primary *strategic* objectives, which is to force the Israeli state to relinquish control over territory that these groups think is the rightful property of the Palestinian people.

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Strategic Objectives Pursued by Terrorists

Now, just so we are all clear about the difference between *tactical objectives* and *strategic objectives*, tactical objectives are goals that

terrorists pursue *in order to* help them achieve their *strategic objectives*. They are a *means to an end* rather than an end in itself.

Strategic objectives, on the other hand, are the “*ends*” or goals that terrorist groups are trying to accomplish, which is usually some sort of tangible change to the political status quo.

So, with all this said, viewing these two kinds of goals in this way and the relationship between them helps us understand that terrorism does, indeed, tend to be *rational* because the perpetrators of terrorist violence tend to understand that there is a *causal relationship* between their use of violence, the immediate effects of this violence (which are their tactical objectives), and their ability to achieve tangible strategic objectives.

Now, what are some of the kinds of *strategic* objectives that serve as the ultimate underlying causes or motivations for the people who commit terrorist attacks? This question is particularly important because we need to understand the motivations behind terrorism in order to develop effective and appropriate counterterrorist strategies.

In many cases, a terrorist or terrorist group will probably attempt to pursue *more than one* strategic objective at the same time, but studies of terrorism suggest that we can group these objectives into any of several *general categories* or types.

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Nationalism and Separatism

First off, some terrorists are motivated by *nationalism* or *separatism* and, as a result, they attempt to achieve full independence or at least much greater autonomy for a particular group of people that they claim to be fighting on behalf of. They tend to view their terror campaigns as an attempt to overthrow colonial rule or the illegitimate occupation of a particular piece of territory.

One of the best known examples of a group that is *primarily* motivated by this kind of strategic objective is the Palestinian Liberation Organization, which was founded in 1964 and used violence to try to convince Israel and the broader international community to relinquish control over all of the territories that it claims are *Palestinian* land, including a great deal of territory that has been controlled by the state of Israel since 1948, and allow the creation of a fully independent Palestinian nation-state.

This organization has, however, *replaced* this initial strategic objective was a less ambitious one, which is to create a Palestinian state out of just *a fraction* of the territory it initially claimed, including the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem, all of which were conquered by Israel during the Six Day War in 1967.

And, since 1993, it has officially accepted that Israel has a right to exist on at least *some* of the territory that it previously claimed to be the rightful territory of a Palestinian state. However, even this newer and less ambitious objective has not been met since the Palestinian people have fairly limited control over these three territories and are actually losing even more control over an ever-greater fraction of the West Bank and East Jerusalem over time as Israel continues to build new settlements there.

Another example of a group that has pursued this kind of strategic objective is the Basque terrorist group ETA, which existed between 1959 and 2018 and killed over 800 people in pursuit of its goal of achieving full independence for the Basque regions of Spain and France. Despite carrying out hundreds of attacks using guns, bombs, and mortar shells, and numerous kidnapping and blackmail operations, it failed to achieve its strategic objective and, in April 2018, declared that it had “completely dissolved all its structures and ended its political initiative.”

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And, of course, much closer to home here in Ireland, the Provisional

Irish Republican Army conducted hundreds of attacks that killed about 1,700 people between 1969 and 1997 when it declared a ceasefire as part of the negotiations that eventually led to the Good Friday Agreement.

As with the PLO and ETA, the Provisional IRA sought to change who had political control over a piece of territory – that being Northern Ireland – but their cause was arguably a bit more *complex* than the others I've mentioned so far because, to succeed, they would have had to not only convince the *British* government to relinquish political and military control over Northern Ireland but *also* convince the *Irish* government to figure out how to *integrate* Northern Ireland into the Republic of Ireland in a way that would make *everyone* on the island, including Protestants with strong loyalty to the UK, happy enough that they would refrain from using violence to try to convince the Government of Ireland to relinquish control over *pieces* of Northern Irish territory that have a majority Protestant and Loyalist population.

Like the other two groups, the Provisional IRA did not achieve its main strategic objective. However, the Good Friday Agreement did establish a legal framework that provided considerably greater political rights for Catholics in Northern Ireland, the group of people that the Provisional IRA claimed to be fighting for, and also created a new governance structure that provides Catholic politicians and political parties a much stronger voice than they previously had in governing that part of the UK.

Finally, another terrorist group that was primarily motivated by its desire to achieve a nationalist and separatist strategic objective is the Tamil Tigers, who sought to establish a Tamil state on the Island of Sri Lanka that would serve as an independent homeland for the Tamil people that make up about 15 percent of Sri Lanka's total population.

The Tigers were a *particularly violent* group, having pioneered the use of suicide bombings in their campaigns, and, at one point in the mid-1990s, it appeared that they had achieved at least a *partial* success because it convinced the Government of Sri Lanka to enter into

negotiations with the Tigers over granting more autonomy to the Tamil-dominated areas of Sri Lanka.

During her successful campaign for President of Sri Lanka in 1994, Chandrika Kumaratunga explicitly asked for a mandate from the people of Sri Lanka to redraw boundaries in order to appease the Tamils in their demand for a separate homeland in the island's northeastern provinces.

She stated publicly that, in her words, “We definitely hope to begin discussions with the Tamil people, with their representatives – including the Tigers – and offer them political solutions to end the war... (involving) extensive devolution” of governing powers so that the Tamils would have much greater control over their own affairs. This would, according to the President, “create an environment in which people could live without fear.”

Unfortunately, these negotiations proved unsuccessful, largely because the Sri Lankan government refused to fully give in to the Tigers' primary demand, which was for full independence of the Tamil-dominated areas of the country. As a result, the Tigers' walked away from the negotiations and launched a new terror campaign.

But, this time, instead of entering into another round of serious talks, the Sri Lankan government decided to annihilate the Tigers and many thousands of their civilian supporters, which crushed the Tamils' efforts to win their independence in 2009. In other words, the Tigers not only failed to achieve their strategic objective but got a lot of ordinary Tamil civilians killed as well.

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Ideological Change

Alright, now, another kind of strategic objective that terrorists may be motivated to pursue is ideological change. The people and groups that pursue this kind of objective are adherents to a particular political ideology, such as socialism, communism, fascism, or white supremacy,

that they believe in *so strongly* that they are willing to use violence to force their government and the rest of their society to replace their *existing* political ideology with this new one.

So, for example, the Red Brigades, which was a terrorist group that was founded in Italy in 1970, during the ideological conflict known as the Cold War, was driven by a belief that the democratic capitalist social, economic, and political system was inherently *corrupt* and *ineffective*, and that it should, therefore, be overthrown and replaced with some sort of *revolutionary socialist* system. Through a campaign of kidnappings, bank robberies, sabotage, and murders that lasted until 1988, the group tried to transform Italy into a revolutionary socialist state modelled after countries like Cuba that had experienced socialist revolutions during the 1960s.

But, despite inflicting a great deal of death and destruction, including the kidnapping and murder of former Italian Prime Minister Aldo Moro in 1978, the group failed to build enough political support to transform Italian society. The group ended its operations in 1988, shortly before the Cold War came to an end, but some of its former members are still being arrested and put on trial for the crimes they committed decades ago.

A similar terrorist group, called the Red Army Faction or the Baader–Meinhof Gang, operated in West Germany between 1970 and 1998. As with the Red Brigades, the Baader–Meinhof Gang’s violent activities peaked in the late 1970s, and it shared the Red Brigades’ goal of replacing the dominant democratic capitalist ideology of West Germany, which they viewed as also being fascist, with a staunch commitment to socialist ideals.

These groups also, however, share a similar *lack of success* since West Germany remained committed to its democratic capitalist ideology and eventually absorbed the formerly authoritarian socialist country of East Germany as the Cold War was coming to an end, and spread its

democratic capitalist ideology to millions of new citizens of a united Germany.

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The Alleviation of Poverty and Inequality

In addition, some terrorists are motivated, at least in part, by a desire to alleviate poverty and inequality within their society or on a global scale.

People who live in poverty or who have noticeably less wealth than other groups in their society may believe that they are suffering deprivation, which can happen when a group has been deprived of something or denied something that they think they should rightfully have.

To complicate things a little bit, the deprivations that a group can experience can be either absolute or relative.

A group is suffering absolute deprivation when its members fall below some sort of objective standard like, for example, a national or global poverty line, such as if their average income is less than one euro per day.

On the other hand, a group is experiencing relative deprivation when its members are worse off relative to or compared to other groups in their society. Therefore, a group is experiencing relative deprivation if its members are being discriminated against or are otherwise being treated particularly badly by their government or by another, more powerful group in the country or if the group's members are less wealthy than other groups in society.

Now, in very general terms, scholars who believe that terrorism is sometimes motivated by a desire to alleviate poverty or extreme inequality argue that members of a group that is suffering these deprivations or people who claim they represent members of these deprived groups may decide that they need to use violence to try to

change this terrible situation by forcing their government to *redistribute* income, benefits, and rights more equally throughout the society.

Likewise, these actors may be motivated to use violence by a desire to redistribute income and political power from the states that currently have them in abundance to those countries or regions of the world that have very little wealth or power.

The empirical evidence for these claims is, at best, *quite mixed*. Certain studies that compared the relative level of wealth around the world – measured by GDP per capita – found that the countries with relatively high average levels of wealth were less likely to experience terrorist attacks than relatively poor countries. This suggests that a desire to alleviate widespread poverty *might* be a possible strategic objective of at least *some* terrorist groups.

However, studies that specifically examined the influence of economic *inequality* on the rate of terrorism found that countries with relatively high economic inequality were *NOT* more likely to experience terrorist attacks than countries with a more equal distribution of wealth.

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Extreme Religious Beliefs

Next up, terrorist attacks might be motivated by a desire to accomplish some sort of objective that is closely tied to a person or group's *extreme religious beliefs*. In this sense, terrorist attacks are carried out by individuals or groups who are trying to advance their religious views, secure religious rights or freedoms, or fight a holy war against their religious enemies.

While scholars recognize that these groups tend to be motivated by an identifiable goal, they often presume that, because their goal is connected to their religious beliefs, they are going to be much *more violent* and *less rational* in their *pursuit* of their goal than groups that pursue purely *secular* goals, like trying to *separate* a piece of territory

from the political country of an existing nation-state.

For instance, one scholar argued that “groups like the PLO and IRA are generally constrained by nationalist... goals – [like establishing] a Palestinian state... (or) a united Ireland – that are negotiable... [because it is at least possible to accomplish them]... What motivates their violence is the desire to obtain a particular political result... [On the other hand, religious’ terrorists] want only to express their wrath and cripple their enemy.”

In addition, religious terrorist groups are often assumed to be unwilling to compromise or accept limited progress toward achieving their goals because they are unwilling to compromise on their all-important beliefs.

Many scholars also assume that groups whose members are part of the same religion, such as the members of al-Qaida and the Islamic State or even the Real IRA, simply have to be primarily motivated by a desire to achieve a purely religious goal through their violence.

For example, a scholar named Mark Juergensmeyer has argued that the August 1998 bombing in the town of Omagh in Northern Ireland, which killed 29 people and injured over 200 others, was motivated by religion simply because the perpetrators of the attack – a small group that called itself the ‘Real’ Irish Republican Army – were members of the Catholic faith. But there is no clear evidence that they were attempting to accomplish something on behalf of their religion or that they felt would be considered virtuous and positive according to their religion. Rather, their motivations were secular in nature, such as a desire to disrupt the Good Friday peace process because the group felt the British government had not made enough concessions to the Republican side in the nationalist struggle for control over Northern Ireland.

Now, other scholars strongly disagree with the notion that religious objectives are a frequent motivation behind terrorist attacks. Instead, they argue that terrorist groups, even those whose members adhere to a

particular religious faith, are almost always motivated by a desire to achieve some sort of *secular* objective.

For example, as I mentioned earlier in today's class, Al Qaida's strategic objectives included to "expel the United States from the Persian Gulf," to "sever US-Israeli relations," to "sever US-apostate relations," and to "spare Muslims from 'Crusader wars.'" All of these are secular goals.

The Islamic State, which is also known as ISIS or ISIL, is another terrorist group made up almost entirely of strict adherents to Islam but its use of violence is still ultimately driven by a desire to *establish political control* over large chunks of territory in Iraq and Syria and to establish a functioning government there. Even though this government would be run on the basis of laws that conform to their fundamentalist religious beliefs, establishing a new nation-state is ultimately a *secular* goal.

With this said, however, a *limited* number of terrorist groups do, indeed, seem to have been motivated to try to accomplish a *religious* objective. For a particularly *extreme* example of this, a Japanese doomsday cult called Aum Shinrikyo launched a Sarin nerve gas attack on the Tokyo subway in March of 1995 that killed twelve people and sent almost 5,000 people to hospital. The group apparently launched this terrorist attack in order to *spark an apocalypse* in the form of a *global nuclear war* that would usher in their own particular vision of Heaven on Earth. The cult's members believed they would somehow escape the destruction and have a privileged role in this new society.

So, again, these sorts of groups do exist but, thankfully, they are quite rare.

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Issue-specific Objectives

And finally, the *last* general category of strategic objectives that I would like to highlight for you today is that terrorist attacks can be motivated

by an impassioned desire to affect change on a specific issue or policy stance.

In these cases, the reason why violence is being used is to prevent or promote a certain political or social activity or to encourage or discourage a government to adopt a particular policy position on an issue.

These issues can include everything from abortion to animal rights, racial equality, and even protecting the environment and saving the whales. Likewise, the range of government policy stances that a terrorist might want to change could be nearly endless, but they are commonly linked to politically-divisive issues, like, again, abortion or racial equality, or aspects of a country's foreign policy, like its overseas alliances and how it uses its armed forces.

To return to the example of Al Qaida, it used violence in an attempt to convince the Government of the United States to alter several important aspects of its foreign policies that I've outlined for you a few times already in today's class.

Other so-called terrorist groups that have sought specific policy changes include certain violent environmental groups, such as the Earth Liberation Front, which, among other things, tried to convince the Government of the United States to adopt and enforce much more strict pollution and air quality regulations and adopt policies that would slow the pace of climate change.

However, although groups like these have been labeled terrorist groups by law enforcement organizations, such as the American FBI, they almost always use violence to damage property and rarely, if ever, intentionally seek to kill civilians, which would mean that they would not be considered terrorists under the definition I presented earlier in today's class. Rather, they're more like politically motivated saboteurs.

Conclusion

Alright, that's it for today class. I'll see you back here next week for our lectures on whether the threat of terrorism has been exaggerated.